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Back To Where The Bluebells Bloom

When did it all go wrong? She couldn't focus. She couldn't remember anything either. She couldn't even breathe. *Wait, I can breathe*, she thought to herself. *But barely*. Sirens screeched all around her. Her ears were ringing with what seemed to be the sound of metal being crushed. She clutched her forehead in pain, flinching as the coldness from her hand transferred onto her face. *Stephanie! Stephanie, Steph--* A distant voice kept calling out her name.

She looked down at her arm, smeared with blood. Suddenly, her nose caught a whiff of something awful. Something that smelled like the remains of her mother's car crash. Something that smelled like her father, trying to hide from reality, after her mother's funeral. Something that smelled like... alcohol. And it was coming from her. *Oh no, I promised myself I wouldn't drink*. After all, it was impaired driving that had killed her own mother. The world was spinning rapidly around her, too fast for her to process. All she could do was remember her mother's last words.

Back to where the bluebells bloom. This phrase was seared into Stephanie's mind. It was the only memory of her mother she had left, and she clung onto it. Stephanie could still remember her mother's voice, sweet like honey, repeating those same words as she tucked Stephanie into bed each night.

As Stephanie grew older, and as many parents can attest to, she began to detach herself from her family. Trying to popularize herself at her school, Stephanie began partying, drinking, and skipping class, unbeknownst to her parents. Monica and Jimmy Bryant had always been very involved in their daughter's life, and were wary towards the independence that their only child suddenly wanted.

The night of her mother's death, an argument between Stephanie and her father had occurred. Her parents had been told that Stephanie had been involved in a vandalism incident at her school. "*Explain yourself,*" her father demanded. Stephanie responded by slamming her empty glass on the table. Shattered pieces of glass flew across the room, a few grazing her mother's forehead. Ruby red blood began to fall from her mother's face, trickling down onto the overcooked piece of meatloaf her mother was eating.

Stephanie could distinctly remember the look on her dad's face as he rose from his seat. She had never seen him this angry before; his fury growing by the second. "*Stephanie Marie Bryant! Go to your room*" he yelled.

Stephanie lay in bed, hours later, still holding a grudge against her parents. Her mother came in and tried to comfort her. "*Back to where...*" her mother began to sing. "*The blue--*"

"*Go away, I don't need you*" Stephanie interrupted.

"*Okay, sorry sweetie*" her mother whispered meekly as she left the room.

Just before midnight, Monica Bryant started the car engine. She wanted to clear her mind after the fight. The country roads she drove on were quiet, quieter than usual. There was only one other car on the road, heading in her direction. The car's headlights were approaching faster

than they should've been. She squinted and leaned forward, unsure whether or not the car was in her lane. Then, Monica blinked.

Stephanie did not know what to feel after her mother's death. She resorted back to partying, alcohol, and troublesome behaviour to ease her pain.

Now, here she was. A victim of her own circumstances, on her way back home from a party where she had been drinking, causing her to crash into a street lamp. Stephanie threw her head back and let out a sob. Maybe she wouldn't be in this position if she hadn't turned to alcohol... or if she hadn't caused the fatal argument before her mother's death... or if she hadn't become so disobedient. Her life had been going wrong for awhile now, and only because she had been untrue to herself, and to the values she had lived by since childhood.

Stephanie couldn't see past the blur of motion in front of her. She fought to keep her eyes open, but eventually, they shut against her will. When she was finally able to open them, everything seemed different. She reached her hand out in desperation.

Someone gripped her hand. She didn't know who the person was, but for some reason, she trusted them. "*Where are we going?*" she mumbled, still dizzy. She couldn't make out who the person helping her was. "*Oh sweetie*" the person began, "*let's go back to where the bluebells bloom... together.*"