**\*\*The Last Ordinary Day\*\***

**It was an ordinary day. Jake woke up to the alarm, grumbled, and hit the snooze button twice before he finally arose from bed. He made coffee, scrolled through his phone, and went to work at the usual time. The subway was crowded, the office smelled of burnt toast, and his inbox was already overflowing. Just another Monday.**

**He met with his best friend, Sam, over lunch at their go-to café. They joked about their weekend, complained about work, and bickered about which movie to catch on Friday. Everything was familiar, normal.**

**And then, at 3:17 p.m., everything changed.**

**Jake was walking back from the coffee shop when his phone buzzed with a notification. \*\*Unknown Number: "Call me. It's about your father."\*\***

**His gut constricted. He hadn't heard from his dad in over ten years. He hesitated, his eyes scanning the screen, his heart pounding. Was this a joke? A prank? Before he could go back on his decision, he stepped into a deserted hallway and dialed the number.**

**A woman's voice interrupted him. "Mr. Callahan? My name is Dr. Patel. I'm calling from St. Mary's Hospital. Your father was brought in this morning—he's in critical condition."**

**Jake's breath caught in his throat. He clamped his fingers tighter around the phone. "There has to be some mistake. We're not in contact."**

**"I know," she said gently. "But you're listed as his emergency contact. I thought you'd want to know."**

**He was rigid, the chaos of the office fading away in the background. His father—the man who had abandoned their family when Jake was sixteen—was in the hospital, and somehow, his name had been registered by Jake.**

**The next hour was a haze. He left work without saying a word, barely seeing the streets he passed as he made his way to the hospital. When he entered the ICU, everything was too bright, too sterile. A nurse led him to a room where a frail man lay attached to equipment. His father.**

**Jake barely recognized him. His formerly powerful body was gaunt, his face etched with pain and age. The sight provoked something unexpected—anger, sorrow, but also something gentler.**

**The doctor told him: terminal cancer, a body weakening after years of abandonment. "He doesn't have much time," she said. "He asked for you."**

**Jake sat beside the bed, his eyes fixed on the man he had worked so hard to erase from his life for ten years. When his father's eyelids fluttered open, there was something there that Jake had never witnessed—remorse.**

**"I'm sorry," his father breathed, weak voice barely above a whisper. "I know I don't deserve this, but… thanks for coming.**

**Jake didn't know what to do. He wasn't sure he could forgive. But as he sat there, holding his father's weak hand, he knew this moment—this one surprise day—had already changed him.**

**By the time he walked out of the hospital that night, he knew life would never be the same.**