

**Hearts Broken By Her Fading Laughter: An Analysis of Grief,
Healing, and Societal Impact from the Short Film *If Anything
Happens I Love You* (2020)**

Submitted to English Letters Study Program of Universitas Ma Chung
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Undergraduate Degree of
English Letters



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2025

LEMBAR PENGESAHAN DOSEN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI

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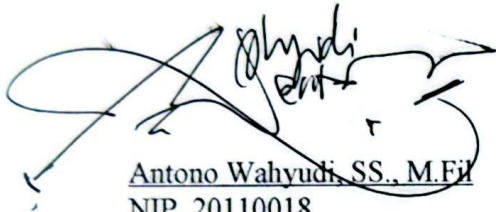


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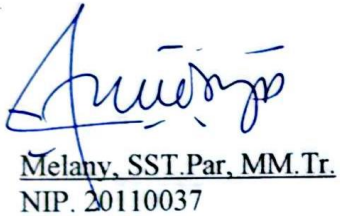
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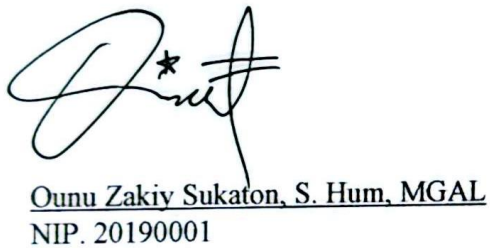
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ABSTRACT

Hearts Broken By Her Fading Laughter: An Analysis of Grief, Healing, and Societal Impact from the Short Film *If Anything Happens I Love You* (2020)

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Advisors: Melany, SST.Par, MM.Tr. & Ounu Zakiy Sukaton, S. Hum, MGAL.

This study employs the use of the 2020 animated short film *If Anything Happens I Love You*, which was co-directed by Michael Govier and Will McCormack. The 12-minute film shows the sorrow of two parents who lost their daughter, Rose, in a school shooting. The author's goal in this research is to examine how the stages of grief are depicted graphically without any spoken words and how the film's minimalist aesthetic enhances its therapeutic value. The author also examines the film's broader social impact, particularly in its critique of gun violence. The objectives of this study are to analyze how *If Anything I Love You* visually represents the stages of grief without any dialogue, to examine how the film's minimalist style contributes to the emotional portrayal of the healing process, and to identify whether the film significantly impacts society, mainly the audience, after its release. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, including particular scenes and visual components from the film as evidence, and applies the book version of the film as a secondary data source. The author uses several relevant theories, such as Characterization, Minimalism Theory, Mise-en-scène, Post-Trauma Response Theory, Five Stages of Grief Theory, and Social Theory. The results demonstrate that the film effectively portrays the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance with using silent symbolism and minimal visual cues. Examples of this include the parents' distant body language, the reappearance of their daughter's shadow, and changing color schemes. By eliminating distractions and emphasizing unfiltered emotional expression, the minimalist style, with its muted color palette, minimal backgrounds, and shadow figures, heightens the emotional impact of the healing process. The film's thoughtful use of sound enhances this visual minimalism. Emotionally charged music and diegetic sounds, like footsteps or the scraping of a chair, highlight the emotional tension in the almost complete lack of dialogue. By acting as emotional cues, these sound and music elements assist viewers in following the parents' internal process of grieving and healing. The film encourages social discussion and emotional introspection about the realities of school shootings and the lasting trauma they cause, striking a powerful chord with viewers.

Keywords: *Characterization, Post-Trauma Response, Five Stages of Grief, Mise-en-scène, Minimalism, Social Theory.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Before anything else, I would like to thank God for being my continual source of strength, even when I wanted to give up. You were with me through every moment of doubt and every difficulty I faced, guiding me in ways I couldn't always see but felt deeply. You gave me peace when I was overwhelmed and hope when I was doubtful. I know I wouldn't have come this far without Your presence, grace, and gentle reassurances.

To my beloved parents, thank you for your unwavering love, unending support, and numerous sacrifices throughout my life. Mom, your prayers have always been my shield, gently guarding and guiding me through each hardship. Dad, your words of encouragement and steady presence have been a continual source of motivation, telling me to keep going no matter how difficult things become. To my sister, thank you for being my continuous cheerleader. Your everlasting support and belief in me, especially when I struggled to believe in myself, means more to me than I can describe.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the lecturers of the English Letters Study Program at Universitas Ma Chung who supported this research process, particularly to my admired advisors, Ma'am Melany, SST.Par, MM.Tr and Sir Ounu Zakiy Sukaton, S.Hum, MGAL, for your mentorship throughout this thesis that has been incredibly meaningful. I'm truly grateful for your time, patience, and thoughtful guidance, which kept me motivated and helped me grow, especially during challenging moments.

To my boyfriend, Akta Aruna Andarvici Tumewu, thank you for your endless patience, understanding, and unwavering support throughout this journey. Your presence has been a constant source of comfort and strength, especially during the times when I felt overwhelmed, stressed, or uncertain about myself. You encouraged me when I was ready to give up and reminded me to take care of myself when I got too caught up in everything. Whether it was staying up late with me or celebrating small milestones. Thank you for believing in me, even when I struggled to believe in myself.

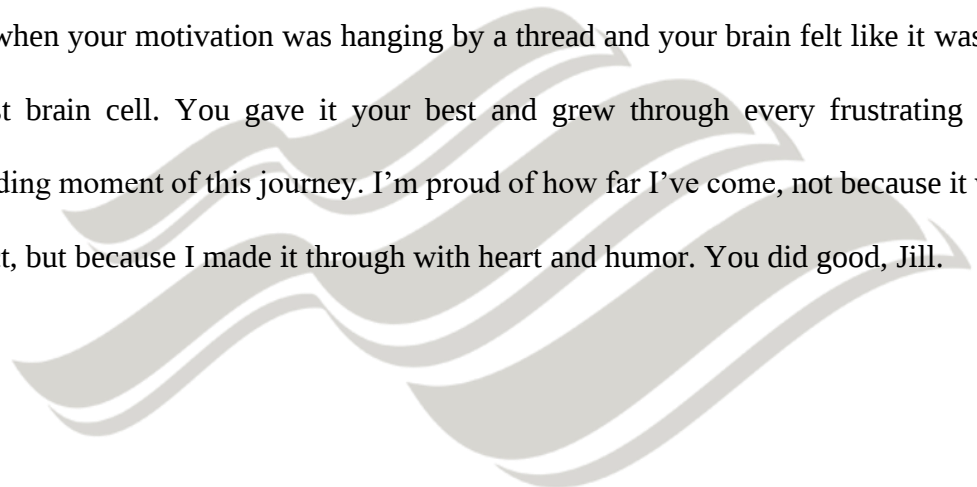
To my closest friend, Keiko Shelomitha Hosana, thank you for walking beside me every step of the way during these past four years in college. We struggled together, vented our frustrations, and lifted each other up when things got tough. Whether it was through shared laughter, mutual panic, or small celebrations, I'm so grateful we went through this together. I couldn't have asked for a better person to share this experience with than you.

To my classmates, thank you for the memories, collaborations, and shared struggles that have shaped this unforgettable chapter of our lives. From late-night study sessions, endless group chats, and last-minute deadlines, to the laughter, inside jokes, and moments of encouragement, we've been through it all together. Each of you brought something unique to this journey, and I'm grateful for the friendships, support, and sense of community we built along the way.

A special thank you to TWICE, the K-pop group whose music, energy, and unwavering messages of love, hope, and perseverance have been a constant source of joy and strength throughout this thesis journey. During the most stressful nights and

mentally exhausting days, your songs lifted my spirits and reminded me that I wasn't alone.

Lastly, I would like to thank myself for not giving up, even when I seriously considered throwing my laptop out the window. Thank you for pushing through the sleepless nights and those existential crises that came out of nowhere. You kept going, even when your motivation was hanging by a thread and your brain felt like it was on its last brain cell. You gave it your best and grew through every frustrating and rewarding moment of this journey. I'm proud of how far I've come, not because it was perfect, but because I made it through with heart and humor. You did good, Jill.



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The experience of death and the process of healing are universal aspects of human life, yet they impact individuals in unique and profound ways, particularly in adulthood. For many adults, facing the death of a loved one or confronting their mortality brings about a complex emotional journey that intertwines grief, loss, and the search for meaning. Studies indicate that the experience of losing a loved one affects a significant number of American adults, with research highlighting both immediate and long-term impacts on mental health. Healing from such experiences is not a linear path but a multifaceted process shaped by personal, cultural, and psychological factors. For some, this involves seeking therapy or support groups, while for others, it may be tied to religious or spiritual practices. This experience often leads to intense psychological distress, and about 10-15% of bereaved individuals develop prolonged grief disorder (PGD), characterized by persistent and disruptive grief that impairs daily functioning (Prigerson & Boelen, 2021).

The societal impact of grief extends beyond personal loss, influencing broader social dynamics and public health. Grief can hinder cognitive functions such as concentration and decision-making, which affect daily interactions and responsibilities. For people experiencing prolonged or unresolved grief, the effects can be long-lasting, leading to emotional disengagement from community and social life. Research has

shown that communities with robust mental health resources and supportive networks facilitate smoother grief recovery, enabling individuals to re-engage more effectively in their social environments. In contrast, communities where mental health is less accessible or where grief is stigmatized may experience prolonged social and emotional impacts (Dhanaraj & Kohlrieser, 2020). Effective coping mechanisms are therefore not only a personal but also a public health issue because loss has a significant impact on society, affecting everything from individual well-being to larger social dynamics.

In this research, I will mainly discuss the emotional analysis and societal impact that caught my attention. The film that I chose for this research is *If Anything Happens I Love You*. Produced by Gilbert Films and Oh Good Productions, and directed by Will McCormack and Michael Govier. The film made its debut in 2020 on Netflix. *If Anything Happens I Love You* is a bitter exploration of grief, loss, and the emotional devastation experienced by parents after the loss of their daughter to gun violence. Set in the aftermath of a school shooting, the film uses no dialogue, relying on visual storytelling and symbolic animation to convey deep emotional waves. The simple yet powerful animation style enhances the rawness of the narrative, drawing viewers into the story. The choice of monochromatic visuals reflects the sense of emptiness and despair, while brief flashes of color symbolize the parents' memories and the lingering presence of their daughter. Storytelling has long reflected this complexity, and modern media continues exploring grief's emotional nuances.

Societal impact, in this context, refers to the significant and lasting effects that actions, policies, and cultural works such as *If Anything Happens I Love You* have on

communities. Much like education policies or healthcare advancements that shape public well-being, the portrayal of grief in media can shape societal attitudes toward death, loss, and mourning. For instance, the film contributes to a broader conversation about the mental health crisis in the U.S. by humanizing the impact of gun violence on families, pushing viewers to empathize with the pain of those who have lost loved ones.

The societal impact of *If Anything Happens I Love You* extends beyond personal reflection, contributing to broader changes in how societies approach death as a universal, yet deeply personal, experience. By fostering greater empathy and understanding of grief, films like *If Anything Happens I Love You* can influence the development of more compassionate social systems, where emotional support, mental health care, and grief counseling become integral parts of healthcare and community services.

Through these portrayals in modern animation and film, societies are increasingly able to engage with grief in meaningful ways. Just as societal impact refers to the enduring changes brought about by actions or innovations, so do these narratives help reshape cultural norms around death, ultimately influencing how future generations approach this deeply human experience. Additionally, the short animated film *If Anything Happens, I Love You* may not have been extensively researched for several reasons. First, its release in November 2020 is relatively recent, and academic research often takes time to develop and publish. Moreover, short films generally receive less scholarly attention compared to feature-length films, as academia tends to focus on larger, more mainstream works. The film's independent production and its later rise in

popularity on Netflix may also explain the limited research, as independent films can take longer to enter academic discourse. Despite addressing deep themes like grief and loss, the film's concise narrative might not yet have attracted the same level of critical analysis as more complex or multilayered stories. However, given its emotional impact and awards, more research on it may emerge over time. So, those are the reasons why this research is mainly about analyzing grief, healing, and societal impact from the short film *If Anything Happens I Love You*.

1.2 Problem Statements

In order to discuss the topic of this research, I formulated some questions as follows:

1. How does *If Anything Happens I Love You* visually represent the stages of grief without any dialogue?
2. In what ways does the film's minimalist style contribute to the emotional portrayal of the healing process?
3. Does the film significantly impact society, mainly the audience, after its release?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main purpose of this research proposal is to analyze the grief, healing, and societal impact of the short animated film *If Anything Happens I Love You*. I have included a few more purposes for my research:

- a) To analyze how *If Anything Happens I Love You* visually represents the stages of grief experienced by the parents after the loss of their child without any dialogue.
- b) To examine how the film's minimalist style contributes to the emotional portrayal of the healing process.
- c) To identify whether the film has a significant impact on society, mainly the audience, after its release.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

To conduct this research analysis, I must set scope limitations to establish suitability on this research topic and maintain proper focus. As a result, I will concentrate on how the characters, the parents, dealt with sorrow and healing following their daughter's death in a school shooting, as well as the societal impact of *If Anything Happens I Love You* after its release. I will use supported studies to analyze the topics in this research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

A. For the writer

- a) To provide tools for personal reflection on loss, enabling healthier coping mechanisms
- b) To enrich my knowledge of the effects of films that contain sensitive topics on society

- c) To fulfill one of the requirements for graduating from university, mainly from the English Letters Study Program

B. For the readers

- a) To deepen appreciation for how films address societal issues like grief and trauma.
- b) To encourage open discussions about mental health and emotional well-being.
- c) To engage the audience in thoughtful reflection on the societal role of films like *If Anything Happens I Love You*.

C. For Universitas Ma Chung and English Letters Study Program

- a) To contribute to academic discourse in film studies, psychology, and social issues.
- b) To strengthen the university's focus on mental health and emotional well-being through academic research.
- c) To provide meaning and a positive impact for readers in obtaining information related to psychology and filmmaking.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Some of the key terms that will be mentioned frequently in the paper are as follows:

1. Characterization

Characterization is the method authors use to portray and shape characters in a story, offering an understanding of their traits, motives, and personalities (Abrams, 1999).

2. Post-Trauma Response

Post-trauma response involves the complex emotional and behavioral effects following trauma, characterized by hyperarousal, re-experiencing the trauma, and avoidance. These responses are part of the natural human reaction to overwhelming events. (Herman, 1992).

3. Five Stages of Grief

The Five Stages of Grief are outlined as the emotional process individuals experience when coping with loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These stages are not linear but serve as a framework to understand the complexities of grief. (Kübler-Ross, 1969).

4. Mise-en-scène

The term mise-en-scène is the contents of the frame and the way that they are organized, which includes lighting, costume, décor, properties, and the actor themselves (Gibbs, 2002).

5. Minimalism

Minimalism in film is described as a storytelling technique where unnecessary details such as complex plot and heavy dialogue are reduced. This allows the audience to focus on core elements, such as character emotion, symbolism, and atmosphere (Bordwell, 1985)

6. Social Theory

Social Theory is a systematic study of the social world, examining the patterns and structures that govern human behavior and the ways individuals and groups interact within society (Giddens, 1984).

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Literary Theory

In this chapter, I introduce several valuable theories that help readers gain a deeper understanding of film elements, providing a foundation for more in-depth analysis. Literary theories that were used include Characterization, Minimalism theory, and Mise-en-scène will be discussed in this chapter.

2.1.1 Characterization

Characterization is the process through which writers introduce and develop characters in a story, revealing details about their personalities, motivations, and characteristics. Characterization is an essential component of narrative and literary analysis because it enables readers to comprehend the core of a character (Abrams, 1999). Characterization is essential to storytelling because it draws readers in by developing likable or interesting characters who can move the plot along, enhance thematic elements, and provoke deep emotions. It presents a contrast between "round" and "flat" characters, pointing out that round characters are diverse and complicated, reflecting the depth of psychology and actual human behavior, while flat characters are simple and static. (Forster, 1927). Through characterization, authors can explore social,

moral, or existential themes that resonate personally with readers (Culler, 2011).

Since well-developed characters may provoke overwhelming emotions, advance the plot, and enhance thematic dimensions, characterization is essential to reader engagement. Empirical research demonstrates how crucial characterization is; research by Oatley and Djikic (2008) states that exposure to well-developed fictional characters may further influence readers' perception of society and empathy, improving their comprehension of a diversity of everyday life viewpoints. Characterization also has a thematic purpose, enabling writers to use a character's internal and external conflicts to examine societal, moral, or existential issues. In genres like realism, where character complexity frequently becomes the main narrative focus, this thematic depth is particularly noticeable, enabling an analysis of social issues and human nature (Eagleton, 1996). The process of characterization typically includes both direct and indirect methods. Both of them collaborate to build an impression of character for the readers.

1) Direct Characterization

Direct characterization, also known as explicit characterization, involves straightforward descriptions of a character's traits, either through the narrator's voice or other characters' perspectives. This technique provides readers with immediate and clear information about a character, reducing the ambiguity in interpreting personality, appearance, or motivations

(Murfin & Ray, 2009). Direct characterization is often used for minor characters who may not play a central role in the story but need to be identifiable and memorable. By providing straightforward character descriptions, authors can quickly set these figures within the narrative, adding context and supporting the story's progression without demanding extensive interpretation from readers (Baldick, 2008).

2) Indirect Characterization

Indirect characterization, by contrast, reveals character traits more subtly, showing aspects of a character's personality through their actions, dialogue, thoughts, and interactions with others. This method requires readers to infer traits based on what the character does or says, often yielding a more immersive and interpretative reading experience. Herman (2009) explains that indirect characterization embodies the "show, don't tell" approach, which allows characters to unfold gradually, engaging readers in actively constructing the character's identity.

2.1.2 Minimalism Theory

Minimalism theory in film emphasizes a storytelling approach that reduces visuals, sound, and narrative structure to their most essential elements, engaging the audience through focus on core aspects such as characters and themes. By minimizing irrelevant details, minimalist films create a space where subtle emotional cues and narrative simplicity enhance viewer engagement. This approach resonates with the philosophy of simplicity found in other

minimalist art forms, where the reduction to essentials allows deeper contemplation and emotional impact (Chatman, 1990; Smith, 2009). Minimalist films typically use minimal narratives, limited characters, and subtle plot developments, often depicting everyday life and focusing on seemingly trivial or routine events. This style tends to avoid dramatic action or elaborate special effects, instead capturing ordinary moments to reveal deeper truths about the human experience. By stripping down the visual and narrative aspects, minimalist films create an intimate, introspective atmosphere that encourages viewers to engage with the film on a personal level (Bordwell, 1985).

Minimalist films are known for their restrained visual and audio elements. They often use static shots, long takes, and limited color palettes to emphasize simplicity, directing the viewer's attention to key details like body language and subtle facial expressions. The sound is similarly minimal, with natural ambient noise preferred over-elaborate soundtracks. This use of sound and silence intensifies the emotional experience and leaves room for contemplation, aligning with the minimalist goal of avoiding distractions to focus on the narrative's core (Bresson, 1986; Bordwell & Thompson, 2003; Schrader, 1972).

2.1.3 Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène, a French term meaning “placing on stage,” encompasses all visual elements within a frame that contribute to a film's storytelling and

emotional impact. Initially a theatrical concept, *Mise-en-scène* was later applied to film to describe the purposeful arrangement of components like set design, lighting, actor positioning, costumes, props, sound, and music. Each element collaborates to guide the viewer's focus and influence emotional responses, adding depth to the narrative. According to Thompson and Bowen, *Mise-en-scène* engages viewers by using spatial and visual cues that subtly convey character motivations and thematic undercurrents (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). Additionally, Boggs and Petrie suggest that the visual cohesion created by *Mise-en-scène* enables filmmakers to communicate complex ideas and moods in ways that dialogue alone cannot, solidifying it as a fundamental aspect of cinematic language (Boggs & Petrie, 2012). Each of these elements works together to direct viewers' attention and evoke specific emotional responses, making *Mise-en-scène* a cohesive, impactful aspect of cinematic storytelling. This visual framework is essential for establishing the film's physical and temporal environment, and as film theorist David Bordwell explains, it guides viewers' interpretations of characters, story, and thematic resonance through subtle visual cues and carefully crafted settings. For example, lighting, a significant element within *Mise-en-scène*, can deeply influence how audiences perceive the mood of a scene; high-key lighting, bright with minimal shadow, is commonly used to create a sense of openness or optimism, frequently found in genres like romance and comedy. In contrast, low-key lighting, with deep shadows and stark contrasts, generates suspense and tension, making it a staple

in thriller and noir genres (Taylor & Bordwell, 2020). There are several elements that Mise-en-scène has and will be explained below.

1) Set Design and Background

The design and spatial arrangement of a film's set create a narrative foundation, providing context and emotional cues. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson emphasize that set design transcends mere backdrop; it actively contributes to storytelling by symbolizing character traits or reflecting psychological states (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017). In addition, Timothy Corrigan explains that well-designed sets can create “psychological spaces” that mirror the inner lives of characters, adding another layer to the story (Corrigan & White, 2018)

2) Lighting

Lighting influences the mood and tone of a scene, with different lighting styles shaping audience perception. High-key lighting, often bright and soft, tends to create a sense of openness or positivity, making it common in romantic or comedic films, whereas low-key lighting with stark shadows is frequently used in horror and film noir to suggest tension or mystery (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017). Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan observe that lighting can even denote time and temperature, such as using cooler tones for a sterile, cold atmosphere or warmer tones for intimacy (Barsam & Monahan, 2019).

3) Costume and Makeup

Costumes and makeup provide vital visual information about a character's identity, status, and evolution. Thompson and Bordwell discuss how costumes are used not only to establish a character's outward appearance but also to reinforce subtler narrative cues about personality and social dynamics (Thompson & Bordwell, 2017). Costume designer Edith Head, known for her work in classic Hollywood, has noted that color and fabric choices can shape audience perception, as in *Rear Window* (1954), where Grace Kelly's wardrobe reflects her character's elegance and social status (Head, 2020).

4) Actor Positioning (Blocking)

Blocking, the strategic arrangement of actors within a frame, is a powerful tool that conveys relational dynamics and emotional undercurrents. As Barsam and Monahan (2019) explain, spatial arrangements can subtly indicate power dynamics or intimacy between characters, shaping the audience's understanding of the relationships onscreen. For example, a character positioned upstage often signifies dominance or authority, while a character positioned downstage may appear more vulnerable or submissive. By carefully considering the placement of actors within the frame, filmmakers can create visually compelling and emotionally resonant scenes.

5) Props

Props are more than just objects placed on a set; they are integral components of the cinematic language, often carrying symbolic weight and contributing to the overall narrative and thematic richness of a film. As Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White (2018) highlight, recurring props can serve as narrative anchors, providing visual cues and thematic resonance. For instance, Indiana Jones' iconic whip and fedora hat are not merely accessories but symbolic representations of his adventurous spirit, rugged individualism, and unwavering determination. These props become visual motifs that reinforce the film's themes of exploration, danger, and the triumph of the heroic individual (Corrigan & White, 2018).

6) Sound and Music

Sound design and music are integral components of the cinematic experience, working in tandem with visual elements to create a comprehensive and immersive narrative. Sound designers employ a range of techniques, such as Foley effects and ambient soundscapes, to construct realistic auditory environments that complement the visual imagery. Simultaneously, composers craft original scores or select existing music to evoke specific emotions, underscore dramatic moments, and reinforce narrative themes. This synergistic interplay between sound and image elevates the storytelling process and enhances the overall impact of the film (Chion, 1999).

2.2 Critical Theory

Critical theories offer a diverse range of lenses through which to examine literary works. For this study, I employed the Post-Trauma Response Theory, the Five Stages of Grief Theory, and Social Theory to gain a deeper understanding of the character's behavior and the societal impact of the film.

2.2.1 Post-Trauma Response Theory

Post-trauma response theory encompasses a range of psychological frameworks that explain how individuals process and react to traumatic events. This theory integrates multiple perspectives, including cognitive, emotional, and social factors, to provide a comprehensive understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and related phenomena. At its core, post-trauma response theory seeks to elucidate the intricate ways in which trauma affects individuals, influencing their emotional states, cognitive processes, and social interactions. Research indicates that perceptions of social support both before and after a traumatic event are crucial in determining vulnerability to PTSD, highlighting the importance of social phenomena in recovery processes (Brewin & Holmes, 2003).

One foundational component of post-trauma response theory is emotional processing. Emotional processing theory posits that trauma responses are largely influenced by how individuals process their emotions surrounding the traumatic event. According to Foa, Steketee, and Rothbaum (1989), post-traumatic symptoms arise from pervasive fear structures that

develop following trauma. Effective emotional processing involves integrating traumatic memories into existing cognitive frameworks. When this integration fails, often due to avoidance behaviors, individuals may experience intrusive memories and heightened anxiety. Horowitz (1986) further elaborates on this by proposing a model of stress response characterized by alternating phases of intrusion and denial. Intrusions manifest as unproductive rumination about the trauma, while denial involves emotional numbing and withdrawal. This oscillation continues until individuals can reconcile their traumatic experiences with their pre-existing beliefs and schemas.

Cognitive theories of PTSD further illuminate how beliefs and schemas shape responses to trauma. Janoff-Bulman (1989) introduced the shattered assumptions theory, which posits that trauma disrupts fundamental beliefs about the world being meaningful and benevolent and about the self being worthy. When these assumptions are challenged by traumatic experiences, individuals may feel vulnerable and helpless. Schema theorists argue that when traumatic events occur, they may not fit into existing schemas, leading to significant distress. The inability to integrate these experiences can result in persistent PTSD symptoms. Resick and Schnicke (1992) describe overaccommodation as a radical change in belief structures following trauma; for instance, a person who has been betrayed may generalize their negative experiences to conclude that no one can be trusted. This cognitive distortion can hinder recovery and exacerbate PTSD symptoms.

2.2.2 Five Stages of Grief Theory

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's model of the five stages of grief is a groundbreaking framework introduced in her 1969 book (Kübler-Ross, 1969), *On Death and Dying*. Kübler-Ross developed these stages to describe the emotions faced by terminally ill patients, and they were later applied broadly to any experience of loss. The stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, reflecting common emotional responses rather than a strictly linear process. Kübler-Ross acknowledged that individuals may experience these stages in different orders or revisit certain stages multiple times (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Here's an overview of each stage based solely on her original model.

1) Denial

Denial serves as an initial protective response to the shock of loss.

In this stage, individuals may struggle to accept the reality of their situation, thinking, "This can't be happening." Denial helps shield them from the immediate intensity of grief, giving them time to process the loss gradually. Kübler-Ross described denial as an unconscious defense mechanism that allows individuals to begin the grieving process in smaller, more manageable doses.

2) Anger

As denial fades, individuals often experience anger. Kübler-Ross noted that this anger can be directed toward others, oneself, or even

the person who has passed. People might ask, “Why is this happening to me?” or “Who is to blame?” This stage allows people to express their pain outwardly, helping to prevent internalizing their suffering. According to Kübler-Ross, anger is a natural step that provides an outlet, releasing some of the intense emotional energy associated with grief.

3) Bargaining

In the bargaining stage, individuals attempt to regain control by negotiating, often with a higher power or fate, in hopes of altering their reality. They may make promises or think about “what if” and “if only” scenarios, reflecting a desire to avoid the full impact of loss. Kübler-Ross observed that bargaining frequently involves feelings of guilt, as individuals reflect on what they could have done differently. This stage is part of a search for understanding and a way to cope with the helplessness that loss brings.

4) Depression

Depression marks a period of deep sadness as individuals start to confront the reality and permanence of their loss. According to Kübler-Ross, depression in grief is not necessarily a sign of clinical mental illness but rather a natural response to the profound emptiness that loss creates. This stage can involve withdrawal, numbness, or a sense of hopelessness. Kübler-Ross emphasized that

depression is a crucial stage, as it allows individuals to confront and work through their pain before they can reach acceptance.

5) Acceptance

The final stage, acceptance, occurs when individuals come to terms with their loss. This stage does not mean they are “okay” with what happened, but rather that they have accepted the reality of their situation and are ready to move forward. Kübler-Ross described acceptance as a stage of emotional adjustment and peace. In this stage, individuals begin to re-engage with life, although they still carry the memory of their loss with them. Acceptance is about adapting to a world in which the person or thing they lost is no longer present.

The model has been helpful in providing a basic framework for understanding grief, helping both professionals and the general public make sense of the emotional pain that accompanies loss. However, it has also faced significant criticism over the years, particularly regarding its application beyond the terminally ill. Research has shown that grief is often more fluid and individualized, and many people do not experience grief in a strict progression through these stages. Studies, including those conducted by Bonanno (2009), reveal that resilience and diverse reactions to grief are common, challenging the prescriptive nature of the five-stage model.

In recent years, researchers have advocated for a more flexible understanding of grief, recognizing that individuals' responses are highly individualized and may involve revisiting emotions in a non-linear fashion. A biopsychosocial approach, for instance, considers not only psychological but also social and biological influences on grief, suggesting that factors such as cultural background, support systems, and even neurological changes all shape the grieving process in unique ways (Peña-Vargas et al., 2021). Despite critiques, Kübler-Ross's five stages remain a foundational concept in the study of grief, valued for opening discussions on a previously underexplored area, even as modern grief studies continue to build on and refine her theory.

2.2.3 Social Theory

Social theory delves into the multi-layered complexity of power, justice, and societal structures, offering a critical lens to examine the world around us. From the ancient philosophies of Plato and Aristotle to contemporary insights, this field embraces diverse thinkers and ideas. Power, a central theme, manifests in various forms, ranging from forcing others to subtle manipulation, influencing individual behavior, and shaping societal norms (Foucault, 1917). Justice, another crucial concept, sparks ongoing debates about the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, with different theories prioritizing individual rights, collective well-being, or a balance between the two (Rawls, 1971). Beyond these core themes, social theory explores a multitude of other topics, including democracy, equality, and liberty. These concepts intertwine,

forming a complex web of interconnected ideas that have been the subject of centuries-long discourse. By engaging with these diverse perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the social landscape, fostering informed citizenship and a commitment to creating a more just and equitable world.

In film analysis, social theory focuses on how movies reflect, shape, and critique societal structures and norms. By using social theories as analytical tools, film scholars and critics examine how cinematic narratives, characters, and settings reflect real-world power dynamics and social issues. For example, class-based theory investigates class struggles depicted in film, exploring how films can expose class divisions, economic power disparities, and social hierarchies (Giddens, 2020). This approach highlights how film can either challenge or reinforce ideologies by focusing on the plight of the working class or emphasizing wealth and power as aspirational values. Similarly, gender theory examines gender representation, analyzing how films portray women, femininity, and masculinity, and questioning whether such portrayals reinforce or subvert traditional norms. By evaluating how films represent women's agency, autonomy, and roles in society, gender theory encourages viewers to think critically about how gender and power are intertwined on screen (Butler, 2011).

2.3 Earlier Studies

To address the issues stated in the first chapter, I reviewed numerous sources, including journal articles and thesis reports, and discovered that no research has ever been done to analyze the short film *If Anything Happens I Love You*. As a result, I will reference some of the research listed below to address the issues that I have stated. The author selected these studies as they explored themes related to the author's research and will assist in gaining a more profound insight for the analysis. These studies explore how grief and healing are depicted in animated films.

The first study I reviewed is entitled "A Social Dimension of the Activities of Selected Contemporary Animated Film Characters" written by Joanna Mytnik-Daniluk (2020). In this study, as outlined in the abstract, the author delves into how characters in animated films embody a wide range of attitudes, perspectives, and social issues, often serving as symbolic figures that reflect and reinforce socially accepted traits. These characters are typically portrayed in situations where they undertake significant missions or challenges, not only for personal growth but also for the benefit of the broader community, emphasizing values like courage, resilience, and selflessness. Central to this portrayal are the heroes, who play a pivotal role in engaging viewers' attention and emotions, drawing them into the story and making the narrative elements feel personally relevant and impactful. This complex interplay of values, norms, and principles in animated films positions them as a powerful medium for educating and even offering therapeutic value. When carefully analyzed, these stories reveal layers of meaning that extend beyond mere entertainment, serving as tools to help viewers,

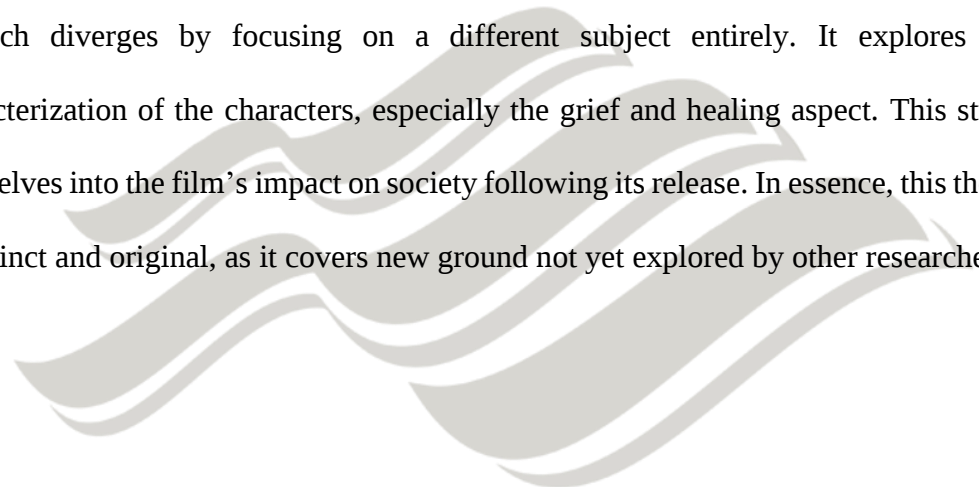
particularly younger audiences, to navigate complex social issues and internalize positive values. By examining the social dimensions that these characters embody, the author aims to highlight the significance of themes often dismissed as trivial or solely “childish.” Themes such as acceptance, justice, cooperation, and empathy are often woven into animated films in a way that makes them accessible and memorable, encouraging viewers to consider these values in their own lives.

The second study was authored by Mia Korhonen with the title “Representing Death and Grief in *A Monster Calls* and *The Honest Truth*”. This study was published in 2023. This study aims to explore how children’s literature portrays themes of death and grief and to investigate whether emotional responses are intentionally used in these representations to align with and reinforce prevailing cultural norms and ideals in contemporary Western society. Death stands out as one of the few genuinely universal experiences, yet it remains enigmatic and difficult to fully comprehend fully. While it is a reality that touches all living beings, our encounters with it are typically indirect, experienced through the loss of others rather than through any direct understanding of our own mortality. Unlike other life events that can be shared and communicated, the personal experience of death itself remains uniquely inaccessible; no one can truly convey their own death to others. As a result, much of what we know and feel about death comes through cultural interpretations, stories, and shared beliefs, all of which play a particularly influential role in how children begin to understand this inevitable part of life. This thesis seeks to uncover how these complex themes are made accessible

to young readers and to understand whether these portrayals are shaped to support societal values surrounding death and grief.

The last study was written by Blain Brown “Cinematography: Theory and Practice” published in (2016). The study is a comprehensive guide to cinematography, covering both technical and artistic aspects of image-making for filmmakers. It emphasizes that cinematography is more than photography—it involves creating visual worlds that enhance storytelling by using tools like lighting, color, and composition. The study begins by discussing how digital technology has transformed the industry, creating new opportunities while preserving the importance of traditional skills like understanding optics and lighting. Cinematographers and directors collaborate to craft visual narratives, blending technical precision with artistic vision to evoke emotions and convey meaning. This study outlines the fundamental elements of visual storytelling, such as the frame, light, lens, movement, and texture, which are the building blocks of the “visual language” of film. These elements allow filmmakers to manipulate perception, create depth, and guide the audience’s understanding of characters and themes. The study explores the psychological and symbolic impact of visual elements like lighting, color, and camera movement, while also addressing practical aspects such as continuity, equipment, and digital tools. It explains techniques for creating texture, managing exposure, and using lenses to enhance storytelling. By blending technical mastery with creative intuition, cinematographers play a crucial role in crafting collaborative and dynamic cinematic experiences.

The three previous studies make it clear that this thesis explores a different focus. While the first one researched an article titled “A Social Dimension of the Activities of Selected Contemporary Animated Film Characters”, the second one analyzed the film entitled “Representing Death and Grief in A Monster Calls and The Honest Truth”, and the last one examines “Cinematography: Theory and Practice” this research diverges by focusing on a different subject entirely. It explores the characterization of the characters, especially the grief and healing aspect. This study also delves into the film’s impact on society following its release. In essence, this thesis is distinct and original, as it covers new ground not yet explored by other researchers.



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CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Studied Material

The material analyzed in this research is the short film *If Anything Happens I Love You*, written and directed by Will McCormick and Michael Govier. Released on Netflix on November 20, 2020, this animated melodrama has a runtime of 12 minutes. According to IMDb (2020), the film received a rating of 7.8/10 and won an Oscar for Best Animated Short Film on April 25, 2021. The official film poster is shown below.



Figure 1. *If Anything Happens I Love You's* Official Poster

If Anything Happens I Love You is a deeply moving animated short film that takes viewers on an emotional journey through the lives of two grieving parents dealing with the aftermath of their daughter's tragic death in a school shooting. The film utilizes a strikingly minimalist, hand-drawn animation style in black-and-white, which emphasizes the intensity and rawness of the parents' pain and isolation. Without relying

on spoken dialogue, the story conveys its narrative through visual cues and symbols, allowing the emotions of the parents to unfold in a universal language of loss and grief. Shadowy figures accompany the parents, representing their memories, unspoken thoughts, and lingering regrets. These shadows serve as haunting reminders of their daughter and reveal the depths of their sorrow, regret, and longing. Through flashbacks and moving visual storytelling, the film paints a vivid picture of the family's once-joyful life before the tragedy, illustrating the love and happiness they shared with their daughter.

3.2 Study Design

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method on finding the answers to the issues in this study. In the words of Creswell (2018), a qualitative research approach is a type of research designed to explore and gain a deep understanding of complex social problems or issues. This approach is particularly useful for examining phenomena within their natural contexts, allowing researchers to gather rich, descriptive data that reflect participants' perspectives, experiences, and social realities. Rather than focusing on measurable outcomes, qualitative research emphasizes understanding the deeper reasons, motivations, and meanings behind people's behaviors and interactions. Creswell explains that this approach allows researchers to engage with social issues in ways that reveal the nuances of human experience, which might be missed in quantitative studies.

I use a qualitative descriptive research design to gather data that can be collected by analyzing the visuals, viewers' reviews, the book version that serves as my secondary data, and sounds or music. I will be limiting the scope of this study to only concentrating on specific aspects, such as grief and healing, characterization, and societal impact, which will address the main focus of the research, especially the psychological effect on the parents after their daughter's death, and the societal impact of this film. I will analyze the film to identify aspects that can be supported through the application of literary and critical theory.

3.3 Data Gathering

In this thesis, I gathered data by closely analyzing specific details within the film, focusing particularly on the storytelling, visuals, societal impact, and mise-en-scène. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the material and collect detailed data, I watched and rewatched the film. During these viewings, I took notes on significant scenes, sounds, or music that related directly to the research questions on the parents' portrayal of grief and healing. In order to further comprehend the story, I then used the book version of the film, in which Rose herself narrated the tale. I examined the book's texts and scenes from the film to determine whether my interpretations aligned with the movie's intended goal. Following that, I used Google to enhance the data collection process by searching for reviews on the film *If Anything Happens I Love You*. The reviews served as evidence to assist me in identifying the societal impact of the film after its release.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Once the data had been collected, I used it to analyze the issues in this study. The analysis began by rewatching the film, examining and identifying the scenes according to the specified criteria, such as grief and healing. Each criterion was thoroughly analyzed according to my understanding and documented to understand how the film portrayed and represented value. After that, I also referred to the film's book version, in which Rose herself recounted the events, in order to comprehend the plot more thoroughly. I aimed to determine whether my interpretations aligned with the story's intended message and emotional impact by examining the plot of the book as well as significant scenes from the film. Then, I improved the data collection process by searching for reviews of the film *If Anything Happens I Love You* on Google—specifically, on the IMDb website. I examined and filtered the reviews, connecting them with their own interpretations of the film. In the next phase, I reviewed relevant journals, academic papers, and books to identify theories connected to the study. By applying these theories to the data collected from the film, I aimed to uncover potential answers to address the research questions. Finally, I summarized the results of the analysis and drew conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout this chapter, I will be discussing the three problem statements mentioned in the first chapter, which include looking into the phases of grief that parents go through after losing a child without dialogues, exploring the film's minimalist style's role in the emotional portrayal of healing, and its impact on society, particularly the audience, post-release. By using a variety of theoretical frameworks from the second chapter to thoroughly examine these problem statements, I acquire a more profound understanding of the social impacts of movies that deal with delicate subjects, and provide me with resources for reflection on loss that promote healthy coping techniques.

4.1 Showing grief without words

4.1.1 The Stages of Grief that the parents experienced

If Anything Happens I Love You follows the grieving parents' emotional journey after Rose, their daughter, passed away due to a school shooting tragedy, highlighting the psychological progression of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I will be using Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *Five Stages of Grief Theory* to analyse the psychological progression. The film uses minimalist animation and visual metaphors to subtly depict each stage, highlighting the universal nature of mourning and the emotional resonance of the parents' grief.



Figure 2. The parents are showing signs of denial (00:01:00)



Figure 3. Close-up shots of the parents are showing signs of denial (00:01:08 – 00:01:12)

As presented in figure 2, scene 00:01:00, the film opens with the parents displaying clear signs of denial. They sat at opposite ends of a long dinner table, emotionally and physically separated. Denial, in this context, is not portrayed through dramatic outbursts or dialogue, but through the absence of color, of connection, and of expression. The stillness of the scene and the vast emptiness surrounding the characters visually echo their inability or unwillingness to face the reality of their loss. The silence is deafening, reinforcing how grief, when left unspoken, can become a barrier between people who might otherwise find comfort in each other.

This sense of denial is further explored through more intimate visual cues, particularly in the close-up scenes between 00:01:08 – 00:01:12, as highlighted in Figure 3. In these shots, the camera lingers on the parents' faces and gestures, drawing attention to their small but meaningful behaviors. They avoid eye contact, keeping their bodies still, and show no signs of movement or emotional engagement. These subtle actions speak volumes; each lack of interaction a quiet refusal to acknowledge not only each other's pain but also their shared trauma. The absence of dialogue enhances this emotional paralysis. By choosing to withhold speech and instead focus on the tension, the film immerses the audience in the psychological weight of denial.

The parents' sorrow seems both intensely intimate and broadly relevant because of this simple approach. The music and sound design in this scene quietly increase the parents' grief. The silence at the dinner table, broken only by the faint sound of utensils, reflects how emotionally distant they've become. Instead of dramatic scoring, the film uses soft piano melodies and ambient tones in a minor key, which naturally gives

sadness and vulnerability. In order to increase the emotional tension, the camera moves slowly and deliberately, frequently focusing on motionless moments such as two parents sitting silently or passing one another without saying anything. These visual decisions reflect the denial experience, in which reality becomes hard to comprehend and time seems to stand still.



Figure 4. The parents are showing signs of denial in the book (page 9)

In figure 4, page 9, shows how gently but powerfully it captures the emotional paralysis that parents often experience in the denial stage of grief. In the book, Rose narrates the narrative from her perspective. The statement "The day I died, seems like

Mom and Dad died, too” shows how the parents have emotionally shut down in the aftermath of their loss. Their inability to communicate or even look at one another reflects the deep shock they are still processing. A powerful image is conveyed when Rose compares them to zombies. This emotional reality is more than just a metaphor because they go through the motions of everyday life without truly living, so while they are alive, they are hollow. “I wish they would talk to one another,” Rose’s soft request is a subtle plea for reconciliation and the start of healing.

This emotional distance is emphasized in the scene’s visuals. The room is cold and lifeless because of the grayscale tone, which reflects the world that the parents live in without their daughter. The emotional distance between them is represented by their heavy shoulders and lowered heads as they sit far apart at the table. Hovering above them are dark, shadowy versions of themselves, and these figures are not just haunting visuals; they reflect the pain and denial they are holding inside, all the things they cannot say out loud. In the middle of the table sits a single flower vase, simple, quiet, and full of meaning. It stands as a small but powerful symbol of the life they lost and the memories that still linger between them, even in their silence.



Figure 5. The parents' inner shadows show signs of anger (00:01:13 – 00:01:17)

As the story unfolds, shown in figure 5, scene 00:01:13 – 00:01:17, the film uses shadows to give life to the parents' hidden anger, acting almost like animated extensions of their emotions. These shadows move on their own, lashing out, breaking down, showing the pain and frustration the parents cannot bring themselves to express out loud. Through these movements, we see the commotion they are feeling inside, where anger bursts forth not through words or actions but through these haunting and uncontrollable figures. Instead of having the parents shout or argue, the film lets their shadows do the emotional heavy lifting and reacting in ways that show just how much they are struggling beneath the surface. It is a powerful way to show what suppressed grief can look like. The shadows reveal how people often carry this storm of emotion inside, too raw and too painful to express openly, especially when the grief feels too heavy to bear.



Figure 6. Close-up shots of the parents' inner shadows show signs of anger (00:01:18 – 00:01:26)

As portrayed in figure 6, scene 00:01:18 – 00:01:26, the mother's expression says everything. She is trying to do something as normal as eating, but even that seems impossible. Her head is down, her body hunched. It is like she is folding in on herself. The fork in her hand trembles slightly, not from fear, but from everything she is holding back. The shadows are not passive; they are active, looming, even aggressive, and they physically reach toward the other parent. This visual metaphor suggests how unresolved pain and anger often spill over, whether we intend it or not. The mother's shadow leans menacingly toward the father as if blaming him, perhaps for something

he did or didn't do. The father's moment mirrors hers. He is equally weighed down, eyes low, holding his fork, but not eating. His shadow points away from him, stretched and distorted, almost lashing out toward her. This might reflect his pain turning outward, or maybe how grief can drive a wedge between two people who once leaned on each other. When people grieve together but suffer silently, it's common for emotions like anger and guilt to become misdirected. The shadows hovering over each other show how each parent's pain is no longer theirs alone; it now interferes with the other's ability to grieve, to heal, or even to breathe. It's a painful reminder that, in shared trauma, people sometimes push each other away even when they want nothing more than to connect.

The music in this part of the film is subtle but incredibly powerful. It isn't full of big orchestral moments or loud themes. Instead, it is quiet and almost still. The silence and the gentle piano playing in the background become a kind of presence in themselves. It makes the viewers lean in and feel the weight of what they are not saying. It mirrors the emotional pressure they are under, like something about to break, but holding together out of sheer will. The music speaks to the ache, the tension, and the loneliness that has taken root between them. Visually, the way these scenes are framed makes everything feel even more raw. The space around them is blank and empty, almost like the world has faded out. There are no distractions, no background details, just two people and their grief. The animation has a sketch-like quality, as if it were drawn by hand in a moment of sadness. That roughness makes the scene feel personal and intimate.

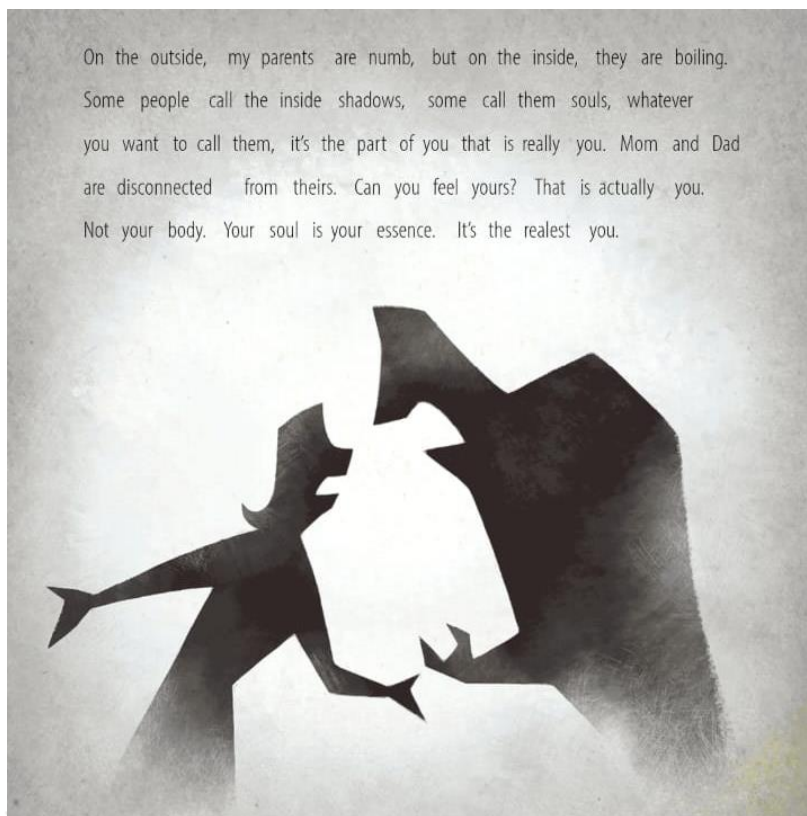


Figure 7. The parents' inner shadows show signs of anger in the book (page 10)

Two enormous, black shadow figures that symbolize the grieving parents' inner selves or souls can be seen in figure 7, page 10. These shadows are portrayed in aggressive, irritated, and harmful postures. While the other rears back defensively and tensely, one seems to be screaming or yelling in desperation. This design captures the invisible emotional violence of grief and anger that's not aimed at each other, but exploding from a place of powerlessness, pain, and confusion. The idea that the parents' physical selves have turned into numbness is further supported by the absence of their tiny, almost undetectable bodies. The frame is dominated by the shadows and the internal conflict. At this point, the shadows reveal their true selves, expressing the intense anger and powerlessness that words cannot describe. It is not that the parents are upset with one another; rather, they are both overcome by a crippling, aimless pain that prevents them from connecting.

The background is a soft, ashen gray, like dust or fog, setting a muted, mournful tone. There is no scenery, no furniture, no home, just an undefined emotional space. This emptiness highlights the void left behind by grief. It also emphasizes how the characters are trapped within themselves and each other's pain, with no escape and nowhere to anchor their emotions. Their loss of control over their grief is a powerful visual metaphor created by the shadows that take over the composition's center. The pain they carry within them. This creative choice underlines how anger, in grief, can take over one's sense of self. It becomes the loudest part of you.

Written from Rose's point of view, the text adds depth to the image's meaning and provides a reflective layer. It starts with the observation that the parents seem numb on the outside but are boiling on the inside, a line that captures the suppressed anger that many people go through during times of grief. It uses shadows as metaphors for the inner self, the area of ourselves that experiences the most intense and agonizing feelings. According to Rose, the parents' disconnection from their inner shadows suggests that grief has caused them to drift apart from their former selves. Their sense of identity is shattered by this emotional distance, which also harms their relationship with one another. "Can you feel yours?" Rose gently reminds the reader that grief lives in our souls, our most vulnerable and authentic selves, and that's where healing must start. "That's actually you," she says. Therefore, this moment is not only about suffering but also about realizing that our inner feelings, no matter how sinister or violent they may appear, are still a part of who we are. These parents' anger stems from

the form their love took after experiencing unimaginable loss, not from cruelty or selfishness.



Figure 8. The parents' inner shadows show signs of bargaining (00:07:44 - 00:07:50)

In figure 8, scene 00:07:44–00:07:50, the parents' inner shadows begin to travel down memory lane and end up in a memory that they have always wished to alter, even slightly. The parents' subconscious attempts to reverse the irreversible loss

of their daughter, Rose, are powerfully symbolized by these inner shadows, which are more than just decorative elements. Without speech, the shadows act as the movie's most expressive medium, externalizing feelings and ideas that the characters are too distraught to express. Their agonized attempts to prevent their daughter from leaving for school and to prevent her from facing death are a reflection of the parents' deep internal conflict over the fact that she has died. This is the purest, most agonizing form of bargaining: a desperate psychological struggle with fate, as though searching the past for a secret escape route or a loophole that could, in some way, result in a different outcome. The shadows' fruitless attempts to change the past perfectly capture the bargaining state, where regret and imagined alternatives clash with logic and longing. These ideas are made visible by the inner shadows' struggle to stop her, which conjures up their irrational and desperate desire to step in and save a moment that has long since passed.

The often solitary notes of the piano create a haunting, echo-like effect in these scenes, as if each keystroke is a request to the past to produce a different outcome or a step deeper into memory. After that, the strings softly appear, covering the piano with a quivering quality reminiscent of the shakiness of emotional vulnerability. The music gently rises as the inner shadows reach out for Rose, symbolizing a wave of desperation from grief, a desire to touch, speak, and hold again. As the music fades, a sense of emotional deflation remains, comparable to the silence that follows a moment of imagined hope or a breath exhaled after being held for too long. The only sound left when the inner shadows failed to stop Rose from leaving for school was the sound of

her footsteps, which gradually subsided as she entered the building. In those moments when the mind wanders back, making unspoken deals with time and fate, it evokes the mental loop of bargaining, replaying memories as agonized negotiations with loss rather than as consolation.

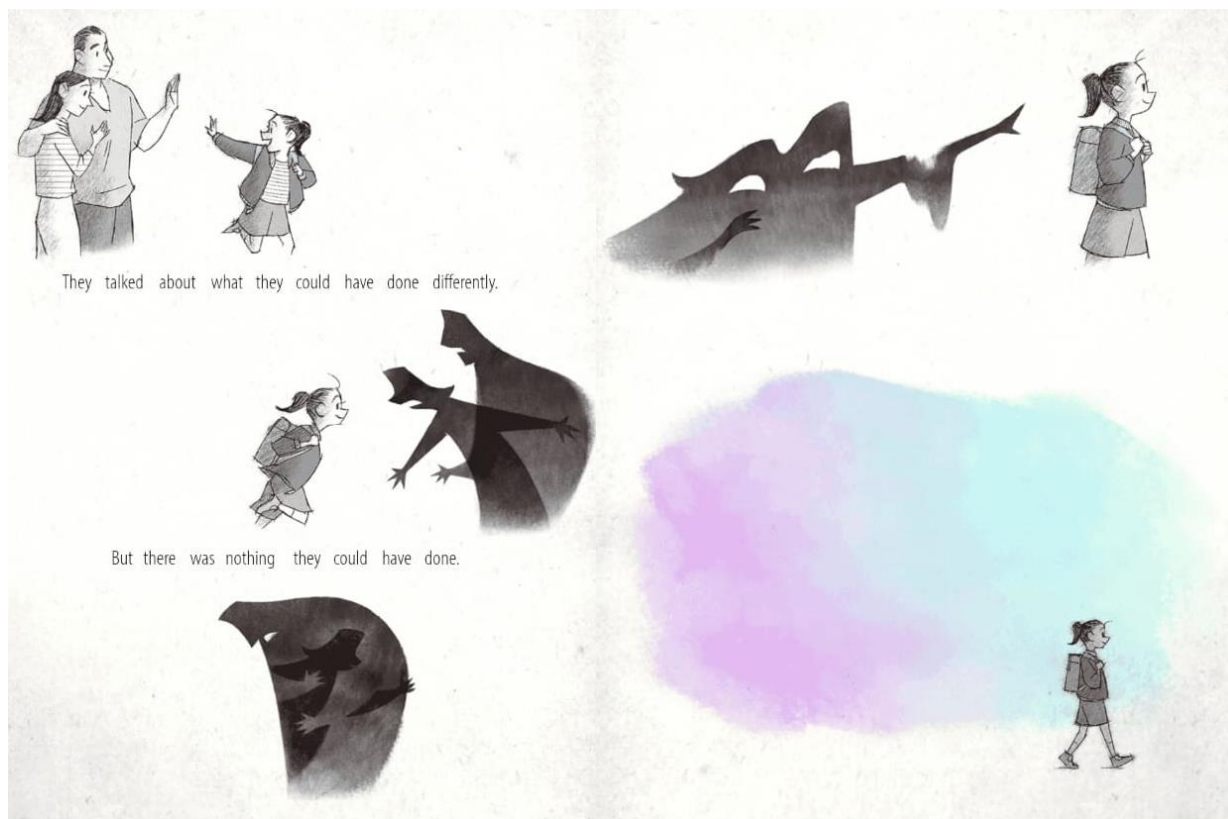


Figure 9. The parents' inner shadow shows signs of bargaining in the book (page 48-49)

From figure 9, page 48-49, visually and emotionally represents the bargaining stage in the grieving process. As described, the parents and Rose are saying their farewells to each other as she is going to school. The line, "They talked about what they could have done differently," indicates the intense internal conflict and mental reliving that frequently characterizes this stage of loss. Desperately looking for

alternate realities, what might have stopped the tragedy, what warning signs were overlooked, or what steps could have changed the course of events is what bargaining involves. The shadows that loom around Rose in the illustration introduce a powerful sense of helplessness and guilt. As she stands by herself, Rose is surrounded by the parents' inner shadows that emphasize the crushing emotional burden the parents bear.

The text's next line, "But there was nothing they could have done," is shocking. It conveys the harsh reality that bargaining eventually faces: reality cannot be altered by a lot of "what ifs." The illustrations effectively convey this message. There is a change as Rose starts to move through the parents' inner shadows. The emotional process of dealing with grief is reflected in this visual journey, which confronts it head-on rather than running away from it. Rose's resilience is demonstrated by the contrast between her smaller frame and the huge, overpowering shadows, which also conveys how helpless and vulnerable she feels. Her forward motion suggests an internal understanding that life must continue even though the past cannot be altered. Rose's posture and direction indicate emotional endurance and even growth, despite the inner shadows suggesting that pain stays.

To portray the psychological atmosphere of these scenes, color is essential. The parents' inner shadows surround the characters in the first few pages, which are captured in obvious blacks and grayscale colors that are frequently connected to depression, loss, and grief. This monochromatic color scheme emphasizes the emotional paralysis of bargaining and creates a somber mood. However, the last panel introduces gentle pastel colors, pale pink, lavender, and baby blue. In sharp contrast to

the previous darkness, these colors gradually appear behind the girl. This delicate use of color conveys healing, hope, and the beginnings of acceptance. It softens her path and implies that beauty can exist even in the face of severe loss, even though it doesn't erase the sadness. The text's subtle and minimalist style mimics the silent inner monologue of grieving minds, intensifying the emotional cycles. Overall, the aching complexity of the bargaining stage is hauntingly tenderly captured in these pages through the combination of text, illustration, and color.



Figure 10. The parents are showing signs of depression (00:02:34 - 00:03:00)

Based on figure 10, scene 00:02:34 - 00:03:00, the animation skillfully conveys the emotional burden of depression through its symbolic imagery, muted gray palette, and minimalist style. The mother is depicted standing by herself beside withering flowers in the first and second pictures. Her stooped and solemn posture reflects her inner sadness and isolation. Her loneliness is visually reinforced by the muted colors and sketch-like animation, which highlight absence rather than presence. The scene

seems to imply hope or renewal as the mother's inner shadow depicts how the withering flowers were in the second picture. Showing how the plants used to be, however, feels more like a painful echo in the context of grief, a reminder that life goes on without the lost person. The depiction of the mother's inner shadow reinforces the emotional gap and stimulates longing rather than healing, highlighting how even in the depressed stage of grief, beauty in memory can cause suffering. No conversation is present. Rather, the soundscape is dominated by deep silence, with the faint ambience of nature involving a distant hum or a slight breeze, yet noticeably absent music. The emotional gravity of the situation is increased by the lack of a score. The silence itself turns into a manifestation of grief, acting as an active presence that weighs down on her like an immense burden rather than merely being a lack of sound.

The third and fourth pictures convey the father's experience with a similar level of emotional nuance. The third picture shows him watching television with his back to the viewer and framed from a high perspective. He comes across as emotionally distant from the audience and the outside world because of this viewpoint. A sense of numbness and emptiness is produced by the dim lighting and broad space, and the television serves as a coping mechanism by occupying silence while maintaining emotional detachment. With the subtitle "[audience cheers on television]" playing in the background, the fourth image draws us in closer with an extreme close-up of the father's face with his eyes closed. The contrast between the external cheer and his internal stillness is striking. It's remarkable how his inner calm contrasts with the outward joy. The disconnect between a grieving person who feels trapped in sadness

and a world that keeps celebrating is what defines depression. This emotional clarity is further enhanced by the minimalist animation's soft lines and limited detail, which let even the smallest facial expressions convey a lot. The film effectively conveys the paralyzing stillness of depression and the way grief isolates people even in a world full of movement and noise through these visual choices.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which highlights how traumatic events interfere with linear time, memory, and emotional processing, can also be used to understand the mother's and father's experiences. Both characters exhibit detachment, stagnation, and emotional numbness in their interactions with their surroundings, which are hallmarks of traumatic grief. These depictions are consistent with PTSD, which holds that trauma is not merely remembered but is instead repeatedly and uncontrollably relived through spaces, images, and silences that cause emotional paralysis and a detachment from the present. These scenes paint a silent but devastating picture of depression when taken as a whole. The film explores the psychological areas of loss by relying on quiet, stillness, and absence rather than dramatizing grief. The subdued imagery and symbolic use of commonplace items like televisions and plants evoke an internal and isolating state of mourning. The film depicts the sensation of being emotionally paralyzed, overwhelmed by memories, and suspended in time, all of which are characteristics of the depressive stage and PTSD in the grieving process. The filmmakers establish a space where grief is not spoken but deeply felt.

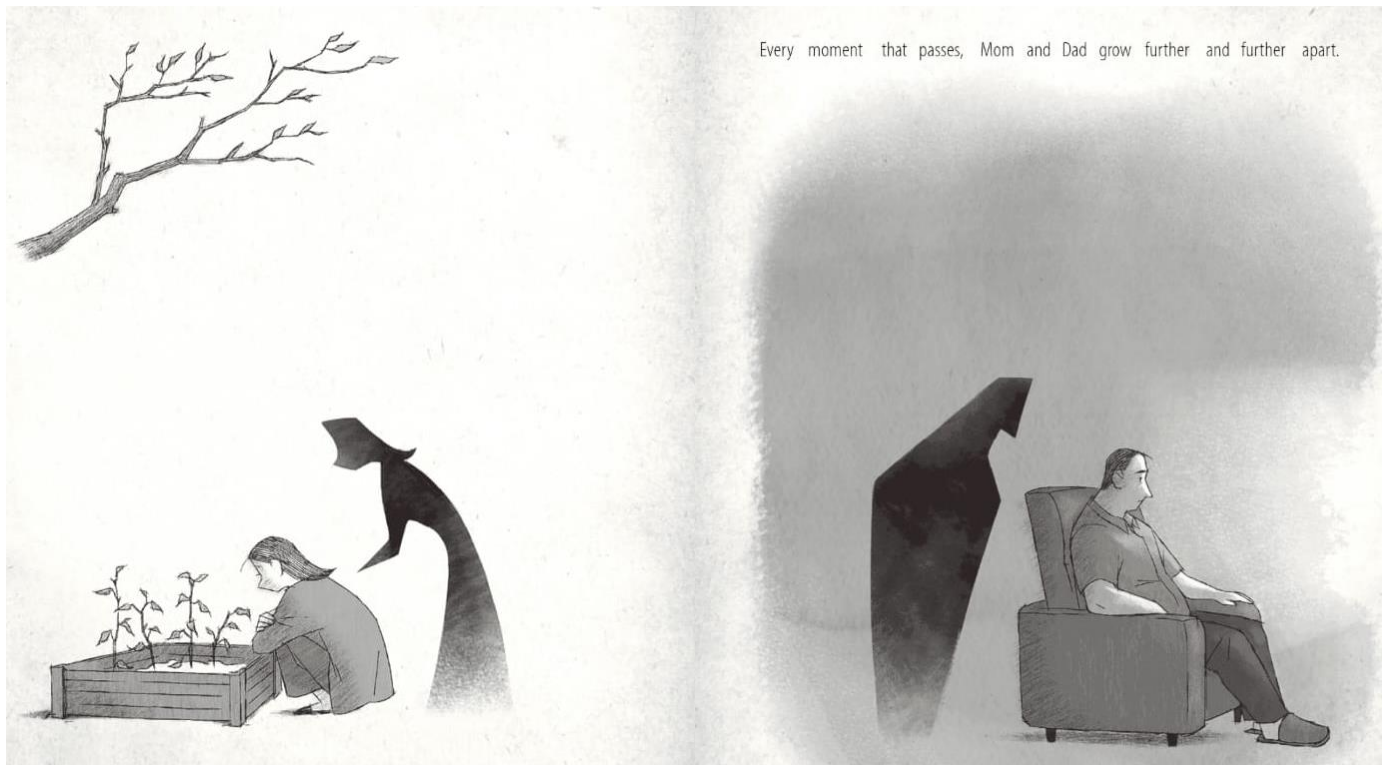


Figure 11. The parents are showing signs of depression in the book (page 12-13)

In figure 11, page 12-23, in these two powerful and haunting images, we witness the quiet, heavy unraveling of two parents deep in the throes of grief, each consumed by their own sorrow, each silently drifting away from the other. Each parent is silently drifting away from the other as their own grief consumes them. The mother is crouched close to a tiny, weak planter box in the first picture. Her entire posture conveys defeat, with her head bowed and shoulders slumped. There is no longer any strength to stand tall or cause for optimism. Because of the depth of her loss, she appears to be motionless. The inner shadow of the mother looms behind her, keeping watch over her with a solemn, silent presence. They seem more symbolic than real, as though she is trying to nurture something small and delicate in a world that now seems

empty, or to grow something out of the past. An even more heartbreaking winter scene is created by the dead, leafless branch that extends into the frame above her. There is nothing left of life, no hope of spring, only a sense of stillness and the idea that time has stopped. Everything seems bare, gray, and resonant with absence, as if it were stripped to the bone.

The father is seated by himself in a chair in a large, deserted room in the second picture. His hands are on the couch, and he is staring at the television. His expression shows no signs of life or movement. There is a lot of space all around him, but it doesn't feel free or open. It seems empty. Beside him, his inner shadow looms, as silent and unyielding as before. It doesn't have to talk. Like a burden bearing down on the soul, it simply remains. The words, "Every moment that passes, Mom and Dad grow further and further apart," appear above the picture. There is an unbearable truth in that one sentence. Instead of uniting them, their grief has strained their relationship. It's not that they do not care. It's because each person's pain is too great and too unique. While the father withdraws into himself, trapped in the silence of his own despair, the mother turns to the soil and the memory of life. Although they live in the same tragedy and under the same roof, their hearts are no longer in contact.

4.2 Minimalism can portray healing

In *If Anything Happens I Love You*, the film employs a minimalist style and symbolism that powerfully amplifies the emotional portrayal of healing from grief by stripping away excess and focusing on the raw, essential elements of visual and narrative expression.



Figure 12. Pre-acceptance stage of the parents (00:03:05-00:03:46)

As portrayed in figure 12, scene 00:03:05-00:03:46, the only sound coming from the dimly lit room was the gentle piano and strings as the mother worked quietly on the laundry. Her movements were deliberate, almost robotic, as though the routine provided a brief reprieve from the burden of her loss. However, something changed when she opened the washing machine and revealed a pile of laundry and a familiar,

the only colored item of apparel, Rose's t-shirt. She had been suppressing her emotions for a long time, but the smell, the texture, and the memories woven into the fabric broke through. She gripped the shirt to her chest with shaking hands, and the raw, overwhelming grief started to show. Her inner shadow, a soft, spectral projection of her repressed feelings, appeared in front of her in this silent agony. It didn't talk to her or impose itself on her. Rather, it approached her gradually and gave her a warm embrace, providing the comfort she had suppressed. As if Rose were holding her, the mother closed her eyes and allowed herself to sink into the ethereal embrace. At that moment, a miracle occurred. Rose's old soccer ball was sitting on top of the washing machine, unseen. It started to move, tipping on the edge, whether it was pushed by the machine's vibrations or moved by something invisible. It fell and rolled gently across the floor of the hallway with a soft thump. Almost deliberately, it moved down the hallway until it reached Rose's room and hit her vinyl record player. Though not very strong, the impact was sufficient. A vinyl started to spin. The air was filled with a well-known tune, a song that used to fill the house with happiness. Rose loved it the most. The soft, sentimental melody filled the quiet house like a returning memory.

The father sat by himself down the hall, disconnected and withdrawn, lost in a mist of grief and disinterest. He woke as soon as he heard the song's opening notes. A glimmer of awareness appeared on his face as his eyes opened. The haze of his grief was broken by the music, which was so closely connected to their daughter. It appealed to a part of him that was still alive and aching. Both parents headed toward the source of the sound without saying a word. The house felt different as they walked to Rose's

room. less empty. Not as quiet. The song acted as a bridge between them and their daughter, between their love and their grief, and between the past and the present. For a split second, it seemed as though Rose was back with them.

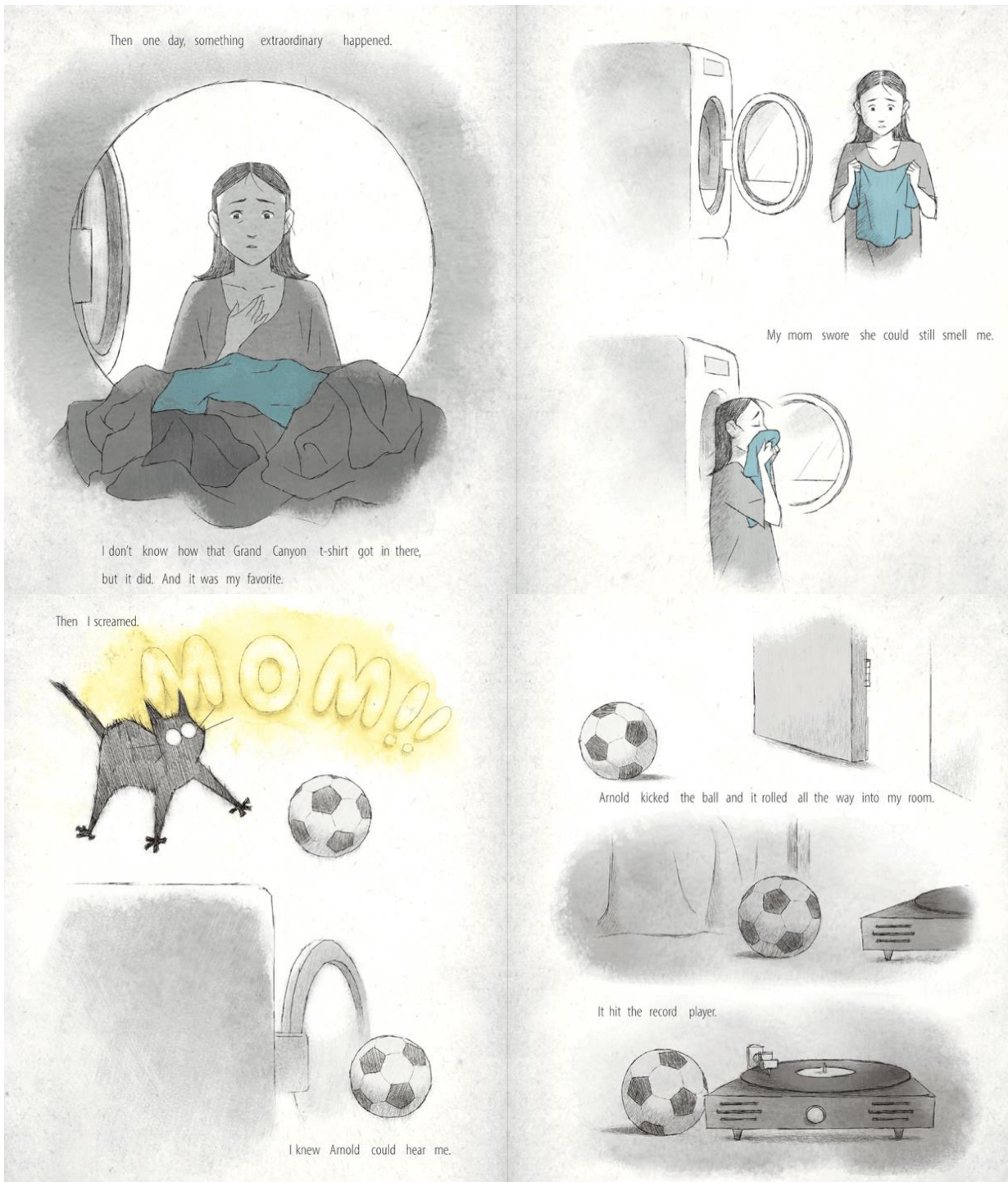




Figure 13. Pre-acceptance stage of the parents in the book (page 22-27)

As shown in figure 13, page 22-27, A silent moment of deep emotional resonance occurs. The mother is shown in the opening scene, her figure gently framed in a ring of clear white, inside the circular opening of a washing machine drum. Her face displays a look of mild surprise or wonder, and her hand rests lightly on her chest. One item stands out among the tangled laundry surrounding her: a turquoise Grand Canyon t-shirt, which contrasts sharply with the grayscale background. It instantly becomes the center of attention, both aesthetically and emotionally. The narration continues, “Then one day, something extraordinary happened.” For such an established moment, the sentence is subtle. Rose admits that she has no idea how her favorite shirt got into the laundry, just that it did. The mother is the focus of the emotional flow. She is seen holding the turquoise shirt in her hands while standing in front of the same open

washing machine. Her posture is hesitant, and her eyes are wide with shock. Despite its simplicity, the illustration is powerful. Her loneliness and the silence of the moment are increased by the emptiness surrounding her. She pauses as the shirt seems to have a presence about it. One sentence serves as the narration that follows: “My mom swore she could still smell me.” This silent line has a great deal of emotional impact. The mother in the following picture closes her eyes, inhales, and presses the shirt against her face. She is able to connect with her daughter in a way that words or thoughts cannot by using scent, a very personal and evocative sense. The turquoise shirt, the only color in a grayscale world, glows subtly in her arms, indicating the profound significance it contains. The use of color is still striking. The moment distinguishes between a deceased person's spiritual legacy and their physical remains. The mother is taken, if only momentarily, into a place where Rose feels close and real again through this single piece of clothing.

The word “MOM!!” is surrounded by a yellow burst, which is the only accent to the subdued grayscale palette. The spotlight serves as an emotional focal point in the visual narrative in addition to emphasizing the scream’s volume and urgency. Arnold, the black cat, is then shown jumping into the air with wide eyes in shock, obviously responding to a loud and unexpected sound. A soccer ball appears to have been kicked by Arnold into the room because it is in midair. The text beneath the cat says, “Then I screamed.” MOM!!” and then, “I knew Arnold could hear me.” The exaggerated size and brightness of the word “MOM!!” in childlike font reinforce the emotional panic of the narrator, Rose. Three horizontal scenes, each depicting a soccer ball’s travel

through the narrator's room. The ball breaking the line between two separate worlds in the first scene represents the point at which the narrator's private world is invaded by an outside force. The ball is seen moving past the bed in the second scene, implying that the secure, enclosed areas that kids frequently identify as comfortable are being disrupted. The ball hitting a record player in the third scene suggests memory, rhythm, and stillness. A symbolic detail that may represent order or sentimental value is the record player, which implies that the impact of the soccer ball has impacted not only the real world but also something that holds emotional significance for the narrator.

The scene undergoes a dramatic change as the song that Rose used to play repeatedly starts to play again. A change from numb grief to emotional reawakening is indicated by the mother's softening expression as she holds Rose's Grand Canyon t-shirt. The father, who had been emotionally detached and withdrawn, is now completely present and moved by the music's return. The soft, curling music notes that make up the soft cloud of blue and green that floats across the frame represent connection and memory. In opposition to the reduced tones of previous scenes, the colors, especially the calming teal and blue tone, create a sense of emotional life coming back. The music, which acts as Rose's parting gift, an impactful echo of love that goes beyond her physical absence, keeps them connected even though the scenes of each parent are set apart. The textual line, "Then the song I used to play over and over began to play again," has a subdued resonance that suggests familiarity, comfort, and the routines of a life that was once shared. At this point in the story, the unchanging, paralyzing grief starts to give way to something more fluid and social.



Figure 14. Acceptance stage of the parents (00:03:57-00:05:22)

As shown in figure 14, scene 00:03:57-00:05:22, the mother stealthily walks into Rose's bedroom, which is still untouched and has a subdued grey color scheme that surrounds the room. The use of gentle, subdued colors, ash, silver, and dusty charcoal emphasizes the enduring sadness and emotional silence that have existed in the house ever since Rose left. clinging to Rose's Grand Canyon t-shirt, which is the only brightly colored object in the scene. The t-shirt is more than just clothing; it's a symbol of identity, intimacy, and memory. In contrast to the despairing world her parents currently live in, it represents Rose in all her brightness. The mother's whole body language conveys a desire that words cannot describe, a familiar yet constant ache, as she eventually lowers herself onto the edge of Rose's bed and runs her hand along the sheets.

The faint, scratchy melody of Rose's favorite song, King Princess's 1950, which is still playing softly from the record player, draws the father into the doorway a few moments later. He is gently guided into the area he had probably avoided for too long by the music, which serves as a spiritual bridge. At first, he is hesitant, but he is brought to his feet by the image of his wife sitting among the belongings of their daughter while holding Rose's shirt. She turns to face him, offering him connection, memory, and a shared sorrow instead of asking. He approaches and sits next to her as she holds up the t-shirt. The visual composition at this point becomes highly symbolic: the blue shirt serves as the only visual and emotional focal point, and the two of them are framed within a room of grey solitude. Then a subtle surrealism takes place—as the needle keeps spinning, Rose's spirit starts to barely perceptibly emerge from the record player.

She seems to be drawn in by the music itself, by the vibrations of something she used to adore. Arnold, their family cat, reacts immediately as her ethereal figure starts to spin and dance in the room's corner. He plays with utter delight, as if he were playing with his owner once more. The parents notice a cat playing by itself from the outside. However, their inner shadows, who are still aware to their daughter's soul, start to see her presence in the scene's deeper, symbolic language, and embraced her tightly. Grief gives way to something lighter, like the lifting of a curtain after years of darkness, during an invisible moment of recognition.

The scene's climax comes with quiet, intimate human intimacy rather than with a lot of drama. Gently, the father puts his hand on the mother's shoulder. It's a moving gesture that includes invitation, reconciliation, and reassurance. It marks the start of shared grieving, the end of isolation, and perhaps even the beginning of recovery. Their grief had been unspoken and intolerable for a long time. But now, surrounded by the bitter traces of Rose's life and comforted by the room's sole color, they start talking. They initially speak softly and hesitantly, as though they are worried that words will ruin the atmosphere. But gradually, memories of Rose's life that once made them happy start to fill the room. The room's emotional temperature changes as their conversation goes down memory lane. The greys are still there, the outward sign of loss, but they start to feel more open and less confined. The fact that the parents are seated together suggests that this is not a return to normalcy but rather the start of a new phase of grief, one in which Rose is no longer there but never absent, and in which memories bind rather than hurt.

Mom hadn't been in my room since I died.



Neither had Dad.



And then suddenly, Mom and Dad were in my room together.



And then magic happened. My spirit was in the room.

Now Arnold could see me.



My parents thought Arnold was crazy.



But their souls didn't ...



because now they could see me too.



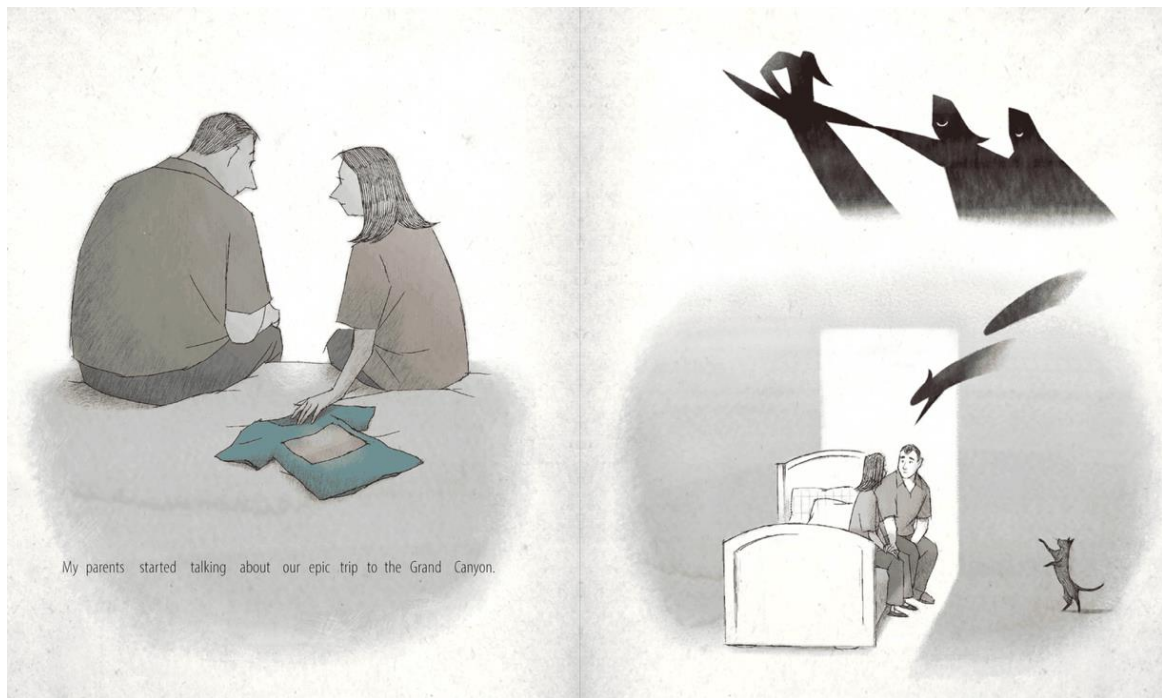


Figure 15. Acceptance stage of the parents in the book (page 28-35)

As presented in figure 15, page 28-35, a moving representation of their incapacity to accept the truth of their loss is the mother and father's emotional and physical separation from their child's room. The empty room becomes a symbol of the silence between them and the emptiness left behind, a physical and emotional expression of denial. Each parent starts to enter the room on their own as the narrative progresses, implying the gradual and unique process of facing loss. The moment they are finally in the room together is a crucial moment that their shared presence in this hallowed, memory-filled room serves as a metaphor for vulnerability and the beginning of healing. "Mom hasn't been in my room since I died," which implies that the mother is unable to face the room since it serves as an obvious reminder of her daughter's absence, which the text suggests is a painful avoidance. "Neither had Dad" is a brief, silent, and powerful line. The fact that the father has also been avoiding the room adds yet another level of sorrow. The reality that neither of them has gone into her room, as the daughter notes, emphasizes the psychological impact of their loss and how grief

can drive even the closest of people apart. It also reveals how the father's sorrow is just as deep, though perhaps less openly expressed. This line establishes a sense of quiet balance in their mourning by demonstrating that, despite the story's initial emphasis on the mother's absence from the room, the father is also impacted. It suggests that even when grieving is shared, it can still be isolating.

The mother gradually reestablished contact with the room. "And then suddenly, Mom and Dad were in my room together," the narration says. This is a crucial moment. Now, both parents are in the room, sitting apart with their backs slightly turned. They are still grieving, but they are now physically facing the room they used to avoid. Despite their somber poses, their shared presence in the room marks the beginning of emotional acceptance. Though still invisible, the daughter's spirit subtly hovers close to them. Although the subdued color scheme persists and reinforces the emotional numbness, something changes, the mere fact that they are present indicates progress toward recovery. Here, the silence is one of introspection and mutual grief rather than avoidance.

The daughter's spirit was sitting next to Arnold, the family cat, who was curled up on the bed. "Now Arnold could see me," the text reads. This insignificant moment has a significant symbolic meaning. Sensitive and natural, the cat sees the spirit before the parents do. The cat's at-ease behavior shows comfort and acknowledgment, highlighting the idea that connection doesn't vanish with death but rather takes on new forms. The spirit is now visually closer to the parents, implying that they are starting to sense her presence as they sit with their grief. The room's light gradually warms up,

indicating that the initial emotional paralysis is gradually being replaced by emotional improvement. Despite its striking simplicity, the line “My parents thought Arnold was crazy” conveys a lot about the story’s emotional atmosphere and character dynamics. The word “crazy” is also used to reflect the way that grief and belief are judged; what some people consider to be madness may be a profound form of love or hope.

The family is reunited in spirit rather than in life. “Because now they could see me too,” the daughter narrates. Complete acceptance is the climax of the emotional journey. The daughter’s spirit can be seen between the parents, no longer hidden or ignored, as they embrace one another. The background record player, which is now playing once more, represents the return of emotion, memory, and life. Although the pain still exists, it now coexists with love and connection. Healing isn’t about forgetting or moving on; it’s about making room for a loved one’s memory to endure gently, honestly, and fearlessly.

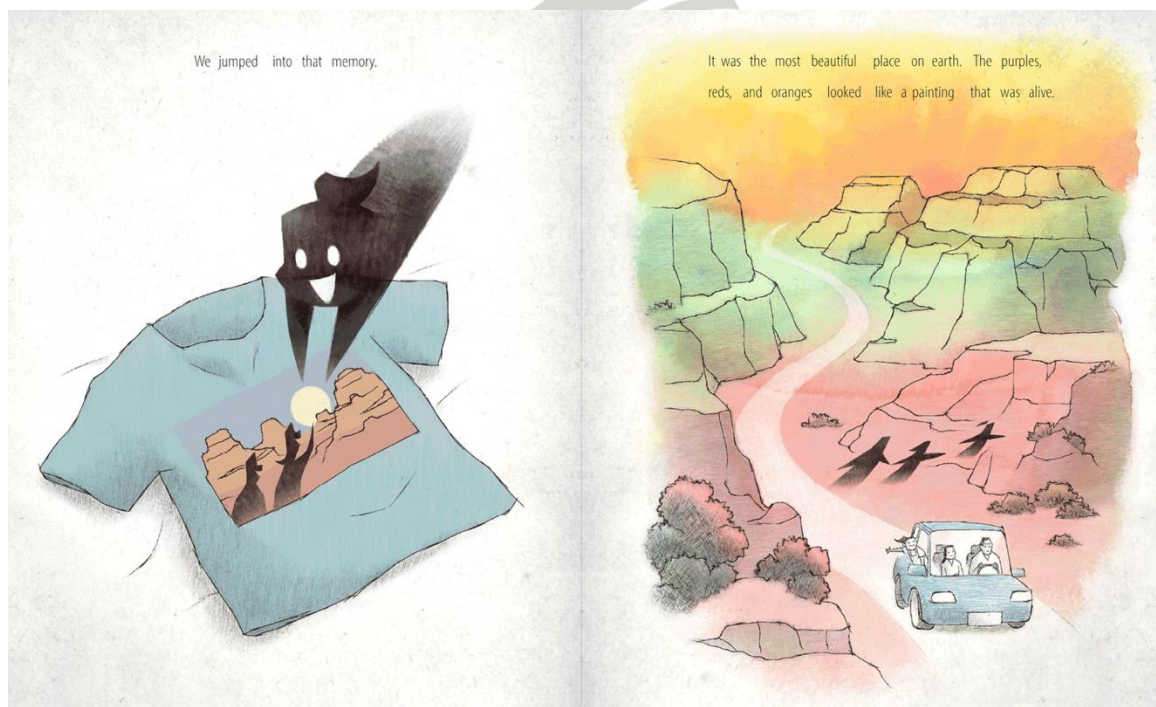




*Figure 16. The parents reminisce about the Grand Canyon
(00:05:23-00:05:57)*

In figure 16, scene 00:05:23-00:05:57, as the parents talk, an empowering transformation starts to take place. The previously dull monochromatic scene begins to gradually change, with warm colors. The memory comes up as they talk about the Grand Canyon. In addition to reminiscing about the memories and enjoying each moment, Rose's spirit and the inner shadows of the parents are present in the memories. The music from the previous scene is played in the background with ease. The music embraces the conversation, giving the impression that both the living and the dead are sharing a dream, a brief, fragile return to something that was once lovely. The power of the memory is conveyed solely through movement and expression in the absence of dialogue. A look of unspoken recognition passes between the parents. As though remembering the Grand Canyon's immensity together, their eyes soften, and they slowly turn toward an invisible horizon. The grayscale color scheme that dominates their world starts to lighten as they do this. The first indications of emotional improvement are subtle hints of gold and red that enter the surroundings. Even the lighting softens, casting a soft glow over the characters that is reminiscent of sunlight on flesh. The memory speaks for itself; words are not necessary. Once buried beneath

sorrow, the trip to the Grand Canyon memory now rises like a silent wave. It is a memory of a time when they were together, whole, happy, and alive, not just of a location. The silence turns into a language of its own as the colors softly blossom into the frame, discussing love, loss, and the tender start of healing.



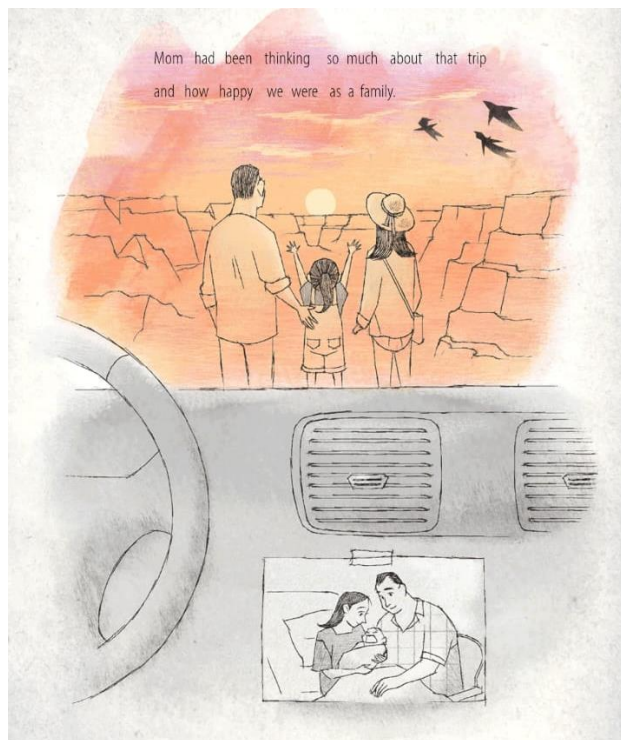


Figure 17. The parents reminisce about the Grand Canyon in the book (page 38-40)

In figure 17, page 38-40, the mother and father are seated solemnly on the bed, looking at a blue t-shirt that holds a lot of sentimental significance. The room changes as they talk about an “epic trip to the Grand Canyon,” and the shirt serves as a memory trigger. Previously looming darkly and symbolically representing grief or possibly guilt, their inner shadows start to ascend toward a memory. Perhaps sensing the emotional weight in the room, Arnold even stands on its hind legs to watch the shadows that leap from the bed and catapult forward on the following page. This scene demonstrates the beginning of emotional movement, from immobilizing grief to recall and connection.

Through the shirt, a fantastical illustration of the memory coming to life is paired with the narrative text, “We jumped into that memory.” Suddenly, a bright, animated Grand Canyon appears on the fabric, and the family's shadow can be seen

inside the printed layout. The shirt turns into a real portal to the past. At this point, the color scheme drastically changes. The narration refers to the canyon as “the most beautiful place on earth,” and the monochromatic grays and whites have been replaced by vivid oranges, pinks, and purples. These colors and stylized canyon walls, which resemble stained glass or watercolor brushstrokes, soft, ethereal, and filled with warmth, romanticize the memory itself. In addition to striking a contrast with the previous icy tones, these colors also signify life, energy, and connection, implying how treasured and radiant the memory is to the grieving parents.

The final page completes the emotional message. The mother had been “thinking so much about that trip and how happy we were as a family.” The family is depicted looking over the canyon at a colorful sunset from behind. In contrast to the parents' earlier solemn positions, the daughter, positioned between them, lifts her arms in joy. A tale of remembrance and compassion is expertly woven through the use of color, shadow, and minimalist but impactful text.



*Figure 18. The parents reminisce about the day Rose was born
(00:06:03-00:06:09)*

As shown in figure 18, scene 00:06:03-00:06:09, depicts two parents holding their newborn child tenderly in a hospital room, capturing a very personal and emotional moment. The father and mother look lovingly at the child wrapped in a tiny blanket, while the mother, still in her hospital gown, leans into him. A universally significant sound that represents fresh starts, love, and hope, the caption “[baby crying]” describes the baby’s first moments of life. The image’s subdued simplicity, the lack of vivid color or background detail, and followed by the light strings that indicate to concentrate only on the characters’ emotional bond. It highlights the extent of the parents’ loss by standing in contrast to the emptiness and grief that are examined later in the movie. The emotional impact of the scene is largely derived from this contrast between joy from the past and grief from the present, which highlights how love and memory are the foundations of grief. Essentially, this scene captures the film’s central themes: the indestructible ties of family, the indescribable burden of loss, and the resounding echoes of love that endure despite unspeakable suffering.



Figure 19. The parents reminisce about the day Rose was born in the book (page 41)

In figure 19, page 41, captures a moment of intense love and tenderness that develops in the bond between a new parent and their child. The picture depicts a mother and father in a hospital room, cradling their newborn in a quiet, personal embrace. A feeling of security, oneness, and overwhelming love is conveyed by the mother leaning against the father and the two of them looking tenderly at the baby in their arms. Behind them, gentle watercolor shades of teal give the scene an ethereal, dreamlike quality that recalls a memory or emotional imprint. The parents' inner shadow and Rose's spirit behind them, looking all happy and immersed in the feeling, add even more impact to this page. The profound impact is enhanced by the accompanying text: "Dad said the best day of his life was the day I was born. When he saw me, he felt like he

had always known me, we just hadn't met yet." This statement depicts a timeless, spiritual bond that surpasses explanation, demonstrating the depth of the father's love and the immediate, instinctive bond he felt with his child. The line emphasizes the idea that this moment was about the fulfillment of a profound, nearly destined relationship rather than just birth. The sense of loss is made even more devastating by the addition of a layer of innocence and purity that stands in sharp contrast to the eventual tragedy.



Figure 20. The parents reminisce about the day they ate spaghetti and meatballs (00:06:31-00:06:38)

As presented in Figure 12, scenes 00:06:31-00:06:38 portray the family dinner memory, and the plate of spaghetti acts as a moving visual analogue representing the healing ability of acceptance during the grieving process. The first picture, depicting a half-eaten plate of spaghetti with meatballs and a hand clutching a fork, captures a quiet, deeply symbolic moment. Eating a meal once shared with a lost loved one reflects the beginning of emotional healing, an attempt to return to routine, to reclaim life amid grief. The scattered food and minimal composition evoke a sense of emptiness, yet the hand reaching for the food indicates a willingness to re-engage with

a painful but cherished memory. This moment is closely related to the second picture, in which a loving portrayal of a happy family dinner reflects the memory. Between her devoted parents and energetic daughter sits savoring the same spaghetti meal with a fork. The soft purple backdrop emphasizes the emotional tone and indicates love, nostalgia, and the mixed nature of memory. Through food, the parents are not only remembering the past, but they are learning to coexist with their grief, allowing it to become part of their life rather than something to flee from. These sequences together show the acceptance stage of grief, not as a moment of forgetting but rather as an emotional change in which the hurt of loss is mixed with ongoing love.

In addition to this emotional journey is the subtle, reminiscent music highlighting these sequences. Using delicate piano notes and expansive silence to produce a reflective environment, the score softens at these times. The minimal instruments let viewers experience the weight of memory and the tenderness of healing without distraction. The simplicity and intimacy of the family's reunion are reflected in the lack of dramatic crescendos and the soft repetition in the song. The music leads the audience into the delicate but hopeful realm of acceptance, where love for the one lost continues to grow, not fade.

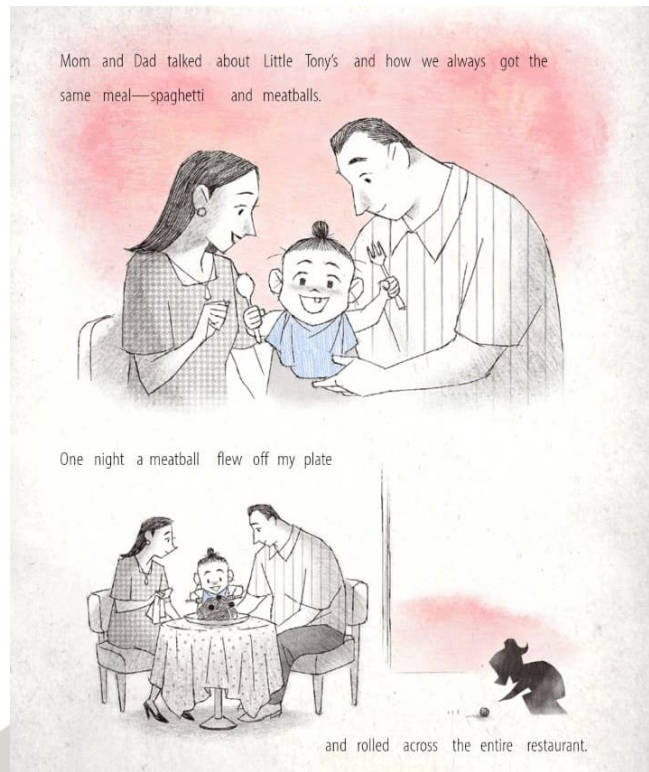


Figure 21. The parents reminisce about the day they ate spaghetti and meatballs in the book (page 42)

In figure 21, page 42, it focuses on a recurrent occurrence during their visits down memory lane to Little Tony's restaurant. This illustrated scene from *If Anything Happens I Love You* tenderly captures a moment of warm family memory. In this picture, the daughter is happy and wrapped in her devoted parents, who are all grinning as they eat spaghetti and meatballs, a classic favorite. The delicate pink tint of the background conveys feelings of warmth, fondness, and affection. While the text describes a fun, lighthearted incident "One night a meatball flew off my plate and rolled across the entire restaurant" the accompanying images depict the meatball rolling away and Rose's shadow amusingly chasing after it, solidifying the sentimental and whimsical quality of this memory. This memory marks a significant turning point in the grieving process and the acceptance stage. It illustrates how, despite their grief, the parents are at last able to remember their daughter with joy rather than just sadness,

recalling a humorous, seemingly insignificant, but intensely personal moment that brought them together and made them laugh. The parents are beginning to accept their daughter's memory as something they can tenderly preserve, as evidenced by the telling of this story and their choice to interact with it. The family members' harmonious visual arrangement, the gentle color scheme, and the lighthearted storyline all convey the emotional transition from mourning to loving remembrance.





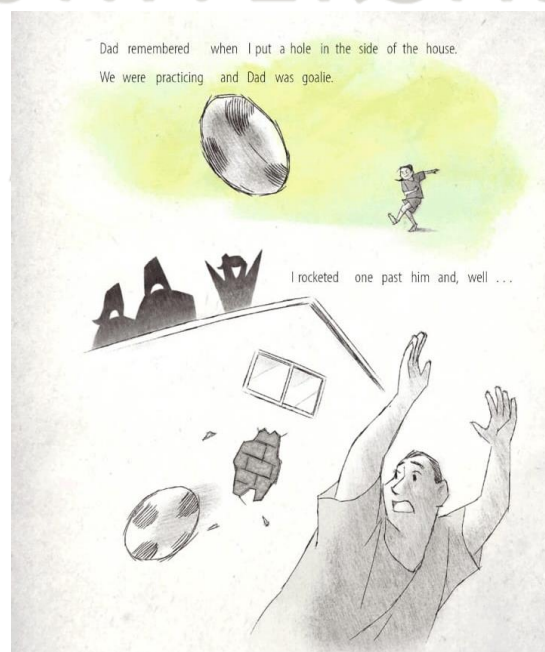
Figure 22. The parents reminisce about the day Rose put a hole in the side of the house (00:06:41-00:07:03)

As shown in figure 22, scene 00:06:41-00:07:03, as Rose kicks a soccer ball beneath a pastel sky, it displays a happy moment. Soft watercolors are used to delicately render the background, with blues and greens blending to create an airy, dreamlike purity. This scene is essential to *If Anything Happens I Love You* because it represents Rose's bright, active, and carefree personality. Her happy demeanor and the ball's smooth motion create an emotional foundation that will soon stand in contrast to the film's central tragedy. This memory is further strengthened as one of love and light by the use of negative space surrounding her, which highlights her youth and independence.

The tone then abruptly changes. The subtitle "[crackling thud]" is displayed alongside a visible crack caused by the soccer ball colliding with a wall. Although the wall's impact point might seem insignificant at first, it foreshadows a much more significant emotional breakdown in the story. The girl's calm world is subtly disturbed by the rough texture of the wall and the abrupt, violent action of the ball. The rift in the

parents' lives after her passing is symbolized by this crack. It bridges the gap between trauma and innocence by giving the audience a warning that something is off.

A moment of family joy is being captured in a photograph. Her parents stand behind her in a supportive position as the girl flashes a confident smile and a peace sign. Despite the happiness depicted in the picture, the hand holding the phone and the faint blue shadow above them that looks like a broken heart have a melancholy undertone that foreshadows loss. The colors are still subdued, with blues and grays dominating, suggesting emotional control or sorrow that lingers just beyond this pleasant recollection. The distinction between the past and the present is hazy in this picture, as it is in many others throughout the movie. By putting the audience in the role of viewers of this sentimental moment, the movie allows us to share in the parents' grief by remembering what was lost and emotionally relating to how permanent that loss is. The film portrays the harsh quiet of absence and the resounding echo of a life that was once full of joy through these still, fragile frames.



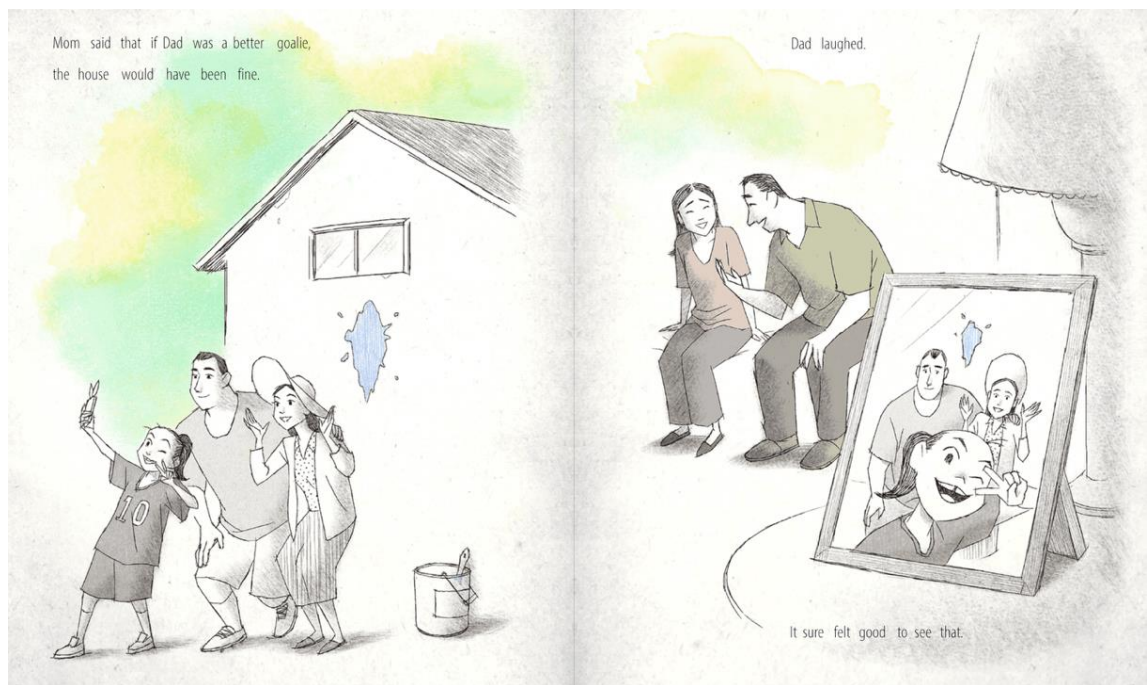


Figure 23. The parents reminisce about the day Rose put a hole in the side of the house in the book (page 43-45)

In figure 23, page 43-45, shows a flashback that is told from the child's perspective and depicts a moment when the child and Dad were playing soccer. "Dad remembered when I put a hole in the side of the house," the text says. Dad was the goalie while we practiced. I blasted one past him and, well. Despite being straightforward and even humorous, this memory has strong emotional resonance. The ellipsis at the end of the paragraph, "and, well...", alludes to more than just a humorous incident; it also conveys a sense of aching nostalgia and the burden of recalling times that are no longer possible. Visually, the pencil shading in black and white with background flashes of yellow and green evokes the warmth and innocence of that era. The story's central loss is hinted at by the father's frantic attempt to catch the ball as it crashes through the wall, which serves as a metaphor for his failure to shield his child.

The mother's amusing yet emotionally reassuring statement, "Mom said that if Dad were a better goalie, the house would have been fine," families frequently use humor to process pain and shared history, as this line illustrates. Despite the damage,

the family is depicted standing in front of the repaired hole and grinning for a picture. By using love to deflect blame, the mother's line demonstrates that, when seen through a lens of unity, even mistakes are treasured. We see a glimpse of the family's unity before tragedy in this flashback. The splashes of color, especially the light shades of green and blue, highlight the happiness they were experiencing at the time and add warmth and vitality. Now that it has been painted over, the cracked wall represents not only a previous accident but also recovery and imperfection accepted by a loving family.

Quiet contemplation replaces the emotional tone. It just says, "Dad laughed." That was a pleasant sight to see. Rose expresses relief and internal longing in these few lines. This brief smile, this laughter, becomes monumental after a time of unthinkable grief. The framed picture of the parents and their child, forever frozen in a joyful moment, is reflected in the picture of the parents sitting together, closer, sharing a memory. That picture inside the frame suggests what was lost but also what is left: memory, love, and connection. The emotional impact is increased by the limited wording, which allows silence to speak. There is a sense of the seriousness of healing in action during this cinematic pause, a beat in the narrative where everything slows down. These pages' text and images work together to create a heartwarming picture of a family dealing with loss and clinging to what's important through humor and memory.



*Figure 24, The parents reminisce about the last day that they hugged
(00:07:30-00:07:42)*

In figure 24, scene 00:07:30-00:07:42, depicts a standard morning routine as the Rose gets ready to leave for school. In a small gesture that conveys his playful and supportive role in the home, her father stands close by, holding a soccer ball, while her mother tenderly adjusts her backpack. Rose appears to feel safe and loved in her parents' company based on her joyful and trusting expression. The family is framed against a minimalist white background with no surroundings or distractions, and the interactions and feelings of the characters are the only things on display. This structural decision enhances the scene's intimacy and gives the characters a feeling of security and coziness. The scene was being recollected from the past, soft, delicate, and priceless. The pencil-sketch style and subdued grayscale color scheme add to the memory's nostalgic and almost dreamlike feel. Understanding the depth of the family's love, which is necessary to fully comprehend the weight of the following grief, begins with this peaceful moment.

The image of the mother, father, and daughter locked in a passionate group embrace represents the peak of this sense of familial unity. Rose's head rests in her parents' arms as they both close their eyes in mutual satisfaction, their faces calm and loving. In addition to expressing their love for one another, this picture of an embrace also foreshadows the terrible emotional breakdown that follows her passing. The characters' bodies interlock to create a single, seamless unit, highlighting the drawing's emphasis on intimacy once more. The embrace is made even more touching by the white background, which leaves the frame empty except for an emotional connection, no setting, no distractions. The emotional importance of this moment is emphasized by

the subtle hints of muted color, such as the red of the daughter's backpack, which add visual emphasis without breaking the monochromatic tone. As the bereaved parents try to come to terms with their loss, this image will play back in their minds like a visual echo.

Accompanied by the major scale of piano keys that makes the scenes seem uplifting and joyful, shows Rose happily waving goodbye in front of a simplified drawing of her school, which stands in contrast to the previous scene in both tone and implication. Unaware of the danger that lies within the building, her face is beaming with excitement, innocence, and trust. An eerie symbol is created by the school's placement in the background, which creates a long, gray shadow. It is merely a schoolhouse on a literal level. However, it becomes a site of trauma in a metaphorical sense. She makes a bittersweet gesture as she turns to face the school and looks back to wave; it's a lively farewell that is tragically created because the audience already knows what will happen. This memory also serves as one of the steps to heal, which is to face the harsh reality or trauma, to keep moving forward, and to accept Rose's death. The visual clue that this is a memory being reenacted or recreated is conveyed by the same soft motion and sketch-like animation. This method makes it difficult to distinguish between the past and the present, as well as between loss and memory. The scene serves as a reminder that happy times are frequently entwined with grief. It intensifies the emotional rift that is explored throughout the film and deepens the tragedy.

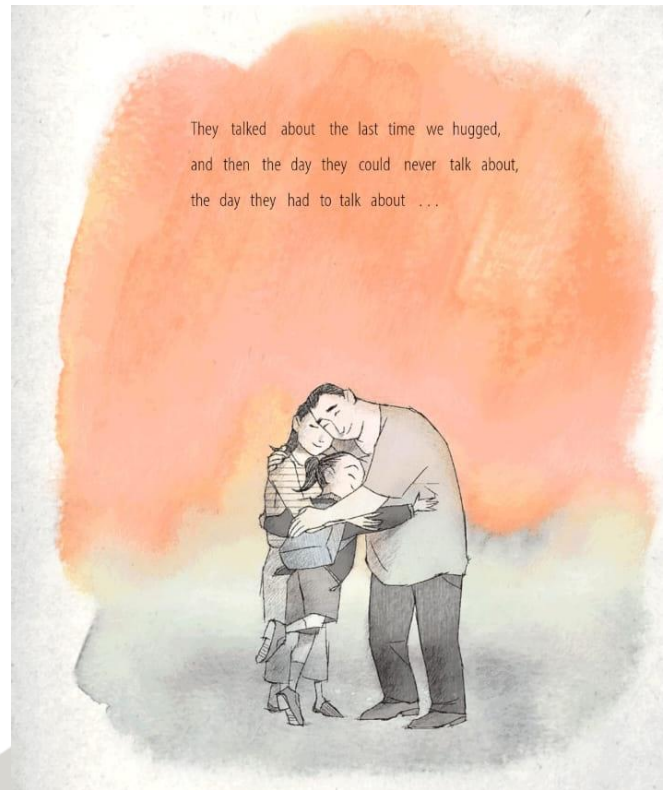


Figure 25. The parents reminisce about the last day that they hugged in the book (page 47)

As shown in figure 25, page 47, a powerful textual and visual depiction of loss, emotional upheaval, and memory. A tender group hug between the mother, father, and Rose is depicted in the middle of the frame, serving as a visual representation of love, harmony, and emotional stability. The hand-drawn sketch style used to depict this gives the scene a pure, unrefined emotional quality. A gentle, abstract wash of orange and peach hues surrounds the illustration, reflecting a surreal, nostalgic mood. Warm hues contrast with the characters' grayscale outlines, implying that this is a treasured but distant memory, one that is blazing in the parents' emotional memory. The picture captures a moment of emotional completeness that is framed by loss and frozen in time. The film's examination of trauma and memory is further enhanced by the narrative "They talked about the last time we hugged, and then the day they could never talk about, the day they had to talk about..." In just one sentence, this poetic line crafts

a powerful narrative progression. The story swiftly transitions from a loving, shared memory, the final time the family hugged, to the unimaginable trauma of the school shooting, “the day they could never talk about.” The final circle refers to unresolved grief and lingering pain. It expresses how they battle memory and return to the past for healing, only to be struck by the same memories.

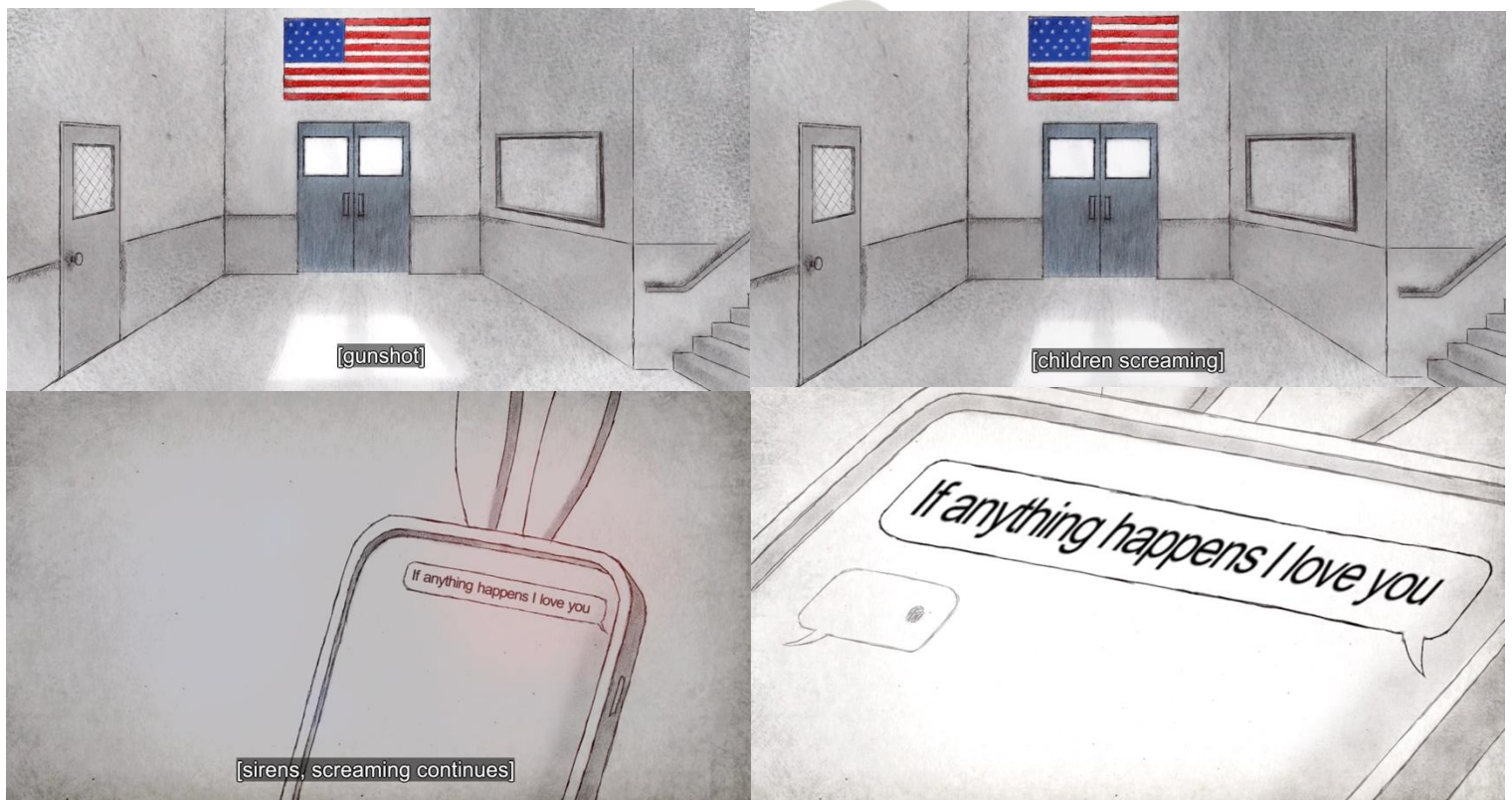


Figure 26. Rose's point of view on the day of the shooting incident (00:08:31-00:08:52)

As portrayed in figure 26, scene 00:08:31-00:08:52, it depicts the tragic reality of a school shooting, one of the most emotionally devastating scenes in the movie. The story is immediately set in the United States. This nation is struggling with the epidemic of gun violence in schools, thanks to the opening two scenes, which show an empty

and disturbingly silent school hallway with an American flag. The setting is deafeningly quiet until the subtitles “[gunshot]” and “[children screaming]” break the stillness. An intense terror is created by these captions and the glaring stillness of the frame. Because there is no overt violence, the audience is forced to visualize the horror, which heightens its personal and unsettling impact. The following scenes focus on a smartphone screen that shows the film’s title, *If anything happens I love you*. Heartbreakingly simple but emotionally deep, this message is displayed on Rose’s phone amid sirens and disaster. It reflects the tragically real-life messages that have surfaced from previous shootings and symbolizes a last, desperate attempt at connection in the face of death. The close-up highlights how brief life is and how cruel the world is, where kids have to consider saying goodbye to their parents in this manner. Together with the simple visuals, repeated sound cues, sirens, screaming, and silence produce a sensory experience that goes beyond the screen.

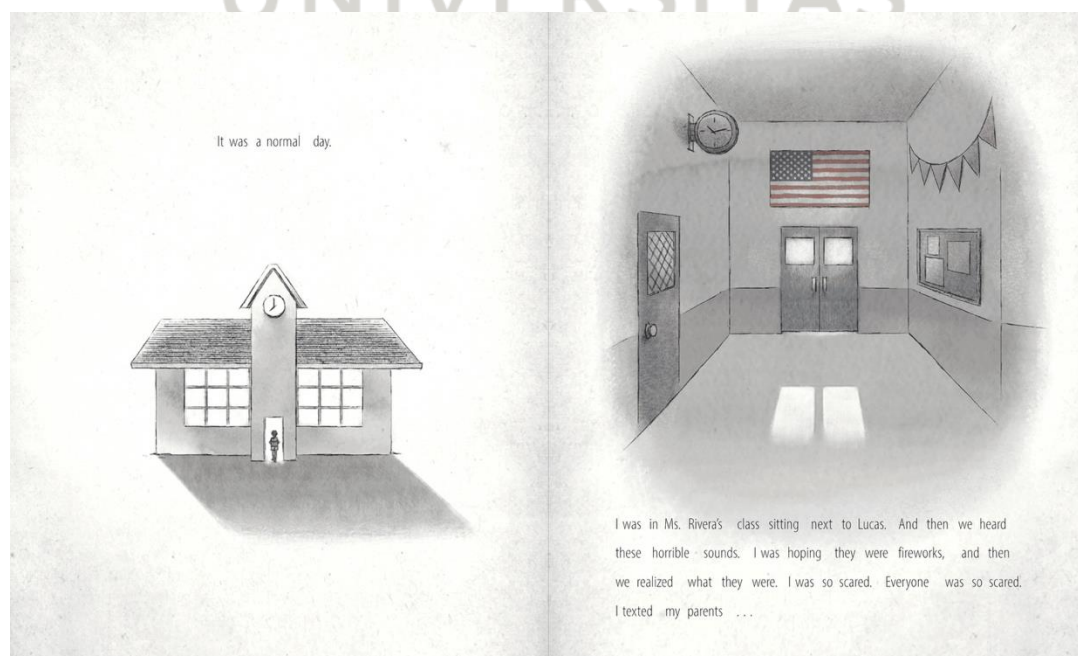




Figure 27. Rose's point of view on the day of the shooting incident in the book (50-52)

In figure 27, page 50-52, the visual language tells much of the story in this silent but devastating moment. In the first picture, Rose's figure is standing at the door of a plain, desolate school building created in grayscale. "It was a normal day," is written above it. This frame's minimalist art and simplicity capture the false serenity that precedes trauma. The grayscale color scheme eliminates all warmth, resulting in a calm and detached atmosphere. The figures' and the building's extended shadows indicate the imminence of an unsaid presence, an invisible burden looming over the scene. The building's symmetry and centered composition support the idea of order and routine, which heightens the shock of the impending disruption. The ambiguity of the phrase

“a normal day” is terrifying; the audience is aware that something terrible is about to happen, and this awareness heightens the emotional tension.

Next, the image of the school’s interior, a corridor depicted using the same muted pencil lines and black-and-white colors. In addition to providing context for the scene, the American flag, which is prominently displayed on the far wall, also subtly refers to the social effects of school shootings in the US. The clean, silent, and empty hall is covered by a feeling of absence. Subtly producing themes of sacrifice, loss. Celebration banners and school notices on the wall serve as a reminder to viewers that this area is normally an environment of activity, color, and education, but in this case, it is reduced to a silent hallway. Instead of showing violence, this image captures the moments before a terrifying event occurs. This looming tragedy is made even more relatable by the narration that goes with it. Rose describes what should have been a typical day in halting, broken sentences. “I was in Ms. Rivera’s class, sitting next to Lucas. And then we heard these horrible sounds...” A child’s desperate denial and search for innocence in the midst of chaos are reflected in her attempt to process the event in real time, saying, “I was hoping they were fireworks.” “I was so scared,” they repeated. The fact that everyone was so terrified highlights the widespread trauma that was taking place at that precise moment. The narration ends abruptly with the line, “I texted my parents...” This is heartbreaking. The final words that were never answered are left up to the viewer’s imagination, speaking volumes without resolution.

One of the book’s most intensely emotional pages, the revelation of the title message, is depicted on the following page. A single blue text bubble glows from the

screen of a cellphone that is face-up on the ground in the image. It reads, “If anything happens I love you.” The message’s gravity is conveyed with full force thanks to the intimate and still framing. The emotional core is broken by the text alone. The phone’s positioning close to what looks to be a desk or chair leg places the image in a particular area, most likely the classroom where the tragedy took place. The image’s subtle yet symbolic bleeding of red and blue hues, which resemble emergency lights, foreshadow the violence that has already occurred or is currently taking place not in the page. These hues emphasize the chaos that intrudes on this private, quiet moment by producing an unsettling contrast with the otherwise muted background. The text message’s simplicity and silence heighten its emotional impact. Rose captures both her sense of imminent danger and her frantic attempt to get in touch with her parents in that brief, parting message. When physical intimacy is impossible, it’s the last chance to connect by technology, a love letter wrapped in panic. An additional layer of heartbreak is added by the shapes that are visible beneath the message bubble, indicating that the conversation was either ongoing or never finished. A visual metaphor for interrupted life, unfinished words, and unresolved futures, it is a textual cliffhanger. The heartbreakingly familiar blue text bubble, which is typical of iPhone messaging, helps viewers understand that this tragedy is real and that many families have experienced this firsthand. By concentrating on the text message, the book avoids explicit portrayals of violence and instead focuses on its human cost, employing restraint to provoke strong feelings.

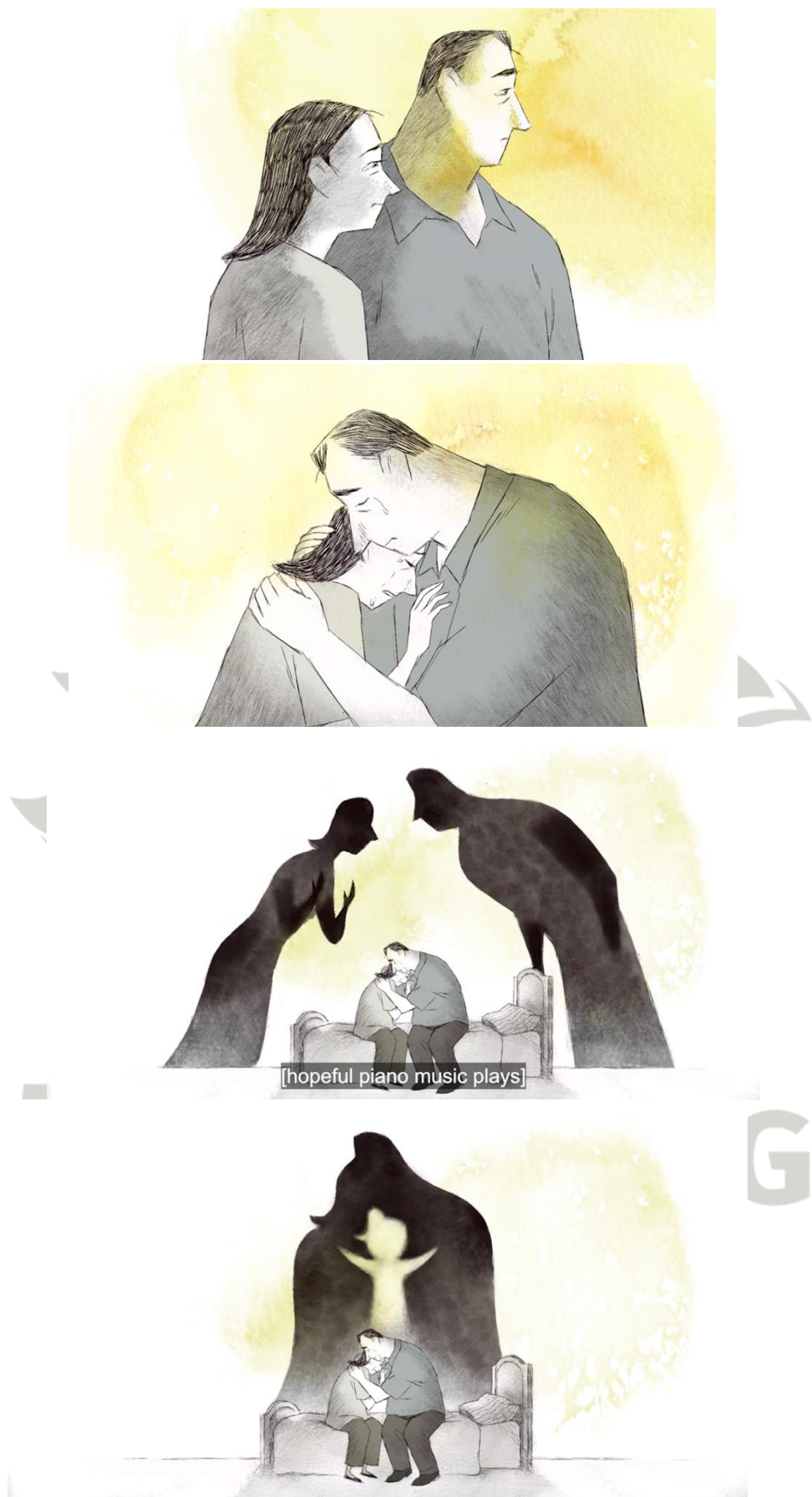


Figure 28. The parents' final stage of acceptance (00:10:27-00:10:43)

In figure 29, scene 00:10:27-00:10:43, it effectively captures the emotional development of trauma-related grief and recovery. The parents are shown sitting next to each other in the first scene, their bodies stiff, faces tense, and eyes detached. A hint of memory or a warmth from the past, their daughter's spirit, is introduced by the yellow watercolor background, which is softly textured and glowing. However, the parents' disconnection and personal suffering highlight the gap that grief has created between them. They are physically close but emotionally distant, and their postures indicate repressed pain. This feeling of emotional numbness is heightened by the subdued color scheme, which shows a world without life and color.

The parents eventually fall into each other's arms in the second scene. This private moment marks a shift when shared grief breaks the silence. The mother's head resting on his shoulder signifies vulnerability and surrender, while the father's tightly closed eyes and furrowed brow reveal an expression of long-suppressed pain. This embrace represents a revival of their relationship, a shift from loneliness to comfort. Though still muted, the steady yellow background now seems brighter, suggesting that warmth can be reignited by connection. It's a crucial time for letting go of emotions and the beginning of the actual healing process.

The haunting visual motif of the parents' inner shadows is first shown in the third scene. Their shadows loom large and confrontational, echoing past arguments and unspoken blame, even as the physical figures embrace on the bed. Nevertheless, the shadows create an arch over the parents, forming a sense of protection and containment even as they lean in toward one another. The background piano in the major scale

signals a change in tone in the story. It suggests that hope can now arise in spite of the gloom. The internal conflict of grieving and the feeling of release that results from facing it together are depicted by this contrast between light and shadow, past and present.

A significant visual change occurs in the last scene. The shapes of the inner shadows that once represented suffering now come together to form a single, unifying area where the daughter's glowing figure emerges with her arms extended. Standing above the parents as they continue to embrace, she displays a reassuring and ethereal presence. This visual metaphor effectively conveys spiritual reunion. Not only does the daughter's appearance symbolize her presence in memory, but it also signifies the parents' recognition of their love for her and one another. A story about devastating loss and the enduring power of love is appropriately concluded by these scenes, which create a sense of closure and emotional resolution.







Figure 29. The parents' final stage of acceptance in the book (page 54-61)

As portrayed in figure 30, page 54-61, provides a profoundly significant and complex depiction of loss, remembrance, and lasting love, especially in a scene that shows a transition from hope to sorrow. One of the earliest sets of pictures depicts the parents anxiously waiting in a crowd to see their daughter again. Other families are embracing and reuniting in happiness all around them, but they are still alone, silent, and motionless. The loneliness of grief and the anguish of absence are highlighted by this contrast. Their hunched shoulders and empty gazes are an example of emotional paralysis, a condition in which time seems to stop even though the world is still moving forward. The faded character outlines highlight the brevity of loved ones and the frailty of memory, while the gentle pastel backgrounds, mostly shades of blue and green, amplify the melancholy tone. The accompanying text, "My parents waited and waited." "and waited," echoes this emotional landscape. The purposeful and strong repetition slows down the tempo and reflects the tiresome, constant nature of waiting. The parents

did more than just wait; they continued to wait long after hope had given up. Their emotional absence, as though life itself has stopped, is reflected in the lack of progress or resolution. Every repeated “waited” expresses helplessness more clearly than words ever could, sounding like a silent cry into an emotional emptiness.

In contrast to the emotional decline inside, the visual motif of falling leaves outside the window serves as a subtle metaphor for time passing and life’s natural progression. The couple sits on the bed, distant and burdened, appearing trapped in a state of suspended mourning. The intimate scenes, where they talk, cry, and eventually hold one another, are infused with warmer tones of yellow and gold, suggesting that even in the depths of despair, the memory of love still offers a fragile source of connection. This shifts the focus from external public scenes to a more intimate depiction of the parents’ private grief, taking place against the quiet desolation of Rose’s bedroom. The accompanying text is “They are still waiting,”. “They talked all night”, and the line “And cried all morning” shifts the emotional tone from a past incident to the present, emphasizing that their grief is not limited to a single instance but has instead become a part of their daily existence. The present tense used in “They are still waiting” conveys an unresolved longing and an enduring sadness. While sobbing in the morning signifies the harsh dawn of reality that each day brings, talking through the night represents a desperate attempt to preserve memories and to express what cannot be undone. These acts, which are repeated every morning and evening, give the impression that mourning is a daily cycle of remembrance and emotional breakdown.

The tone gradually changes from intense grief to silent resilience and unwavering hope. Rose's line provides a last outlet for her emotions by rephrasing it from a place of calm and compassion: "My parents are so brave. They keep going. And one day we will meet again." Her words' impact is enhanced by their simplicity, which honors both her parents' loss and the courage required to move on. It acknowledges their bravery in enduring pain rather than denying it. A borderland where their daughter now exists is created by the contrast between the dreamlike blues and glittering stars of the spiritual realm and the grounded yellow hues of the real world, a realm of memory, stillness, and watchful presence. Her final lines, "Until then, I'll be here, waiting for them," subtly echo the book's main theme of waiting, one that has been changed from one of agony to one of love-based promise. This waiting is calm and eternal rather than helpless or depressing, implying that the relationship between a parent and child is not severed but rather paused. It refers to an eternal realm of connection and remembrance where love endures despite loss. The book ends with the gentle realization that grief is love with nowhere to go, and that even the deepest wounds may eventually be touched by light.

4.3 The film's impact on society

Relevant and painful reminder that something has to change >

It's a good thing that they kept the animation style simple, and that it doesn't really take long to get to the point its trying to convey, nor do they need to put much effort into it. Real life occurrences that have continued to happen since its release speaks for the work. The length makes its impact much more felt and it really draws power and emotion from real events that have happened to families of victims in these unfortunate tragedies. That this is a reality that they will have to live with for the rest of their lives is just heart-breaking to think of. More so when they have to relive it again with every new school shooting reported on the news.

A painful reminder that not much has changed since then in the wake of much more recent incidents that have taken more lives and left more families grieving.

 Helpful · 2  0



CasualViewer · Jun 18, 2022 · [Permalink](#)

★ 10/10

Exploring The Effects Of Gun Violence. >

It was a very moving film that explores the tragic grief affecting many families after the unexpected loss of a loved one, particularly involving gun violence . The film was able to get the message across without the use of words. It was excellently made, and I applaud all who were involved in making this film. It really highlights the need for laws to prevent these types of tragic events from happening. Families, as well as survivors of these events are left to pick up the pieces that are left behind. I think this film is perfect for anyone to watch no matter what their current stance on gun control may be.

 Helpful · 3  0



pixienoire · Oct 28, 2022 · [Permalink](#)

★ 10/10

Very important >

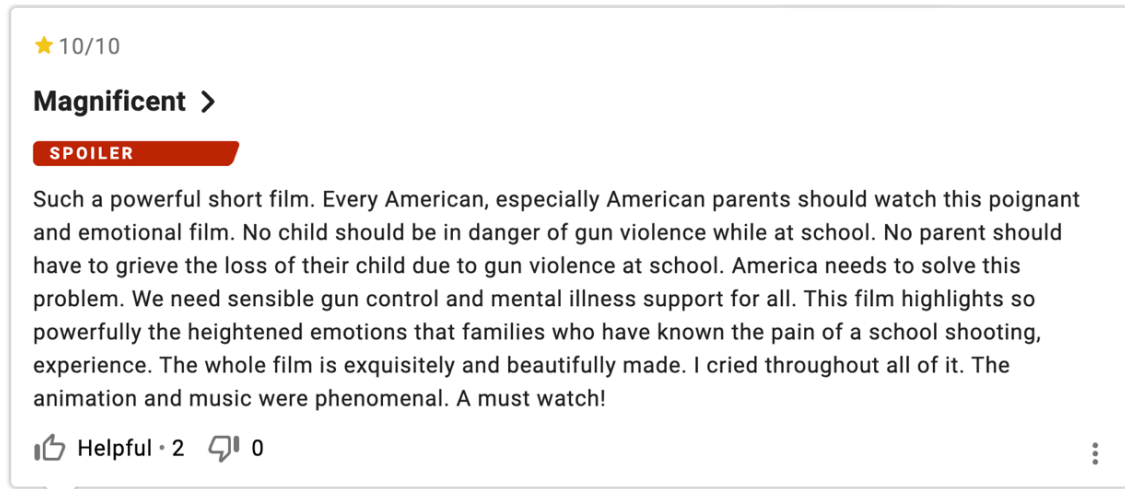
SPOILER

This was made during the pandemic. It's very important, considering what has occurred as of late. Especially since the tragedy in Uvalde Texas, Sandyhook Elementary School. Parkland Florida and many many more. Sadly this is a common occurrence, it doesn't have to be if we have common sense gun laws. Kids deserve to go to school without fears that they will not be returning home. We shouldn't have to be having these discussions. #ProtectKidsNotGuns.

 Helpful · 2  0



funkyle91 · Jun 12, 2022 · [Permalink](#)



jodyscott31 · Oct 31, 2022 · [Permalink](#)

Figure 30. The evidence of gun violence awareness (IMDb.com)

As shown in figure 30, these IMDb user reviews on *If Anything Happens I Love You* present intensely personal and pressing viewpoints on the problem of gun violence, particularly in light of school shootings. Commenters frequently highlight the short film's emotional impact, calling it "powerful," "heartbreaking," and "necessary." According to the first image, highlights how the film's animation style's simplicity works to its advantage by letting the emotional core of the work shine through freely. They value how the movie uses real-life incidents as inspiration and depicts the terrible, enduring effects of gun violence in a way that is both approachable and profoundly moving. The reminder that these tragedies keep happening, new school shootings continue to take lives, and yet nothing has changed, is what most strikes me about their commentary. The review concludes with the heartbreaking observation that the movie is still painfully relevant today, not as a historical analysis, but as a commentary on a current crisis.

Based on the second image, another user considers the wider psychological toll that gun violence has on families, paying special attention to the sadness that persists for a long time after such tragedies. They draw attention to how the film skillfully

conveys deep grief and loss without resorting to dialogue. The review emphasizes how well the movie raises awareness of the need for stricter legislation to stop these avoidable tragedies. They believe that it is not only a tale of loss but also a heartbreaking illustration of systemic failure, leaving survivors and their families to pick themselves up with no justice or change in sight. The movie transforms from a piece of entertainment into a call to action and awareness-raising tool.

In the third image, a commenter directly links the film's relevance to actual tragedies, like the Sandyhook Elementary School tragedy in Uvalde, Texas. They highlight how frequent school shootings have become in the US by focusing their review on particular, upsetting incidents. According to their review, the film's message is all the more urgent because it was released during the pandemic, which is already a time of great loss and anxiety. The commenter's activist stance is highlighted by the use of hashtags like #ProtectKidsNotGuns, which call for immediate and "common sense" changes to gun laws. They contend that kids shouldn't have to be afraid to go to school, portraying the current state of affairs as a moral failure to safeguard the most vulnerable citizens of the country.

Finally, in the last image, one commenter suggests that all Americans, especially parents, should see the short film, as it addresses a fear that no family should ever have to deal with: losing a child to gun violence at school. The commenter makes a strong case for change by supporting reasonable gun control laws and better mental health services as ways to combat the persistent school shooting epidemic. The short

film earned praise for its artistic strength and emotional depth, with music and animation enhancing the message and making an impact on the audience.

★ 10/10

For me, it isn't just a short movie >

SPOILER

My parents lost a baby (the same day she was born) before I was born and this movie made me very emotional.

My mom carried her for 9 months, taking care of my brother, at the time 3 years old, who was cheerful to have a little sister, but when my parents got back home to him, they came back "empty handed".

They've never talked about it.

I was born 4 years later and they had to experience almost losing another baby. I've had an allergic reaction to the anesthesia of a so called routine surgery and almost died 45 days old.

My parents never talked about losing their baby and never really healed from it.

Today, 39 years after their loss, I've watched this movie and shared it with them. I hope it can make them think about her and everything they felt and still feel about all of it.

This movie gave me the courage to talk about Taty with them.

For me it isn't just a movie.

👍 Helpful · 0 💬 0



[rafaeloteles](#) · Jan 26, 2025 · [Permalink](#)

MA CHUNG

★ 10/10

Extremely emotional must-watch >

⤴ Back to top

SPOILER

First off, plotwise, the story is about parents dealing with the loss of their daughter to a school shooting.

Now, I'm generally really not an emotional or even just an overly emphatic guy. Plus, I live in Germany, not the USA, so school shootings are exceedingly rare here and the situation is not all that relatable. I also don't have kids, either, though I do have a younger brother.

However, all that being said, I have watched this short film multiple times, and I have never gotten through without crying *hard*; on subsequent watches after the first not even far past the beginning.

Another review said something along the lines of "it gets harder if you rewatch it", and I wholeheartedly agree; although it still hit me like a truck the first time I watched it back in 2020 or so.

Now, if you don't count the opening and the end credits, it's barely 10 minutes, yet despite the short runtime (or perhaps because of it), it is a real masterpiece in my opinion. The storytelling, the music, and the animation all come together to convey the feelings of grief and sadness (or at least a shallow approximation of them) that we are left with after the passing of a loved one, especially untimely ones at that.

I can't even begin to imagine how it must feel like to go through something like this in reality, as opposed to just watching a 10-minute short film.

I can only recommend watching this to anyone, regardless of political affiliation or stance on gun laws. Regardless of your opinion on certain topics, we are all just humans, and (nearly) all of us feel the same range of feelings. If you can watch this without becoming at least somewhat emotional, you must be truly made of stone (and I don't mean that in a good way).

👍 Helpful · 4 💬 0



misteradi · Mar 7, 2024 · [Permalink](#)

★ 10/10

Heartbreaking >

Beautifully done, but terribly sad to watch. The pain the parents were going through was shown so clearly, and it's sad that this is what some parents end up going through when their children are killed in places that should be safe. It's important to see the effects of these shootings after the news has moved on. The film shows not only the loss of the child, but how it alters the lives of the parents and affects their relationship as they struggle to cope.

The artwork style and music were perfect, and they really captured the feelings being expressed. It's a hard watch, but definitely worth it.

👍 Helpful · 1 💬 0



laurajanejones-60844 · Apr 26, 2023 · [Permalink](#)

★ 10/10

This is INTENSE >

I don't know if I'm too emotional or the short movie is too emotional but I cried during all of it, it shows the emotional difficulty of losing a child, and losing a child because of one monstrous person who decided on morning he's gonna shoot kids in a school, where kids supposed to be safe. The fact that America still not banning guns is absurd. I can't bare in my mind that one day when I'll have kids, I can't bare it in my imagination that they can be killed in a place that supposed to keep them protected, I'm not from the United States but just to think of it, thinking about the parents who have lost their kids and thinking about the parents that their child IS the killer. And all they say is: "thoughts and prayers" like that would help. It won't and never will help. So to sum it all up, please, watch it, this is important.

👍 Helpful · 68 💬 15

[ohadlu](#) · Nov 20, 2020 · [Permalink](#)

★ 10/10

This left me speechless >

Honestly i didnt know what to expect from this short animation and i didnt actually fully understand what i was watching until half way through when it finally hit me and a wave of emotions washed over me.

This simple looking animation with no audio words and yet it delivered such powerful & vivid heart wrenching animated scenes that were well organized & planned in sequence too achieve maximum effect on your emotions.

If anyone can watch this without feeling any bit of emotional change in them then they probably are people with no emotions.

For me it was very easy to imagine myself as 1 of the characters and to feel what they feel because this short film depicts a lifestory that can easily happen to anyone and has happened to many in the world.

Truly a well done animation that although has no words or speech and what comes to my mind is how it represents perfectly the old saying about how "a picture is worth a thousand words"

👍 Helpful · 1 💬 1

[18Buddha](#) · Jun 21, 2022 · [Permalink](#)

Figure 31. The evidence of emotional impact (IMDb.com)

From figure 31, in the first image, one commenter starts from a very personal place: their family had suffered the trauma of losing a baby before they were even born, a subject that was never discussed openly at home. They became “very emotional” after watching *If Anything Happens I Love You* because it brought to light their parents’ unsaid grief. They talk about how the movie gave them the confidence to bring up long-

avoided topics of past losses with their parents. This response demonstrates how the movie's portrayal of parental grief can have an impact outside of the particular context of a school shooting: the universality of severe loss, regardless of its cause, may awaken feelings and create opportunities for healing that had been blocked for many years. For this audience, the brief animation serves as an inspiration for genuine family conversations about suffering and remembering, in addition to fostering empathy for fictional characters.

In the second image, even though they live in a nation where school shootings are uncommon and consider themselves to be generally non-emotional, another viewer was often brought to tears. Despite their lack of firsthand knowledge of this type of tragedy or even parenthood, they observe that the film's simplified narrative hit them like "a truck" during their initial viewing and became even more difficult to watch on rewatch. The audience is forced to experience the parents' inner world of shock, silence, and haunted memory due to the absence of dialogue and the minimalist animation. This observation highlights a significant strength of the film: by discarding implicit explanation, it allows viewers of all backgrounds to experience the sorrow of loss.

In the third image, a commenter praises the music and artwork for expressing "the pain the parents were going through" and for demonstrating "not only the loss of the child, but how it alters the lives of the parents and affects their relationship as they struggle to cope." According to this perspective, the film does more than just show a tragic event; it also lingers on the fallout and the long-lasting, silent ways that grief

affects daily life, memories, and the relationship between partners who have lost a loved one. Viewers are able to feel the parents' loneliness, guilt, and longing through the use of visual metaphors such as the child's shadows, changing colors, and muted spaces. When viewed through this lens, the film turns into a closer look at the outcomes of mourning, demonstrating that grief never goes away after a news cycle ends and instead keeps changing how people perceive the world and interact with one another.

In the fifth image, one commenter uses the film as a platform to criticize more general issues while concentrating on the profound emotional toll of losing a child to violence. Imagining the nightmare of losing future children and the harsh irony that schools, places supposed to be safe, can become the scene of unimaginable loss, they admit that the entire film brought them to tears. They complain about the lack of action in the face of avoidable tragedies and express dissatisfaction with societal responses ("thoughts and prayers" that "won't and never will help"). The animation's emotional impact, its ability to bring out intense heartbreak in someone who is not American or hasn't personally experienced such events, underlines the film's capacity to create empathy and displeasure.

The commenter in the final image resonates with this sentiment when they reveal that they didn't fully comprehend the film's impact or intent until halfway through, at which point an intense wave of emotion left them stunned. This reaction emphasizes how the film's structure contains a muted yet effective emotional build-up. The commenter highlights how the animation, despite its straightforward appearance and total absence of spoken dialogue, produces heartbreaking and some vibrant scenes

that are painfully arranged for emotional impact. The emotional rawness and clarity of the scenes, rather than their complexity, are what create such a strong response.

In conclusion, I agree with the comments. *If Anything Happens I Love You* is a profoundly moving and powerful film that subtly but powerfully conveys the pain of loss. The film's dramatic musical score, minimalist animation, and absence of dialogue give the characters' grief a genuine and intimate feel. Like many of the commenters, I could feel the parents' heartbreak even though I had not personally experienced such a loss. The film serves as a reminder of the lingering emotional burden that tragedies leave behind, in addition to providing a forum for crucial discussions about loss and healing. Grief on screen turns into a healing and inspiring force that makes people think about the need for change and brings attention to the actual human stakes in larger societal issues like gun violence. Ultimately, the film's emotional impact connects personal suffering to societal responsibility by bridging private grief and public conscience.

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Figure 32. A police shooting incident of a student in Semarang (batamnewsasia.com)

As shown in figure 32, *If Anything Happens I Love You*'s touching message is particularly relevant to Indonesian audiences because of the tragic shooting death of a 17-year-old vocational high school student in Semarang by a police officer. The film depicts the silent, incomparable suffering of parents who lose their child to senseless violence through the use of silence and shadow. A real-life example of this heartbreak can be seen in the Semarang case, where a young life was cut short, not by a stranger, but by someone meant to protect the public. A gang fight in the Paramount housing complex set off the incident, which turned into a deadly shooting and led to public mourning, national outrage, and requests for police accountability.

The Semarang case is paired with the film *If Anything Happens I Love You* to increase a sense of emotional similarity and connection among Indonesians. Although the settings may be different, one is a school shooting in America, while the other is a police shooting in Indonesia, the fundamental experience is sadly the same: the loss of

a child, the parents' helplessness, and the echoes of a life taken too soon. Families are left to deal with unresolved issues, institutional silence, and the indescribable burden of loss in both narratives. Gamma Rizkynata Oktafandy, a 17-year-old victim in the Semarang case, was shot by an off-duty police officer who claimed self-defense, although he was allegedly not involved in any gang activity. The injustice was felt deeply. Independent witnesses, the victim's family, and school officials immediately opposed the police narrative, pointing out that there was no proof of a fight at the scene. The officer was only named a suspect after significant public pressure, and CCTV footage recovered by the family reportedly contradicted official statements. The family also disclosed that they felt pressured to avoid "extending the issue," which only strengthened feelings of injustice and raised suspicions of institutional cover-up. Viewers are reminded by this connection that injustice and grief transcend national boundaries. Indonesians might feel less alone in their grief and have a deeper understanding of the range of emotions depicted in the movie if they see their reality mirrored in it.

In the end, showing the tragedy for a wider audience involves tying this tragic real-life case to the film's emotional truth. It promotes empathy, makes us aware of our vulnerability as a society, and creates an environment for discussing change. The message is unmistakable in both fictional and real-life tales: loss of a child should never be accepted as normal, and grief is universal. Because of this connection, Indonesian viewers see more than just a film; they see a mirror of their own distress, concerns, and possibly a shared agreement for justice and empathy.

By examining how *If Anything Happens I Love You* portrays grief, healing, and its societal implications, we can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the film's themes and message. Through its characters and storyline, the film delivers a powerful commentary on the emotional journey of loss, the struggle to move forward, and the process of healing. These elements are essential to grasping the film's core idea, that rather than remaining in prolonged mourning, acceptance eventually leads to emotional resolution and highlights the film's lasting impact.

Without relying on dialogue, *If Anything Happens I Love You* expertly illustrates the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, through visual storytelling. As the parents silently go about their house, unable to acknowledge each other's grief or the loss of their daughter, Rose, the film opens with muted, desaturated tones that represent the stage of denial. The distance between them and their stiff body language highlights the emotional gap and the shock that still consumes them. Their inner shadow figures, who argue on their behalf while the parents themselves are silent on the outside, and raw visual movement are used to symbolize anger. These shadows show how grief frequently appears internally, too painful to express out loud, and they represent the emotions that they are unable to express. The parents and their shadow selves start reliving memories as the film moves into bargaining, especially a moving scene where they relive the moment of saying goodbye to Rose. These scenes, which represent an effort to rewrite or comprehend the tragedy, are depicted through gentle, dreamlike scenes that stand in contrast to the present. Heavy silence and muted imagery, such as the mother curled up next to a

tiny planter box with her body language conveying sadness and defeat, and the father numbly watching television as a diversion from his suffering, are used to depict the depression stage. The mood of numbness and detachment created by the dim lighting and empty spaces highlights symptoms that are frequently associated with PTSD or grief from trauma.

Music and sound are essential for escalating these emotional states. The absence of dialogue is accompanied by a thoughtfully crafted audible surroundings rather than just silence. Every little sound, including the ticking of a clock, the rustle of clothes, and footsteps, is amplified and given emotional weight. These small details highlight what is not said while establishing an intimate sense. The film's soundtrack supports the story's emotional trajectory, especially King Princess's ethereally lovely song "1950" and the original composition that rises during the dramatic climax.

As the parents finally start to confront their trauma instead of avoiding it, the acceptance stage begins. For the first time, they go back to Rose's bedroom, talk about their favorite memories, and face the terrible day she passed away. As a visual representation of healing and support for one another, their inner shadows are able to connect during this moment of emotional sincerity. The animation gets brighter as the parents embrace, and the emotional and physical separation between them vanishes. The musical arrangement reflects this emotional sincerity as well; the silence is no longer void but rather cozy and colored with faintly upbeat notes that use major keys. The return of light marks a turning point where acceptance results from shared grief rather than erasing their sorrow. The film effectively conveys the entire emotional

journey of grief without using any words, thanks to its simple aesthetic, symbolic use of shadows, well-executed sound design, and emotionally compelling music to tell a story that is both intimate and universal, effectively capturing the whole emotional journey of grief without the use of words.

If Anything Happens I Love You's emotional message and increased awareness of gun violence have had a profound effect on society, particularly its audience. Many comments on IMDb, where viewers have discussed how profoundly the film impacted them. Due to a significant part of its depiction of parents mourning the death of their child in a school shooting, many viewers characterized the short film as "intense" and emotionally devastating. One interesting comment praises the film's simplicity and its ability to quickly get to the message's emotional core, calling it a "relevant and painful reminder that something has to change." According to the reviewer, the film's brief duration heightens its emotional impact because it is based on actual tragedies that families must face, particularly when every school shooting reopens old wounds. *If Anything Happens I Love You* strikes a deep chord with viewers due to its emotional depth and social relevance, as further proven by another review titled Exploring The Effects Of Gun Violence. The film is described as "a very moving film that explores the tragic grief affecting many families after the unexpected loss of a loved one, particularly involving gun violence" by the viewer, who also highlights how the film's silent storytelling heightens the impact of its message. The film effectively conveys overwhelming grief, loneliness, and the irreversible effects of violence on families without resorting to dialogue. Global audiences were also deeply affected; one

commenter wrote, “I cried during all of it. I can’t bear in my mind that one day when I’ll have kids, thinking about parents who have lost their kids.” The film's capacity to provoke such intense emotional reactions has made it both unforgettable and agonizing to watch, encouraging contemplation of the actual effects of gun violence. Additionally, several remarks complain about society's inaction in the wake of mass shootings, emphasizing that token expressions of sympathy, such as "thoughts and prayers," are insufficient. These responses demonstrate that in addition to striking a personal and emotional chord with audiences, the film also inspired discussion about the pressing need for reform and action in the fight against gun violence. *If Anything Happens I Love You* has evolved beyond a simple short film by reflecting society and encouraging empathy, consciousness, and a call for change through its powerful story and symbolic imagery.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In order to address the study's problem statements, I have presented my findings in Chapter IV. I discovered that the 3 problem statements presented in Chapter 1 can be fully and thoroughly addressed based on the discussion displayed in Chapter IV. which include examining the stages of grief that parents experience after losing a child without using dialogue, examining how the film's minimalist aesthetic contributes to the emotional depiction of healing, and examining the effects it has on society, especially the audience, after it has been released. I gain a deeper comprehension of the social effects of films that deal with sensitive topics by carefully analyzing these problem statements using a range of theoretical frameworks from the second chapter. Additionally, I am given resources for reflection on loss that encourage constructive coping mechanisms.

If Anything Happens I Love You's message and emotional depth become clearer to us when we examine how it deals with themes of healing, grief, and the impact on society. The story offers a powerful reflection on the distress of loss, the difficulty of moving on, and the slow road to recovery through its characters and storyline. These elements are essential to understanding the film's main themes, which are that although grieving is exhausting and painful, acceptance and healing are achievable and represent

an important step forward from long-lasting mourning. In the end, this journey through loss demonstrates the film's emotional depth and enduring influence.

In my analysis of *If Anything Happens I Love You*, I noticed that the film is in line with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief Theory (1966) and efficiently depicts the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance through visual storytelling and simple animation alone, without the use of dialogue. As grieving parents move through their house in silence, unable to face one another or the fact that their daughter Rose is gone, the film opens with chilly, diminished tones. Denial is symbolized by their stiff posture and emotional distance. Their inner shadow figures, which represent the suppressed feelings they are unable to articulate verbally, are used to depict the stage of anger. The internalized suffering that comes with profound loss is made evident by these shadows' arguments and conflicts. The parents and their inner shadows start going over precious memories as the story moves into the bargaining stage, especially the last time they saw Rose. In contrast to the harsh present, these flashbacks, which are depicted in gentle, dreamlike imagery, express a wish to undo or make sense of the tragedy. Long pauses and emotional moments, like the father numbly staring at the TV and the mother curled next to a little planter box, are used to portray depression. The numbness and detachment described in Post-Trauma Response Theory, are reflected in these moments, which are enhanced by low lighting and space.

Sound and music are crucial for intensifying these feelings. Instead of just silence, the absence of conversation is accompanied by a carefully constructed audible environment. Every small sound, such as footsteps, clothing rustling, and clock ticking,

is emphasized and given emotional significance. These minor details create a feeling of intimacy while highlighting what is not stated. This method is in line with Michel Chion's theory of the audio-visual contract (1999), which contends that sound in movies not only enhances but also essentially alters our perception of the image. The film's soundtrack, particularly King Princess's ethereally beautiful song "1950" and the original composition that rises during the dramatic climax, supports the story's emotional trajectory.

When the parents decide to face their trauma head-on, the acceptance phase develops. They eventually acknowledge the day of Rose's death after returning to her room and starting to reminisce about their memories. A change in psychological area is indicated by the parents' surroundings becoming less monotone and the physical distance between them starting to close. Small gestures like a touch, a glance, or a shared memory can have a big emotional impact because of the minimalist setting, which is representative of minimalism theory. Minimalism eliminates distractions in this way, creating room for reflection and emotional clarity. Their inner shadows are able to connect and reach out during this emotional opening, signifying a step toward mutual support and healing. This emotional sincerity is also reflected in the musical arrangement, where the quiet is no longer empty but rather warm and tinged with slightly cheerful notes in major keys. From the viewpoint of narrative theory, this development illustrates what David Bordwell (1985) refers to as the viewer's active participation in creating meaning through structural and visual cues. Additionally, since the parents' recovery depends on a collective understanding and acceptance of

their loss, social theory is relevant because the healing process is both socially constructed and personal. Visual narratives can be effective in communicating emotional recovery, particularly when grief is processed emotionally or collectively, as the film illustrates through the parents' reunion. The beginning of healing is visually expressed by the symbolic closing of their distance from one another, which is an act of mutual support rather than the absence of pain.

If Anything Happens I Love You's social relevance and emotional impact have had a long-lasting impact on viewers and society, especially in terms of increasing awareness of gun violence and its emotional toll. Drawing on Social Theory, particularly Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration (2020), the film reflects broader cultural anxieties about safety, parenting, and institutional failure, especially in the context of school shootings. The film has been described by numerous IMDb users as deeply moving and terrifying, especially because it shows parents grieving for a child who was killed in a school shooting. The film's brief duration and straightforward animation enhance its emotional impact, as one user praised, calling it "a relevant and painful reminder that something has to change." They highlighted how the movie is a reflection of actual tragedies and how every new shooting leaves grieving families with new scars. "A very moving film that explores the tragic grief affecting many families after the unexpected loss of a loved one, particularly involving gun violence," wrote another reviewer in a post titled "Exploring The Effects Of Gun Violence." The same reviewer praised how the story's focus on universal emotions like grief, loneliness, and the irreversible effects of tragedy was enhanced by the absence of dialogue. Similar

sentiments were expressed by viewers worldwide, with one commenting, "I cried during all of it. When I eventually have children, I can't bear to think of parents who have lost their children. These intense emotional responses demonstrate how the film does more than merely amuse viewers; it makes a lasting impression and encourages contemplation of the human cost of gun violence. Several comments also attacked society's inaction in the wake of mass shootings, pointing out that expressions like "thoughts and prayers" seem meaningless in the absence of concrete action. This demonstrates how the film not only strikes an emotional chord but also promotes pressing discussions about accountability and reform. *If Anything Happens I Love You* ultimately serves as a mirror to society, supporting empathy, awareness, and a collective call for change in addition to being a masterfully made animated short.

5.2 Suggestions

The author of this study would like to offer some recommendations for several parties in this section, including:

5.2.1 For General Readers

This study assists in a deeper emotional understanding of the film's depiction of grief, healing, and societal trauma by providing insightful information about how people in general can interact with *If Anything Happens I Love You*. Readers are led toward a more perceptive and thoughtful experience of the parents' emotional journeys by analyzing the symbolic and visual storytelling techniques employed in the absence of dialogue. Particularly in light of grieving parents and school shootings, readers can

develop empathy and an understanding of the psychological complexities associated with loss and grief. Readers are encouraged to investigate how minimalist animation can portray deep emotional realities by closely examining cinematic elements like color shifts, facial expressions, body language, shadow figures, and empty space. This engagement encourages careful consideration of the healing process, the long-term impacts of trauma, and the wider societal implications of gun violence. Readers are more capable of comprehending the specifics of loss, connection, and adaptability when they approach the film with emotional openness and critical thinking, which eventually leads to a more sympathetic and socially conscious viewpoint.

5.2.2 For Future Researchers

Future researchers are encouraged to improve on this study by delving deeper into *If Anything Happens I Love You's* emotional and visual depiction of trauma, grief, and healing. A more in-depth examination of the film's use of symbolism, minimalist animation, and nonverbal storytelling can reveal important details about how emotional suffering and psychological reaction are portrayed. Future researchers might concentrate on how the parents' experiences reflect more general themes of post-traumatic stress disorder, group grieving, and the fragile condition of connection with others after loss. Future researchers can investigate how various narratives portray the emotional weight of tragedy and its effects on relationships with family members by contrasting the film with other literary or cinematic works that deal with related themes, such as parental grief, school shootings, or child loss. Furthermore, this subject

encourages more research on how emotional and physical trauma can affect decision-making and social behavior, especially in characters who are forced to deal with intense grief without verbal expression. These kinds of studies can contribute to a richer understanding of how readers interpret space, silence, and symbolic elements when there is no dialogue. By providing additional points of reference for individuals interested in trauma studies, visual storytelling, and emotional representation in modern media, this continued exploration can expand the academic discussion surrounding animated grief narratives.

5.2.3 For English Study Program

If Anything Happens I Love You is a powerful exploration of trauma, grief, and the psychological effects resulting from loss that students can approach in the English study program. Students can learn more about how complex emotional states are communicated through nonverbal storytelling by examining the parents' silent emotional journey and the visual depiction of their internal conflicts. In order to portray themes of grief, loneliness, and ultimate healing, the film offers a chance to analyze the use of cinematic techniques like mise-en-scène, lighting, color symbolism, symbolism, and minimalist animation. Students can explore how trauma affects characterization and readers' empathy, as well as how grief is narratively organized through the Five Stages of Grief. Rich material for textual and visual analysis is provided by this film, which encourages critical engagement with larger themes like family relationships, societal violence, and emotional resilience. The use of subtle storytelling in modern

media to portray universal human experiences can be explored by students through in-depth interpretation. This encourages emotional literacy and interdisciplinary learning in literary and film studies.



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