

It had been years.

Mackenzie and Claire known each since 2009 but both had been in relationships and only available to talk to each other through the transient social circles afforded to their lives. Their chemistry had been recognizable immediately but neither allowed acknowledgement, just prolonged conversation that lingered too long in personal places to be innocent. Social media had loomed over their shoulders and their online interactions were redacted versions of their face to face pleasantries. Their lives and the lives of their friends and partners changed and so did they, going years before meeting again for the first time in 2015 at a Holiday party hosted by one of Claire's co-workers.

They'd briefly made eye contact across the room but had lost it in the small crowd of people. After the party had been going for a half hour they both found a way to excuse themselves back to the kitchen and bar at the same time.

"We know each other right?" Said Claire.

"Yeah you were dating Steve Wuttuzi."

"Yeah, was."

"That was a while back, jeez sorry I forgot your name."

"Claire, you're Mackenzie, right?"

"Yeah, how'd you remember that?"

"Lucky I guess." She looked him in the eye, smiled and for some reason in that moment Mack took her hand with care, just for a second, and smiled back.

They fell in love. They spent the next six months dating and sharing their lives. They took the ferry and drove to Esquimalt in the middle of February. Mack met her parents, Dave & Sharon as well as her younger sister Tiffany and older brother Kurt. It stormed hard that weekend and they stayed in the guest cabin where Mack read her most of *Dune* and she painted while telling him about her interests in touring Portugal and Spain on bike. Six months later they drove to Edmonton to meet Mack's parent's, Jenny and Tim, and grandparents Ilsa and Roy. They went to an Eric Clapton concert and had dinner at The Keg. That summer Mack surprised her with the tickets to Europe and they embarked on a glorious and challenging adventure together.

When they returned they moved in together. Mack started his own business of custom fine carpentry jobs and Claire went back to her job as a nurse at St. Paul's. Their devotion to each other deepened and in the years that followed their friends would come to know them as *that couple*. They were unabashed in their public displays of affection and neither were caught up in a private agenda or un-sated ambitions. They lived their lives to wholeheartedly love each other.

After dating for four years they were married. It hadn't been insisted, although family had been nudging for years. The ceremony was brief and non-religious and the reception full of good food, cheer and music. That night they left for their honeymoon in Mexico City.

After 5 years of marriage Claire gave birth to their first daughter Alice. Once Alice was five and on her way to kindergarten where she immediately found an affinity for sport, Mack and Claire conceived again and nine months later Claire gave birth to May. There was a desire in both husband and wife to try for a third child, maybe a son, but then Claire received news from her doctor that future pregnancies could be complicated due to a seemingly small health condition he'd discovered in her post partem exam. Mack and Claire were just thankful to have each other and their two healthy daughters, and so it went for them.

The next eighteen years were a collection of very human moments. Mack lost his job while the girls were still in elementary school and Claire became the breadwinner of the household for the next few years while her husband attempted to discover what he really wanted to do. In the end, with the support and guidance of his wife he took a couple of business courses at the community college. During this time Mack spent his hours with his daughters while making time to support his friend's musical endeavours. Claire was steadily promoted until she was allowed to choose her position, settling on a job as the head nurse of the terminal paediatrics ward at Vancouver General. Once Alice was in high school Mack had realized that his calling was designing custom cabinets for musical instruments and began developing this concept into a thriving business. Claire's compassion and care in her job began to strain her mind and her husband began to see this. He didn't encourage her to remove herself from her work but he supported her decisions to seek counselling and psychiatric education to help her process the harsh truths of her job. Twenty years after their wedding they renewed their vows and disappeared to the South Caribbean, renting a sailboat for a month long journey around the islands. Halfway through the journey their daughters were on spring break and met them in Barbados.

Alice would graduate and stay at home in Vancouver where she began developing a series of bands within the local music scenes. May, by this time was a teen herself and had taken to intense study in biology. Mack and Claire both thrived in their respective fields. Mack's product line was licensed by Fender, Yamaha and Gibson and he had expanded to a carpentry studio in North Van. Claire had earned her PHD through part time classes and now was one of the most influential leaders in terminal child psychology. May graduated from high school and was enrolled in MIT with advanced placement. Both parents couldn't have been prouder of May while still maintaining support and interest in their struggling but still focused older daughter.

It was a stormy Vancouver night. Mack and Claire had just driven Grandma Sharon, Dave had passed in 2021, to the ferry. There is no saying what caused the accident. There were no survivors of the crash. Either party could have been speeding but it was not in Mack's character to do so, and neither was it his nature to let his wife drive in the evening. Their 2024 Tesla had collided with a Ford Raptor XIII, knocking through the barricade and tumbling down the cliff faces of West Van, their bodies broken and rattled. Their vehicle smashed against the wall of the ocean. They had decided to take the scenic route.