

My Dear Brother, Andrew

When COVID began, I hadn't lost anything, I was considered an essential worker, working at Festival Foods, and my family became closer than ever. Fast forward to December 21<sup>st</sup>, only days away from Christmas, I was struck with a hard to swallow rock that stays in my throat still today. My older brother, 21 at the time, the happiest, healthiest, and liveliest 21-year-old, working his dream job, had unexpectedly passed in his sleep. I can still hear the cries of my mother as she told me to wake up near 5:30 in the morning. Everyone who heard the news was stricken with grief, he had touched so many lives. It got even more real at the funeral, never in my life did I imagine I would be standing with my parents next to my brother in a coffin, overwhelmed by emotion and yet an insane amount of comfort as his friends and coworkers, even people we had never met before came to us with their condolences. After a couple months that felt like years, we found out his cause of death was myocarditis, a viral infection that went straight to his heart, with no symptoms or signs. Although I did not lose him due to COVID, which he would have rolled in his grave if he did, I still lost my one, and my only older brother. I always thought about what life would be like as an only child, but I never wanted to experience it this way. I do not wish this pain on anybody else, even my worst of enemies, no one deserves to go through this, and my heart goes out to everyone that has. Now, months later, I am still lost in grief and balancing life at college along with it, it is not the slightest bit easy for me, but I am slowly finding my way through life with hope that Andrew is with me and guiding me along the right path towards healing and success. I often struggle to find positives with the loss of a smiling soul like Andrews, but I am happy that I had the time I had with him, this is making me a stronger individual with a bigger heart, because my brother wore his heart on his sleeve.

To my brother,

I hope I make you proud, we all miss you down here. xx

Kaitlyn Hanson