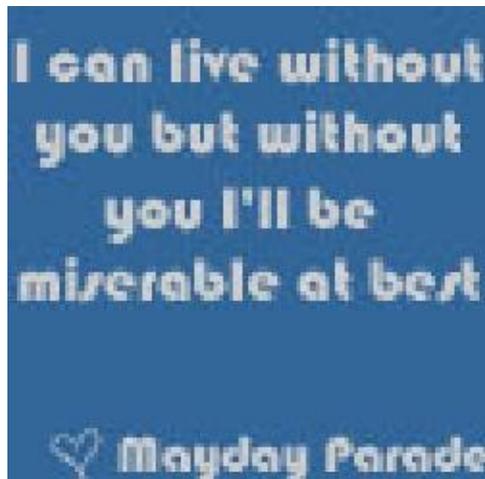


Isiah and Ryan

By : Me Against The World

Something I've been writing, I don't want any complaints on the context, if this isn't what you want to hear don't read it. Don't say it's against your beliefs and on and on.



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Isiah and Ryan : Chapter 1

PART ONE

Chapter One: Ryan

~

Everyone talks about how first kisses

are all fireworks and butterflies in your stomache.

To be honest, my first kiss with Daniel was exactly that,

even though we were supposed to be just friends...

and guys aren't supposed to kiss

.

It made me realise how head over heels I am for him.

~

It's hard to think about only schoolwork, my mind has to be in two places. As interesting as elipsis points are, I'm thinking about later tonight. When I'll be at Barbies' house smoking a cigarett and taking photographs. That's the way most of my nights go; I don't want to be home with my mom, not with her boyfriend.

I don't like the way he looks at me, the way he tries to make his hand on my knee look friendly. It feels like he's hitting on me. I tried to tell my mom, she called me a liar and a fag. Both comments equally hurt; she didn't believe her own son and she couldn't accept me.

That was the first time in years my sister, Hunter comforted and hugged me. It hasn't happened again since then though. Life went back to being lonely.

"You're dismissed" the teacher calls out. It's funny how I didn't hear any of the last ten minutes of her talking. I hurry to pick up my books and leave, but once I get to the door I drop my stuff and have to bend down to pick everything up.

Thankfully, some comes to my rescue, because I see a flash of a hand reach down and grab my Chemistry book. I look up to thank the said person, it's Isiah.

I know a lot about him; he hangs out with my sister, he's popular, he's a basketball player, he gets good grades, and he's totally gorgeous, but totally not my type.

Isiah gives me a warm look, so I smile before I leave and the funny thing is that he watches me as I scurry away.

When I reach my locker my cell phone starts buzzing like it's clausterphobic inside of my pocket and is dying to get out in the open light and air again. I flip it open and it's Barbies' rough but fragile voice saying hello.

Isiah and Ryan

"You can't come over tonight. Can I come to your place, we can use my new camera and have some fun with it?" she's practically dangling a lets-laugh-until-our-sides-ache night in front of my face.

"Of course."

Chapter 2

Chapter Two: Isiah

Dinner with my dad is never fun.

Anything to do with him is about being perfect.

~

Since I was little I have been pushed into Basketball;

pushed to be smart and hang out with the right people.

~

Everyone talks about peer pressure,

but they should educate kids on parent pressure.

~

I'm alone, so very alone. Dads pissed again, he went to the bar. Mom went to mourn about her failing marriage in her room. I desperately don't want to be here, not my house, but here in this misery.

My cell phone rings, I think it knows I need human contact. I answer my phone; my savior is Hunter.

She wants me to come over to watch a movie with her, Lacey, Megan, Jacob, and Alex.

Of course Jacob would be there, he's her new boy toy. As much as I love Hunter, she's emotionally unbalanced and replaces that with other... things.

Lacey will be there too and the thing is I'm not sure I want her to be. she's not the love of my life. Truth be told I'm not sure I love her at all. At least, not in the way she wants me to. I love like she's my sister.

"...Isiah..." Hunter breaths in an irritable tone "Did you listen to me at all?"

I didn't. "Yeah, I'm on my way." I'm not lying about the second half; I'm jamming my feet into my old basketball sneakers as I press end on my cell.

I don't tell my mom I'm leaving, she'll hear the car start. She won't care. It's funny how the right people never care.

It makes me think, I don't even realise I'm in my car driving. My head is writing poetry about no one in particular.

"I need you

to see,

to feel,

to breath

the real me. It's for you.

I wouldn't even do this for me.

~

And I'll tell you 1000 times more;

I want,

I need,

I beg

to have you...

and only you.

~

You can count on me.

I will catch you,

kiss you,

love you

to the end of time

and past the end of mine.

~

...See this please..."

And I title my poetry the very last line 'See this please'. I have no one in mind, they're empty words.

My eyes focus, because I'm done thinking. I've been sitting in my car in Hunters' driveway for God knows how long. I feel pathetic and I don't know why.

Chapter 3

Part Two

Chapter One: Ryan

My sister has shut me out,

but I have Barbie, so i'm fine.

~

Well, not fine is general,

but fine with that.

~

I honestly know that generally I'm not okay.

The door has been locked for five minutes total, because Barbie and I are being insane. She stripped her shirt off, knowing I wouldn't care; It wouldn't phase me the slightest bit. She tossed her camera to me and said "I want to remember being a fun person. Capture that."

And I do, over and over again. I take pictures of her laughing as her fragile hands wrap around her torso. Her almost black eyes are sparkling and I feel like I'm living in her moment; like i'm witnessing a miracle.

After a few more pictures, she snatches the camera "Now, I'm thinking of something for you Ryan Adams." She flashes a heart-melting smile and I'm a puddle, but because she's like my sister and I know she'll always be there.

She dashes to my desk and snatches my flashy, red-rimmed sunglasses and slides them onto my face. I smile and chuckle. I know she wants to bring out something special in me and I know she can.

She puts her finger at the corner of her mouth and looks up to think. I know she's found brilliance when she snaps her fingers and raises her eyebrows at me in warm anticipation.

Barbie rips her bow out of her perfectly-sculpted hair and pins it neatly into the right side of my soft lockes. She reaches in her back pocket and pulls out a cigarette from the little carton. I giggle as she presses it between my lips.

I half-smile and roll my eyes upward in the way that makes her squeal with delight. (I swear she thinks I'm her little baby-doll). I remove the cigarette from my mouth with my pointer and middle finger.

"Something is missing" she inquires.

She slips her hands under my shirt and peels it off, knocking my shades slightly askew. "You look free" she expresses as she straightens the sunglasses.

Isiah and Ryan

We run to the Hallway, out of my room and into the Kitchen. It's our favorite photospot. I'm giving off looks that span from innocence to your worse nightmare.

Without even thinking I make tiger claws and playfully shout "RAWWWRR." I know we're disturbing my sister and her friends who are in the next room, but I don't care.

Barbie is happy, because I am and this is what living feels like. It's too much to think about, I know I need her. "Thank you" I whisper and she hugs me and for once in the world I feel important.

Chapter 4

Chapter Two: Isiah

I feel left out,

even though I'm not.

Everyone wants to hang out with me,

not for the right reasons.

when they see, they see popularity.

No one ever sees that deep down

I might actually be a person.

The movie isn't that good, I never really was one for Comedy. I'm sort of staring off into space. Suddenly I feel Lacey's lips on my cheek. It just doesn't feel right and I want to end the lie right there. Then again, I can't, not in front of everyone, but soon I will. I have to.

She's smiling at me, it's making me queasy and I wish it was because I love her.

She's so beautiful, but so are flowers, that doesn't mean I love them. She's nice, but so is my grandma and I definitely wouldn't want to kiss her. Most guys would be intoxicated by Lacey, but not me. She's such a good person, I desperately don't want to hurt her.

I hear a whole lot of laughing from the next room and it's making Hunter roll her eyes.

Then her brother Ryan comes sliding across the wood hallway in front of the stairs. He's laughing and he doesn't have a shirt on and he's pretending to be smoking.

His laugh is so pure, it's like it was sculpted to be that way. The sound coming from him perfectly-poised, red lips is calming me down and I feel like I'm falling, but in a way that makes me feel whole and happy. He just has that sparkle in his eyes that tells me there is more to life than this.

I want to be part of it, but I'm the outsider, for the first time, there is someone that doesn't want to be around me and I want to be around him. There has to be a name for it, because it's not envy. I don't envy him-- "WTF, Isiah! Why are you staring at my brother like that?" Hunter yells at me, then directs towards Ryan "And what the fuck are you doing in here, Ry? I'm trying to hang out with my friends and you're in here being a queer."

His face dropped and I desperately wanted to hug him and tell him she didn't mean it; that things would be okay, but guys don't do that stuff.

He's pouting as he walks up the stairs and instead of me, that one emo girl from our school that he hangs out with is comforting him.

He glances back and I give him a hopeful smile. I'm on the outside looking in.

Chapter 5

Part Three

Chapter One: Ryan

Sometimes things feel hopeless,

things such as love.

Daniel will never love me

and I desperately want him to.

I don't blame Barbie for stealng him.

*They're happy together. *sigh**

You know those nightmares where you're screaming to get out. That's what today has been. I wanted to wake up all day and for it all to be fake, but it wasn't.

I woke up with a ridiculous cow lick right on the side of my head, that even a spare bobby pin didn't officially fix. It was a sign. No matter how stupid it sounds, it was a bad omen foreshadowing my day.

Barbie was absent and these guys were bullying me. Infact, my sisters friends, she just sat there as Jacob (her boyfriend) yelled stuff at me. Stuff I don't even care to repeat.

When Hunter didn't do anything, I thought maybe, just maybe, Isiah would. He seemed like he was on my side, the way he smiled, but he sat there grimacing. I guess i don't blame him, if he stood up for me they would have been pissed. Some friends.

By English (6th hour), I was grumpy as hell.

I started scratching hopeless with a safety pin into my pearl desk, until the teacher saw and gave me detention. *It really was absolutely perfect.*

The room had never felt so cold at that moment, metaphorically and quite literally, but I'm used to freezing my ass off.

Isiah glanced over at me and mouthed sorry. I pretended like I didn't notice, he didn't stick up for me, this was payback. I felt bad though, because I know he's a good person, he just... hangs out with the wrong people.

I try to clear my head of all of this as I walk down the hall. I have to hurry to my locker though or I'll miss the bus.

I walk past Daniel and he raises his eyebrow at me it's like he's saying loser. I remember when we were such good friends and then we got caught up in something I'm not even sure and he kissed me. I always thought he was gay. I guess he doesn't think so, because after that he wouldn't talk to me.

Isiah and Ryan

I never thought he'd stop being my friend, we were like brothers, attached at the hip like his mom used to say. I miss those times.

Chapter 6

Chapter Two: Isiah

I feel guilty,

not just now,

but all of the time.

For all the things I do

and the person I have become.

I see Ryan walking out of the school, he's a bus rider, he can't give a cute look to any random boy in school and get a ride like Hunter does. I see some other jocks from my Basketball team come up behind him and start yelling stuff. I know it's not good stuff, that's pretty obvious.

After they walk away and pull up next to him, his eyes are wider than usual at seeing me. He turns his nose up, he's still angry. "Want a ride" I yell out the window and he can't ignore me like earlier in class. He clenches his teeth. "Come on what do you have to lose" I add in.

I guess he decided it was okay, because he climbs in. At first we don't talk, he stares straight forward with his jaw clenched.

I peek out of the corner of my eye several times. I notice how his hair has a little piece sticking up on the side, it's actually kind of cute.

Then I shut my mind down because I just thought that a guy was cute and it makes me feel sick. If I was gay my dad and friends would disown me. I wouldn't be popular anymore, not that it really matters, but I would be teased and people would treat me the way they treat Ryan.

I try not to steal looks anymore, because I don't want those thoughts to come back, but my face is flushing just thinking when I was thinking about him. It won't get out of my head.

He looks over at me finally and asks "Are you okay, you look sick?" I shake my head, I'm trying to shake away the thoughts, but he takes it as a no, which also works. I try to smile, but it comes off pathetic and my throat is so dry. I feel like a fish out of water and my mouth is taking desperate gulps, I don't even know if I'm still breathing.

I attempt to look back over at him and he meets my gaze his eyes are these deep blue orbs, surrounded by these thick long lashes, that are really feminine. They bring out his whole face in the center of a crowd. I'm lost in them, he bites his lip and looks down, because we can both feel how intense it is in the car.

He turns back forwards and starts picking at his shirt, I notice how low he wears his pants on his hips. If I wore mine that low I think my tattoo would show. Maybe my little star is a little lower than that. It's a nice little reminder of why you shouldn't get hammered.

I look away, we're on his street, he turns back to me, he looks nervous like he has something to say. My heart stops, because I fear every second that ticks by. He opens his mouth a few seconds before he talks "I know

Isiah and Ryan

you wanted to stick up for me earlier, I understand why you couldn't."

We're in his driveway now, he finishes with "Thanks for the ride home" and he quickly hugs me before dashing off. My face went into flames at that moment and it seemed like all my thoughts tangled together.

Chapter 7

Part Four

Chapter One: Ryan

Has your world ever spun fast?

You have no idea what you're doing?

I sort of love those moments,

the best things happen during them,

but then again you can't even think.

I hugged Isiah. Why? I can't even answer that. I guess I felt something building in me, he was holding me down to the spot, I wasn't even sure if I would be able to get out of the car.

I just want to know how he feels, I mean he has a girlfriend. That means he's taken and straight.

I want to cry. I want to be able to think. I want to talk to him, but I'm afraid, besides I don't have his number. I need to call Barbie and talk to her, she could help me.

So I do and she answers right away. She's always there for me.

I tell her and she's sympathetic. "Oh Ry, you didn't go falling for a straight guy? I knew it would happen eventually. Do you wanna come over?" I just gulp and murmur something I couldn't even understand.

The car ride there is just a flash, before I know it I'm laying on Barbies bed and she's running her fingers through my hair asking questions. I don't want to answer any of them; I just want the problems to go away.

I know she's plotting and I know it will be good. Barbie is the best friend; she's my best friend. I love her to death.

Millions of different images of Isiah are flashing through my head. There's a picture from everytime I've ever saw him. He looks so warm and cute in all of them.

I can't wait to go to school to see how he acts, but I'm also dreading it, because I could have over dramatized the whole thing.

Chapter 8

Chapter Two: Isiah

I think

and think

and think

about Ryan.

Oh god, this can't be happen, there is no way I like a guy. Maybe if I finally sleep with Lacey it will go away. That's totally irrational though and it makes my stomache churn with a wave of sickness.

Honestly, would being gay be that bad? Of course it would, my dad would murder me, then my friends would bring me back to life and murder me... and Lacey, she'd be crushed. I don't think I could do that to her, then again, she would understand. That doesn't change heartache though.

To top it all off, in precisely 20 minutes, I'll be sitting in class and this stuff will be all around me again. Ryan will be in the same room with me and I'll be confused. I have to deal with this, but how.

~~~~~

*Ryan's sitting exactly one seat ahead of me, I could reach forward and touch his hair if I wanted to. I could whisper something in his ear. I've never hated English quite so much until now. I'm burning up from head-to-toe. It's all because of him.*

*I'm lost in him I don't hear a word of the lecture, and at the end of class he asks me for a ride home, so we can talk again; he has something to say. I nod with wide eyes. I watch him walk away, he sways his hips a little and he looks so small.*

*He's probably about 6 inches shorter than me and 100 pounds lighter with no muscle or fat. I feel like I could smash him. I'm 6 foot 2 and 200 pounds; the prefect body for Basketball. That's what I've become the star player, the attention-getter.*

*The rest of the day passes so slow, because I'm dreading being with in such a close approximity with Ryan again.*

*Last time I was with him, nothing else mattered. There was only him and me. It felt nice not thinking about the outside world, but the minute I stepped out of the car, our world was waiting for us. The world where we're not supposed to love someone of the same sex.*

*I still don't know what I want. It seems like being popular is the thread that keeps my life together. If I'm gay, I'm not popular. I just want someone to tell me it's all going to be okay.*

## Chapter 9

Part Five

Chapter One: Ryan

*I'm not going home,  
he's going to be there.  
My moms boyfriend,  
Mark isn't right.*

The fresh air fills my nostrils, I'm off somewhere in the sky. Isiah brings me back down to earth when he taps my shoulder. We walk to his car nervously.

"Can we go to the park to talk?" I ask him. I'm fidgeting and he smiles in the way that always makes things feel okay.

I'm practically shaking because I know what I have to do and I don't know if, when the time comes, I'll still be able to speak.

My vision keeps blurring as we drive and I can hardly see the trees we're passing. The we're at the park way too soon and sitting on one of the wooden benches. My stomach is in my shoes.

"...Ryan..." Isiah tests to see if I'm still on planet Earth. I fall in love with the way my name rolls off of his tongue, how each syllable sounds perfect.

I take a deep breath "Promise not to flip out?" He nods and I continue "When we were in the car yesterday I felt something. You made me feel... I love you." I can't take it back and I didn't want them to come out so fast. There was no ease to it. I'm uneasy.

The words are hanging there in the open air for several moments. I need to explain myself "And I know you're straight, but it kind of felt like you... I don't know... felt something, too." I'm not even sure if he understood me, because I'm so on the edge that I'm talking a mile a minute.

He looks down and twiddles his thumbs. A lump is forming in my throat. I don't know what he's thinking and I'm panicking, because he looks awkward. I'm sweating bullets and I just want to run away. I can't leave though, because his warmth is holding me down here.

He looks up and his jade green eyes are fragile "Can I try something?"

I'm scared, but I nod. He leans towards me and whispers "hold still." Isiah's lips gently brush against mine, he relaxes my whole body except my heart. He's sent my heart into a fluttering spasm.

His hands come up and hold my face and he has my bottom lip inbetween his. I can't help closing my eyes.

I'm savoring the kiss, but it's over way too soon.

## Chapter 10

Chapter Two: Isiah

*Being in close contact*

*with Ryan isn't like Lacey.*

*She's clingy... he's grateful.*

*He deserves to be held.*

*I keep touching my lips, it feels like it was all a dream. A very amazing dream, that I didn't want to end.*

*I know what this means and I really don't care anymore. I can't help who I love and it shouldn't matter to anyone. I know it will, but that's their fault not mine.*

*It's definitely time to break things off with Lacey. I just stepped into the house, but I go out the door and into my car. Her house isn't too far away and when I ring the bell, she answers.*

*She smiles and I hug her. I can smell her conditioner, the same one she's been using since I met her. The one that smells like cucumbers and lime.*

*We let go and I decide now, more than ever that I want to make this as easy as possible on her. "We need to talk" I make eye contact just as she frowns, but she nods in some sort of consent.*

*We sit on her couch. We have memories of sitting there. The time I kissed her and her mom walked in. The time we were playing video games and I let her win.*

*I sigh and calm my shaking nerves. "I have a confession and you have to swear not to tell anyone" she doesn't say anything, but I go on "I didn't ever want to hurt you, but you have to know... I'm gay." The way it sounds surprises even me a little.*

*Lacey is still making eye contact with me. She was always straight forward like that. There's tears in the corner of her eyes; I knew it would happen, but I was dreading the water works. I brush them away, but immediately more replace them.*

*I hug her; comfort her and she doesn't push me away. "I'm sorry" I say over and over again.*

*She pulls away "I can't be angry with you for being yourself. You're a nice guy... I'm only sorry that it's over." I smile because I know we're friends and that she may not be exactly okay right now, but she will be soon. I know she won't say anything to anyone, it's like a little silent agreement.*

*I smile and kiss her on the cheek. "This isn't goodbye" I say "We're still friends, 'kay?"*

*Lacey nods and wipes her tears away "Who's the lucky guy?" I chuckle.*

# Chapter 11

Part Six

Chapter One: Ryan

*Barbie jumped when I told her;*

*she is so happy for me.*

*I'm happy for me, too.*

*Isiah and I talk at school, but like we're acquaintances. No one has any idea, because everytime they're not looking he flashes me a handsome smile or winks.*

*We plan on hanging out tonight. I'm going to his place and I'm so anxious. I know this is all new for him, being with a guy and all. I'm terrified he'll change his mind about me, but there's something in him that tells me he won't. That he's serious about us and that makes my day just fly right by.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*At first, being in Isiahs house is awkward, it just doesn't feel as homey as I thought it would. I think about what childhood he must have had, it's a blurry image and I don't want to pry into his business.*

*"Do you wanna see my room" He asks, I nod. "Lighten up, I'm not going to jump you" he chuckles and I smirk, then add sticking my tongue out. He blushes for some reason that I can't figure out.*

*I lean back against the wall and bite my lip with my head down. I'm trying not to be really shy, but it's hard to kick old habits.*

*He puts his index finger under my chin and tilts my head up. Isiahs eyes are intense, but they're so vivid I can't even think and I don't register that he's kissing me until a second after his lips brush against mine.*

*We move in sync and I wind my fingers around his neck. His hands slid down my chest and rest on my waist. When we break apart we say "Wow" in the same moment so I know he must have felt it too.*

*The raw connection between us was the best thing I've ever felt in my life. No ones loved me since my dad died... not my mom and not my sister. Sure I've had a couple boyfriends, but it just wasn't the same.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*After an hour of just getting used to being with each other as a couple, we started watching a movie. He let me pick, so we ended up watching Pirates of the Caribbean.*

*"I've never seen this movie before" he announces a quarter into it.*

*It is my favorite series of movies ever "Shut UP, really?"*

*He shakes his head yes. "Why is that so surprising" he chuckles, poking me in the side.*

## Isiah and Ryan

*"Huh?" he pokes my side again and keeps repeating it.*

*Isiah tickles me until I'm squirming all over the couch. "STOP! I'm ticklish" I'm scream in laughter because I can hardly breath and I'm going to pee myself.*

*He snickers, but stops and pullsme into a hug. My hands fall on his chest as I'm pushed gently against him and I can feel how warm he is compared to me. I snuggle my head against his neck.*

*"You're so cute he whispers pulling me away and holding me at arms length. I'm blushing because it feels like he's looking into my very soul.*

## Chapter 12

Chapter Two: Isiah

*I don't feel so scared about being*

*gay.*

*I know my parents and friends wouldn't be*

*supportive,*

*but I'm not telling them anyways. It's my*

*secret.*

I didn't finish my homework, therefore I have an F, since it's the first week of a new semester. I have to get my grade slip for basketball signed and I have an F. Coach will flip and say I'm risking Duke. That's where my dad decided I'm going. Not that I don't want to go, I just feel like if I didn't it wouldn't be an option not to.

I have practice tonight, too, but I can't go until I bring my grade up. There's only two hours of school left, I'm never going to finish my assignment before the end of the day without getting behind on today's work. I have to accept missing practice.

In my next hour, I talk to Ryan, he's sympathetic and offers to help with my homework, but I turn him down, because I don't want him to get in trouble for not paying attention to the lesson.

Then that kid, Daniel that Ryan used to hang out with walks by. He looks at me and says loud enough for the whole class to hear "Yo! Camrich! I didn't know you were a fag lover."

I flip him the finger, because I can tell Ryan feels bad about it. He sank down in his chair and turned redder than usual.

God, I love his little blush.

For the rest of the day, until I get home, I forgot about the F. Forgot until my dad walks in "Why aren't you at practice, boy?"

"I flunked an assignment" I try to sound non-chalant. Hopefully, it will rub off on him and he'll feel the same.

"You'll never get into Duke being a dumbass. You're a Junior, Isiah. You need to start accepting responsibility. No son of mine misses practice" he says it all so matter-of-factly and it makes me want to slam him into the wall, but, of course, I don't

I trudge up the stairs. "By the way, you're grounded from going out this weekend!" I grumble and slam my door, even though I know it will only piss him off more.

I throw myself on my bed and pull my cell phone out of my pocket to text Ryan.

u'll nvr blv it, I got grounded :(

## Isiah and Ryan

It takes him ten minutes to reply and I wonder what took him so long, until I see the reply. Instead of regular text he sent a picture text. It's a snapshot of him pouting with words under it. He typed 'Aww, I'm sorry'. It's just like him to always go the extra mile.

Instead of texting back, I call him and we talk for a few hours. Only I have to be quiet as to not furtherly anger my dad, I pushed him enough today. Plus, I don't want to get kicked off the phone from talking to Ryan.

## Chapter 13

Part Seven

Chapter One: Ryan

*Didn't realise Id' ever be lonely without someone.*

*Never thought I'd need a person so much.*

*Wasn't aware I was capable of such love.*

*I know Isiah can't come over and it makes me so sad. Stupid dad of his putting him on house arrest. I kind of mope around, because I really wanted to see him.*

*He called me again a couple of hours ago, but I think he could tell how sad I am. Some way to spend Saturday.*

I sigh, may as well walk to Barbies. I don't call first, she never goes anywhere. If she did I think I'd be lost. I chuckle to myself, I must look like a madman to other pedestrians though. Also, the fact that I'm wearing long sleeves and jeans makes me stand out. I'm always so cold; while others are wearing shorts I look like an Eskimo.

I chuckle again, but this time a little girl in her driveway is captivated by my strangeness. It makes me want to laugh more, but I've already freaked her out enough as it is.

-----

Barbie doesn't seem in a talkitive or facetious mood like usual and I sort of regret coming.

She's stuck baby-sitting her little sister Addy. I wouldn't mind so much though, because she's a cool kid. She has this real cute, soft brown hair running like a water fall to her waist.

Her face looks so much like Barbies, seriously. That's probably what she looked like when she was younger, but she won't let me see any photographs.

Addy runs up to me and tugs on my fingers, by now I know that means 'come with me'. She makes me sit on her bed and she brings me her babydolls. Addy just smiles, she never really talks much.

I pick one up and play with it's hair and rock it. I guess I always wished I had a little sibbling, someone that really cares no matter what. That's how little kids work... if you do what they want they love you forever.

I decide to leave when I'm done playing with Addy, because Barbie is off in space and she barely moved when I hugged her goodbye. I thought she would ask me to stay for a while, but she didn't. Must be something between her and Daniel, but I don't want to talk about it.

-----

I locked myself in my room an hour ago and I'm not coming out. My mom has her boyfriend over again and it drives me looney how she doesn't notice the way he keeps eyeing me. I don't know where she gets them, but

## Isiah and Ryan

goddamn he's scum. I swear if he tries something I'll kill him.

I turn up my stereo, maybe it will annoy them and they'll leave, but no such luck and it's starting to give me a headache.

Can't someone please come rescue me?

## Chapter 14

Part Two: Isiah

*Sigh*

*I don't want to be stuck here.*

*Sigh*

*There's nothing to do.*

*Sigh*

*I think I'm going crazy of loneliness.*

He hasn't come in my room in two hours, so if I sneak out for a little while maybe he won't notice. I grab my Ipod and hoodie and make a run for it. I don't drive but walk because the car will make noise.

After I get a couple blocks, I'm not so afraid of getting caught anymore. I didn't think through where I'm headed, I could go to the park. I walked toward the general direction of it. Until an idea of seeing Ryan popped in my head and I acted upon it.

Altogether it took about half an hour to reach his house I knocked on the door. I was glad that he answered it and he gasped. I can tell I really surprised him and I hug him before walking in and slipping my shoes off.

"So you escaped you're dad" he asks.

I smile "I'm just hoping I don't get caught or I'll be grounded longer." I felt like saying 'I wouldn't be able to see you longer' but I don't wanna move fast with him. He's so much more different and worth it to move slow with.

We kind of have to hide out as to not piss Hunter off. We stick around in his room. He has a lot of books and I tell him I'm really into Poetry. He tosses me a book written in verse. The Realm of Possibility or something like that, I don't really look at the cover, but he says it's really good.

I notice he has his nails painted again. "You know people wouldn't say anything if you didn't do stuff like that" I remark.

He looks at me with a serious face "Honestly, I've gotten so used to it that it doesn't even matter anymore."

For some reason, that made me really angry "You shouldn't have to get used to it, it shouldn't be there. It's ridiculous how wrapped up in others lives people get."

"I wish it wasn't there, too... you know if you ever come out, they'll victimize you the way they do me" Ryan whispered sadly.

I caress his cheek softly, but look away again quickly. I start thinking way too much again and writing in my head. "Ugh, I need a paper, hurry! He gives me a strange look but tears a notebook out of his back pack and tosses it to me. I need to write this one down.

## Isiah and Ryan

The oceans can't be so blue as your perfect orbs.

They peek into my heart and radiate heat for my heart to absorb.

You're still the most beautiful thing even while I'm staring at the stars.

You're making my life go by, like speeding racing cars.

But you're still holding me down here, with your very soul.

Looking into my eyes, with your blue oblivion ones, making me feel whole.

I could hold you through the breaking dawn to sunrise.

It'll all be okay, I'll hold you when the wind sighs.

I'll be there and stay up for the lonely nights

and stick through all the horrid fights.

'Cus you hold me down to this very spot

and we'll create the love that's long since forgot.

"Can I read it" Ryan asked, soon after realising it was Poetry.

"Erm, it's kind of... about you" I muttered, wishing I wouldn't have right after it slipped past my lips.

He giggles puckering his lips out "That gives me double rights to read it."

## Chapter 15

Part Eight

Chapter One: Ryan

*I hate being alone.*

*Why can't Isiah stay?*

*Why can't Mom stay?*

The door bell rings. Anyone that would be coming here would have a key. I look through the peep hole. It's my moms boyfriend, he must be looking for her. I open it "Hi, my mom won't be home for another 45 minutes."

He smiles and walks in "Oh, that's alright. I'll wait here."

My stomach feels queasy, I do not want to be alone with him. "Would you, erm, like something to drink or anything" I ask him.

"That's alright. Just be a good kid and turn the television on" he requests. I bend over in front of the screen and he smiles at the view. He's so gross. I felt like punching him in the face. It probably wouldn't do any damage because I'm so scrawny.

I wish Isiah was still here, he would protect me, but he's not and I'm actually shaking inside.

I make a move to walk away. Go upstairs and lock my door, but no. "Take a seat and keep me company boy" he commands. I flinch, I hate being called boy. I sit all the way on the other side of the couch; a great distance away from him. "Now, don't be shy. I won't bite" he says a little too loud for talking to someone in the same room.

A lump is forming in my throat and I try to swallow it, but there's no saliva in my mouth. I grungingly move next to him. He turns and flips through the channels he rests his hand on the couch incredibly close to me. I want to scooch away, but for some reason my body won't register what my brain is saying anymore. My eyes zone out and I feel his hand slide onto my leg. My whole body stiffens and my heart stops.

He moves closer and I can hear myself whimper and I want to run far away. Away right into Isiah's arms.

I hate my mom for choosing him as her boyfriend, he's a monster. I can feel his warm breath on my neck. I flinch as I feel his lips press to the skin.

He's not gentle; he pushes me down and starts tugging at my clothes. I yell, but who will hear me. Tears form in my eyes as he touches where ever he pleases. The monster shoves into me and it burns, I feel like I'm being broken.

I'm screaming and he's getting his own sick pleasure from it. It goes on and on forever. Then his sticky seed spurts into me and acid burns in my throat at the gross feeling. My heart is being enveloped in something cold and merciless.

## Isiah and Ryan

He gets up off of me gathers his clothes and leaves. Leaves me left on the couch, curled in a ball.

I feel disgusting and used. I feel hurt and lost. I want it to be a bad dream, I desperately want to wake up, but I don't.

My stomach is churning, I think I'm going to throw up. I stumble to the bathroom and sick into the toilet. Now, there's nothing left inside of me. I'm empty. I lay my head on the cold porcelain of the bathtub.

After a few minutes, I climb in to get the ghastly essence of him off of me. I fill the tub up all the way with freezing cold water. It makes my skin numb. I grab at the rough bristle brush and scrub my whole body until it's painful red and raw. Blood starts flowing from a few places where I washed really hard.

I don't feel clean, though.

Author's notation: I feel terrible for writing this, I cried through the whole thing. I hurt poor Ryan. I feel so guilty!!!! =[

## Chapter 16

Part Two: Isiah

*Distance is a strange thing.*

*You can actually put emotional distance*

*between two people.*

*As of lately Ryan and I are so far away.*

Ryan insists nothing is wrong everytime I ask, but his eyes are glazed over and he's staring off into space. I put my hand on his shoulder and he jumped out of his skin.

I can't help but wonder if he changed his mind about us. Maybe he's afraid to tell me, but I've asked six times whats on his mind and he won't say anything.

I'm afraid of what might have happened, because what ever it is, really shaken him.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

By Saturday, nothing had changed. We've had it planned to go to the movies today and he said he still wants to go, so I don't think it's me. He doesn't seem to thrilled though.

The ride there he rocked in his seat like he was trying to calm himself. He kept biting his lip when he never did before. Occassionally he closes his eyes as if when he opens them what ever happened will have just been a dream.

Before we go into the theater I hug him and ask if he's okay. Surprisingly, he returns the affection and holds on really tightly. For the past couple days, he jumped when I got within a foot of him. Now, he's holding on like I'll be gone if he doesn't. I pet my fingers through his silky, chocolate locks and he melts into my chest. "It's okay" I kiss his forehead.

He nods and just like that walks towards the building. I have to catch up with him. Ryan still seems so empty and gutted.

I don't know where he's at in that mind of his. He goes to the bathroom for the fourth time and I look kind of strange sitting alone.

Each time he smiles I know it's not the one I fell for. Not that inner happiness bursting from within. His smile is forced.

I feel totally helpless.

## Chapter 17

Part Nine

Chapter One: Ryan

*I can't*

*get clean.*

*I can't*

*shake this.*

*I can't*

*feel okay.*

*Never again.*

My stomach churns everytime someone touches me, even though it isn't the monster it reminds me of his dirty hands on me. Isiah cares and he wants to help me, but he'll turn me aside if he knows what happened to my body.

For awhile I just sat around in my room for hours, not even feeling like going to school tomorrow, even though my weekend is over. I'm tired of it now. I can't just do this everyday. I need to tell my mom, at least she's home or I might lose the nerve.

"Mom, erm, can we talk?"

She looks busy and all, but I think she can tell it's serious, so she stops "What is it, hunny."

"Mom...? Your boyfriend-" I began, but her face shut down at the mention of him. I stop, she's staring right through me. I couldn't keep speaking with my throat this tight.

"Enough about him! I know he's not your dad, but accept him into your life. He's going to be around for a very long time."

Tears well in my eyes. I know what this means. I can't escape him.

I have a sinking feeling and she just goes on doing the dishes. I hang my head in shame and in sadness as I drag my feet to my bed to hide out again.

-----

*I'm screaming, the monster has moved in with us and she's not home. He touches me and holds me down. No matter how much I shake my head and tell myself it's not happening, it is.*

*His fingers trail my skin, haunting the flesh. It prickles in sickness of where he touches.*

## Isiah and Ryan

*I beg him not to do it, but it fuels his inner craziness more and he goes faster.*

It was just a dream. I gaze to my clock -4:26- I'm shaking and sweating and my nerves won't calm.

I can't swallow that lump aching through the center of my throat. I feel like I let myself down and everyone else that told me they hoped I got raped by a guy. They got what they wanted.

My misery leads me to my pack of cigarettes and the bathroom. At least it cools my skin. I crack the window and light up. Keeping the smoke in my lungs for as long as I can before blowing it out the window.

I feel drowsy again, but not enough to go back to sleep just to have the same fucking nightmare.

I don't want to have to think about those things. I want my head to spin, to not enraptured in that terror, for this to go away or at least seem unreal.

## Chapter 18

Chapter Two: Isiah

*When did*

*hope*

*disappear,*

*life*

*depress*

*and*

*smiles*

*fade?*

*"Dang, who forced you to wear a long-sleeve, baggy shirt" I try making out-going conversation with him. His smile is flat like usual. I miss the vibrant and spontaneous and sometimes strange-in-a-good-way Ryan. The Ryan that can brighten these dreary school halls.*

*I'm running out of options to get him to talk. From in my land of thinking, I hear him call my name. "Hmm" I say trying to refocus.*

*"Isiah, you'll love me no matter what, right?"*

*I hug him, even though it gets a lot of weird stares "Yes of course" I kiss his forehead he stiffens a little "Why?"*

*"Just wondering" and with that he looks down again. No more life, no more Ryan.*

-----

*I have his house phone number for emergencies and I would call this an emergency. I dial it fast as I pace around my room. It's a weird call to make, but I have to.*

*Third ring a lady picks up. "Is this Ryans mom?"*

*"Yes, who is this?"*

*"I'm gathering my thoughts of what to say "This is his friend, Isiah... Listen, I'm worried about Ryan. He barely talks or eats. He's even dressing differently. Is there anything that you know of that is making him act this way?"*

*I think she's really weirded out, because she doesn't reply. Finally, she says "I'll talk to him."*

*The phone clicks, and I hope, I hope with all of my heart that soon this will be different.*

## Chapter 19

Part Ten

Chapter One: Ryan

*Vicious eyes follow me*

*Can I help wanting to scream*

*My life's a living hell*

*My world has inevitably fell*

*Her boyfriends here, the monster, but so is Isiah, so I'm fine. I think he's picking up the weird vibes between me and monster.*

*My whole insides are trembling, like someone put my guts in a blender. I try avoiding him, because Isiah can't know he'll hate me. "Ryan" I hear someone distantly say my name. My vision screens back in. "You were zoning out, hun" he grabs my wrist, and I yelp because he squeezes where I made little pretties across my flesh. The tears well in my eyes, I'm hoping he didn't break open the wounds.*

*"Ryan, are you okay?" I feel dizzy, and I'm seeing spots, then there's nothing.*

-----

*It's warm, so incredibly warm. My eyelids feel heavy, like a lullaby is swooning them into a slumber. It's the most peaceful thing I've ever felt.*

*I stay like this, in this state of nothingness, for a long time. Then someone breaks, my happy oblivion. A bright light shines into my eyes. It smells of bleach, it's so sickening.*

*I'm trying to open my lids, they feel like they're dripped in glue. "Oh dear God... Ryan?" It's Isiahs voice, I'm in a hospital, I don't remember coming here. I recall being with Isiah, then... I don't know.*

*"I knew something was wrong... I knew... and I didn't do anything..." he's blaming himself, over and over again. He did know, but I was too stubborn to say anything.*

*"What happened?"*

*"You blacked out. They said you're stressed" he stroked the inside of my palm, and it's calming, but no where near the level of my earlier peace.*

*Isiahs biting at his lip, there's something else. "Tell me?"*

*His eyes widen "Oh, erm, nothing, just... they want you to talk to a therapist" his face is apologetic.*

*"I'm scared. You're hiding everything, and now you're here, and I just don't know what to do" I can tell it's true he's talking a mile a minute and his eyes are darting. They look glassy, his whole face looks painted over, decorated with something like grief all because of me.*

## Isiah and Ryan

*"...I'm sorry..."*

*Isiahs face looks disgusting, what did I do. "You're" he clenches his teeth and hisses "Sorry. How can you be sorry, this isn't your fault!"*

*It isn't, but in the end, he'll be the one hurting, and that's what I'm sorry for the most.*

## Chapter 20

Chapter Two: Isiah

*Thoughts reap*

*Torturing*

*Lacking sleep*

*Haunting*

*Dizzy circles*

*Breathing*

*Crazy world*

*Tragedy*

*No one has answers. Nurses, his mom, and even Ryan himself.*

*I feel distant, I feel gutted. I wish for happiness, I wish for solution. I've failed, I can't help him, or fix this. My heads caving in, it's a good thing I'm already at the hospital, because I just may pass out, too.*

*I won't though. I have to stay awake for Ryan. He looks so sad in the hospital bed. I never noticed how sickly skinny and ashen he really was until now. He looks so fragile, like a baby.*

*They said he'll be out soon, but this isn't the end of the problems. There's cuts on his wrist and he's really stressed, there's a reason. I don't even know if I want to know the reason. It scares me.*

*Ryan turns around a little in his sleep and just that is enough to make me rush to his side. I scooch him over and lay next to him. He's pretty cold, but I wrap my arms around him. Pretty soon his breathing lulls me into a sleep.*

-----

*"Saiah... wake up" I heard it distantly, like it was a dream, but I was sleeping. I had to be, and the sound wasn't from there.*

*I flicker my eyes open, much against my bodies will. Ryans looking at me all dazed, his eyes droopy on his angled face. It would be the cutest thing I ever saw, if he wasn't sleepy because he's ill. I lightly grip his jaw bone, caressing the soft, pale skin.*

*He frowns, whatever he sees he doesn't like... but he's looking at me, in my eyes. I don't want him to feel bad, I just- I kiss his forehead, because this whole situation has me lost for the right words. He hugs my torso as hard as he can. He's colder than usual, which I didn't think was possible considering he's always freezing.*

*Suddenly, the door cracks open. "Ryan" Barbie says breathless. Her eyes are all wide, and now Ryans are too.*

## Isiah and Ryan

*"I'm sorry I was being so mean. I can't believe you're in the hospital. Oh my gosh, I'm so fucking sorry" she rushes forwards and hugs him, and he chuckles. I scooch over, it's sort of uncomfortable cuddling someone who is hugging someone else. "Opps, I was interrupting you guys, just when I heard that you're here, Ry, I freaked out!"*

*This time I'm laughing, too.*

## Chapter 21

Part Eleven

Chapter One: Ryan

*Desecration*

*Mutilation*

*Mind dissipating itself*

*Thoughts out on a shelf*

*The light I can no longer see*

*Maybe the death of me*

*Mutilation*

*Desecration*

*I could happy dance, I get to leave this horrid place. Oh no, it's not the end of all of this, but at least I'm not stuck here with everyone watching me like hawks. I have to go therapy now, this is going to suck, but I won't say anything about him because then my mom will find out, and she'll be mad again.*

I can't help but be frustrated though, because I know that I'm going to have to keep lying to Isaiah, and now I have to deal with a therapist, too. I'll try to make the best of it though.

"Come on, Ry" Isaiah whispers, and I remember why I'm still here. He grabs my hand and pulls me along to his car, when we get in he starts looking over at me in that frantic way. "You okay?" He's reduced to those damn half-sentences, like he's afraid of me.

I don't answer him, because I don't feel like talking to him when he's this way. I look out my window to the trees and office buildings that are passing me by. I wonder if there's people in there that are just as unhappy as me.

Isaiah puts his hand on my knee, not in a slutty way, but like he's a concerned grandmother. "Oh please, don't be this way."

I scoff, because it's ludicrous for him to even say that I'm acting any kind of way "How can you say that when you're treating me this way?" He moves his hand back to the steering wheel and clenches and unclenches his hands, it's gets really quiet. I don't know what comes over me, but I'm angry at him. "Yeah, well, fuck you, too" I spit.

*Clench.*

*Unclench.*

*Silence.*

## Isiah and Ryan

I shouldn't have said it, I don't really want to hurt him. I look over and his eyes are a little glassy. I know I'm being selfish now. "Look, I'm sor-"

He interrupts me. "I'm just trying to help you, Ryan." He's angry, but not really, because his eyes are getting more watery. I feel like shit for doing this. "I love you, and-" Isaiah pauses and shakes his head like he's thinking, but there's a tear on his face now.

I look down, I feel guilty, I'm the reason for it. "Come on, pull into a parking lot, 'Saiah."

He does, but he turns towards me "What?" It's not the nicest question, and I don't know how to answer it. I get an impulse and open my door. I walk over to his side and open the door. I wish he would look at me, but he's hiding behind his blond bangs.

I sit on his lap and start hamming, I know it's a cheap shot, but if that's what it takes. "What are you doing?!?"

"No-thing" I sing-song it into two long syllables. I kiss the tip of his nose and he chuckles.

"Alright, you're forgiven, but *only* because you're just *that* cute" He smiles and pulls his arms around me. I get to rest my head at home, right above his heart; I cling my hands to the fabric of his shirt, and nuzzle closer.

"It'll be okay" I wanted to re-assure him, but it came off as a question.

## Chapter 22

Chapter Two: Isaiah

*Is it enough*

*just to be there,*

*to hold you,*

*to kiss you?*

*Is there so much*

*more than this?*

*I practically live at his house no. I mean 'Mom, I'm his best friend, he needs me right now'. Luckily, it works, and I stay over. I know he needs that.*

I notice that he's brightened up a little bit, except when he comes back from therapy, he's so drained, like he put effort into not talking, they told me he won't talk. They want me to come in with him, and see if that will make him more comfortable or something like that.

He wanders a lot now, he is right now. I can hear he's tiny footsteps padding along on the floor. I can't help but wonder, what is he searching for. I guess, he's found it, because the bathroom door shuts. I listen for any source of noise. He takes a long time, and the toilet doesn't flush, there's no water from a shower. What did he find?

He doesn't look much better than when he walked into the room. I pull him into my lap, and ask him if he's eaten today.

"I'm fine."

I sigh "I asked if you've eaten today."

He tries wiggling away, but I only hold tighter "I'm fine, Isaiah."

"You're lighter, and I haven't seen you eat in forever."

He pinches the bridge of his nose in frustration "I haven't felt okay enough to eat." I want Ryan to feel okay, I bounce my knee, and hold him tighter. "You make me feel so helpless."

I only grasp my arms around him more, because I can feel him steadily disappearing literally and emotionally. "You make me feel so hopeless."

Ryan wiggles again, I look at his pale face, the blush is gone still. He closes his eyes and bites his lip.

"I'm really fine."

It makes me want to cry, he's so determined. "Don't say that, you know for a fact it's not true."

## Isiah and Ryan

Then, his sister, Hunter walks in "Eww, fag love."

Everyone makes things so much better. Ryan looks down and twiddles his thumbs.

I sit up and pick him up bridal style, his head rests in the crook of my neck, and I take him to his room. I lay Ryan down on his bed and sit next to him, I smooth his hair, he slowly curls more and more into a ball, and when he's asleep, I lay with him.

I hold him again, because there isn't a possibility that he's disappearing. He is, for certain, slipping away.

## Chapter 23

Part Twelve

Chapter One: Ryan

*No,*

*it's so simple.*

*Why don't you understand?*

*Only one syllable.*

*No,*

*I refuse to talk.*

*Why don't you understand?*

*I can't tell anyone.*

*No!*

*I have stupid therapy again, and they're making Isaiah come. This is so humiliating, I didn't do anything! What's so far off about that? It's just really frustrating, because this has Isaiah convinced that something is wrong with me.*

*The only thing to do is sit back and relax, watch as people try to dissect my life. They don't know just how wasted their efforts are. I'm not going to talk about smoking, or not eating, or cutting, and I'm definitely not talking about the monster.*

*I don't even want to think about him, the way he's dictated my life by doing what he did. It makes me sick when I realise he's the reason why I hurt myself and close off, but I can't stop it.*

*The haunting thoughts never go away, and sometimes, I do want to tell someone, Isaiah or my therapist, but I can't bring myself to, I always chicken out. It's better this way anyways, my mom would just make me look bad somehow, and I'd end up in a crazy home.*

*Well, here comes the worst of it all.*

*"So, does Ryan act different with you than he does right now?" he stiffens a little, it caught him off-guard, I should have warned him that she's good at that.*

*Isaiah clenches his jaw "A little bit, but not much, he's more talkative, and sometimes loving, but he... closes off and gets angry when I pry."*

*Just like that he betrays me, and starts talking. I think he knows I'm mad, because he's gotten more nervous. Now, it's my turn, she'll ask me something now.*

Isiah and Ryan

*"Is that true?"*

*No, of course it's not, i'm fine remember!*

*"I see, and do you think that's what Isaiah wants?"*

*She's guilt tripping me, are therapists aloud to do that?!? I get another nudge.*

*I sigh, I want to say something witty that will make them both angry, but I can practically feel care radiating off of him. "No, I think he wants me to be happy. When he looks at me... it's different than when we first started going out. He looks happy to see me, but like he has to be careful."*

*I hate how unreactive this lady, we could start making out in front of her, and she would ask, how do you feel about that. "Do you think he has to be careful?"*

And I don't know how to answer that, maybe I do. He does, but I can't let them know that.

I don't talk though, it will only give her satisfaction, but Isaiah elbows me, and I may as well go through with it. "A little bit, I guess. Well, yeah... I do."

## Chapter 24

Chapter Two: Isaiah

*Hope.*

*I can only*

*Hope*

*anymore, but*

*Hope*

*has run out.*

I would say there's success for the long run, because Ryan actually talked, but no success for the moment, because he's pissed at me. And I hate for it to be this way, but we parted in anger.

I'm at home now, avoiding my dad who started yelling about where I've been for the past couple of days. I've learned to ignore him. I call Ryan to apologize, but his phone rings and rings and no one answers.

He never leaves his cell anywhere, so he must not want to talk yet.

I don't think I can do anything else but wait and stare at my surroundings or lack there of. I always miss him when we're apart, and lately, even when we're together I feel miles away from his world.

*x x x*

Hunter's frantic voice shimmying through the telephone tells me that the world is upside down. That's the only reason her name is buzzing on the screen. Reluctantly, I click talk. I don't even get in a hello, and she says "You'd better come over."

I know it's about Ryan, so I drive there, though I'd travel to the moon and back for him.

My heart stops when I hear the police sirens foreshadowing what has happened. In the back of the car is Ryans' moms' boyfriend; what's-his-name... Matt? Mark?

I rush over and there's Hunter with her arms wrapped tightly around her torso, holding all of the emotion in.

Her eyes are wide and eyebrows are creased, she takes a deep breath "I walked in and he was-"

"He?"

"Mark" she clarifies. "He was... Oh my gosh" Hunter starts sobbing. In any other circumstance I'd comfort her, but not now, not with things this way.

"Hunter, please, just tell me what happened."

She wipes at her eye. "He raped Ryan, and now he won't come out of his room. I'm afraid he-"she stops "Mom's not home."

But I had stopped listening after the first three words. Right now, I could just crumble in my stance, or shrink back inside my own body, but I can't do that, or at least I won't let myself.

Ryans brought that out of me. The overcoming my fears and emotion, because that's how he used to be until lately. Now I know why. Ryan really helped me in every way a person could. I realize because of him that there are bigger matters than basketball; I found out that what people think doesn't matter; I learned that love is everything and I need to protect those things.

Without a second thought, I run into the house. Just like Hunter said, his door is locked. I put my hand on the hard, shiny plain of wood, it slowly clenches into a fist. "Ryan..."

"Go away, Isaiah!" He doesn't sound angry or hurt but emotionless with a hint of bitterness.

I press my forehead to the annoying barrier between us and rest my other hand on the cold, brass knob. "You can't just quit because of this. I'm here and I love you, and whatever you're thinking will get better."

"Don't feed me that shit, Isaiah" he scoffs "You sound like those damn therapists. I'm not coming out, you'll probably hate me. I'm so disgusting-"

I interrupted him "You are not the disgusting one that man out there is, and I'm not letting him come between us. I love you God damn it."

On the other side of the door there's a shuffling, then the door knob shifts under my hand.

## Chapter 25

Part Thirteen

Chapter One: Ryan

*Surreal:*

*I'm still here.*

*Contrary:*

*So are you.*

The moment an inch of my flesh reaches through the doorway, Isaiah embraces me. He does in the way that he's got his arms reached up over my shoulders with one hand placed gently on the back of my head and the other palm cradling my back. This is how he protects me. I rest my forehead in the familiar heat of his neck for I don't know how long.

He constricts the silence "I'm so sorry, Ry." It's so much too handle; the feeling of the horrors gone, but the wounds still fresh.

A pregnant pause follows in which he caresses my neck, and I shiver. Finally, I muster up the courage "It wasn't the first time... I should have told you sooner." On my tongue and in my heart the words reek vulnerability, but for once I don't mind.

I feel a wetness in my hair. Before the thought registers, he pulls away, and I see the tears glittering in his green eyes. "How could I have let this happen?"

"You didn't 'let this happen'. It did, and there's absolutely nothing we can do about it now except move on" I surprise even myself with my harsh, sharp tone and especially Isaiah. "Now don't you start pouting. No matter how horrible that sounds, it's the truth. "

And finally, he sighs, but before he can say another word, I kiss him. It's what I need to rid myself of the monster. Isaiah kisses back like he knows, and holds me like I'm something delicate. It makes me remember being a kid, how you're happy even when everything is terrible.

Then it's over, and he grabs my hand to pull me outside. All these people are trying to talk to me, but it's a blur with Isaiah pulling me away from them. We run and run, and nothing else matters or can come between us.

Before I know it, we're at the park, and I'm still thinking about being a kid. With him I have that reassurance like when you're a child. I could never get sick of it. I could never get tired of him. I know if I jump, he wouldn't jump too, but he'd be my catcher in the rye.

Isaiah lets out a long breath that blows my thoughts away, he's looking around at the trees and flowers and clouds. They're beautiful. Then his eyes fall on me, and I don't know what to say. 'You're beautiful' he fathoms, and I must be bright red. He chuckles "I've always loved your little blush" and I blush more. He only pulls me close, and our bodies sway in some unknown waltz.

It doesn't feel like bad stuff happened today, I feel fresh and new. I look to his long, chiseled face, and I feel hope.

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