*To feel sad, repentant, or disappointed over something that one has done or failed to do,* this is the definition of regret.There is a famous quote that says we only regret the things we didn’t do and although this may be true, I can’t help but think that sometimes we regret the things we did more than the things we didn’t do. Albert Einstein once theorized that to travel back in time one would have to travel faster than the speed of light. And although this is impossible, currently at least, I can’t help but wish that I could turn back time and correct what may just be the biggest mistake I’ll ever make. But unfortunately life doesn’t work like typing out a story, when we make a mistake we can’t simply backspace and rewind the clocks, we have to try and learn from our mistakes and try to do better in the future. Like most things in life, this is something that’s easier said than done and I am still trying to live with my biggest regret; letting you, again.

As you may know, I’m not really good at expressing my thoughts and feelings except through writing. Because when I write, it’s as though my soul is bleeding onto the pages as the words I could never say flow through my fingers. I guess that’s why I decided to write this. Because bottling up everything is killing me, slowly, and I hope that this will help, even if just a little.

Firstly, I want to start off by apologizing. I know that simply saying “I’m sorry” doesn’t do anything to take away the pain I caused, but I remember this one quote I saw years ago that read *Sorry is nothing, the real apology is when you can look in their eyes and see they’ve hurt themselves just as much.* And believe me, if you had looked in my eyes at any point in the last 5 months, you would have seen just how much my actions hurt me, even if not as much as it hurt you. I have been putting myself in your shoes, and tried to imagine what it must have been like for you, to try and imagine what it must have felt like to have someone who claimed to love you so much, hurt you so badly, but whenever I do, it breaks me and I can’t help but feel like such a terrible person. There was a time where I was convinced that I was a bad person, because of how I hurt you. Which was a bit ironic because when we were together, you always made me feel like I had a heart of gold. J.K Rowling once wrote that we all have both dark and light inside us, that what matters is the part we choose to act on and that’s who we really are. I’ve never told you this but your love and the way you saw me made me want to be a better person, it made me want to act on the light so that the way you saw me never changed. Ever since everything happened, I have been trying even harder to hold onto the little light that remained, so that if you ever came into my life again, you’d still be able to see me as a good person.

They say that actions speak louder than words and although my actions have contradicted it, when I say that I have never stopped loving you since the day I started, I hope that you know I mean it, because when it’s that real it doesn’t fade. It may seem a bit contradictory that I’m claiming to love you and yet I hurt you so badly, but that’s what I hope to discuss in this piece; not to try and find excuses or justify what happened, but rather to just try and explain things from my perspective.

I always say that I blame myself for both of our breakups. The biggest problem we faced when we decided to try again, was the fact that I hadn’t dealt with the past properly. In classic Zayyan fashion, I thought that I could bury things deep down until it disappeared. But that’s not the way things work, the more you try to bury things, the more they build up and the worse it becomes. I know that I’m the only one to blame, but I can’t help but wonder that if I had learned earlier on in life to deal with my emotions better, maybe I wouldn’t be having to write this. Maybe I wouldn’t have posted that video. Maybe I wouldn’t have said the things I said. Maybe I could have been what you needed. Maybe we’d still be together. But ‘what ifs’ and ‘maybes’ can’t change the past, nothing can.

So I kept trying to bury the past hurt, unaware that slowly it was building up, unaware that eventually it would become too much and I’d explode. Over time, I buried so much that it began to feel like things weren’t working between us anymore. With all these things clouding my mind, it became hard to see the truth, that things were good, that you were perfect. Why didn’t I just communicate with you, like I said I would? Why didn’t I just deal with my shit? Fuck. Eventually I began to think that maybe I should end things. Because, again, with my mind clouded it became hard to realise that things were actually working. The other reason I thought about ending things was that I began thinking that I wasn’t good for you, again. I wrote this before, but the first time we dated I really began to feel like I was a rock holding you down. And I began to feel that way again. Because when we just got back together you seemed a lot happier than you were a few months down the line. When you told me you don’t think it would be good for you to be with me again, this kind of confirmed this in my mind. Again, why didn’t I just communicate with you? Perhaps I would have realised that you just had other stuff going on in your life. Fuck.

Fast forward to the day I ended things. This isn’t an excuse but I was so hurt by seeing you out with other guys at 1am. People deal with hurt in different ways, my go-to response is anger. And the anger just worsened my already clouded judgement and I sent you that hurtful message, ending things. Maybe if I had just taken some time to calm down, we could have spoken about it, and we’d still be together. Fuck. For the record, I didn’t think you’d cheated on me, despite all the anger I felt, I would never think that low of you. And then I went and made things worse, by posting that video, and getting into a fight with your sister. Despite all that though, you still tried to message me. To try and meet up with me, so we could talk about things. I was so caught up in my own head that I said no. But I wish I hadn’t, I wish I had met up with you, so we could have worked things out. Fuck. FUCK!

I recently took a walk by the bench where we first kissed, or rather the bench where you first kissed me (as you’d say). It was dark, just like that night, and it was drizzling. It seemed so familiar and yet so distant, as though I was experiencing déjà vu. The difference was that I knew the memories I had were real, that the first time I felt your soft lips against mine was magic. I lingered for a bit, reminiscing, before it got too painful so I kept walking. Until I came to another familiar scene; the courts where we used to play tennis. I felt the knot in my stomach tighten as I was flooded with more memories. Like the time we got stuck in the courts and had to jump the fence. I turned around to walk back to my car, because I knew if I stayed there I would have drowned in memories so painful that I try to keep them locked away. I passed by that bench again and somehow managed a smile through the pain. I smiled because I know that on that night, all those years ago, we were magic. Every time I think of you I get this sharp, painful feeling flowing through my body starting from my heart and ending in my stomach, the best way I can describe is that it’s as though someone sends electricity through my veins instead of blood and I have to take a few seconds to ground myself. That feeling then stays in my stomach. What makes it worse is that it seems there is no limit to things that remind me of you. It doesn’t have to be places we’ve been, things we’ve spoken about or things we’ve done together. This makes it really hard to be around people, because at any moment my anxiety can get really bad, so instead I avoid people but spending time alone with my thoughts just pushes me further down the hole. It’s a vicious cycle that I can’t seem to stop. I watched this TED talk recently that spoke about the best thing for people suffering from anxiety and depression is to be around people close to them, but I just can’t, it’s too hard.

The hardest thing about anxiety is that it doesn’t stop, it doesn’t go away; it’s always there. Some moments are just worse than others. It can make you feel like you’re going crazy, to constantly be controlled by your thoughts and then feel a physical manifestation of those thoughts in your body as your heart beats faster, your stomach tightens, you struggle to breathe, your muscles tense up, your body trembles. I was standing in line at Woolworths one morning and, as usual, my mind flooded with thoughts (mainly about you) and my anxiety was through the roof. Naturally, I was restless, biting my nails, pulling at my hair, shaking my legs. Desperately trying to ground myself, I started watching the people around me. I noticed the lady in front of me was standing dead still so I turned around and saw that most of the others behind me were too (the ones moving were just checking the products on the shelves). That made it worse. In that moment it felt like I was crazy. I began to imagine what it’d be like to be someone else for a day, someone who doesn’t have this constant feeling like he’s about to implode. Everyone, at some point in their lives, experiences stress and anxiety. Professionals would tell you that it only becomes a disorder, or a problem, when it’s ongoing and starts to interfere with your daily life. For example, when you’re sitting in front of your laptop with your work open but can’t seem to bring yourself to focus, until weeks go by and you realise that you’ve fallen so far behind that catching up seems impossible, which in turn makes your anxiety worse. Or perhaps when at random points throughout the day you find yourself unable to breathe, when you can barely manage to eat half a cup of noodles without feeling like throwing up or perhaps it’s when you struggle to fall sleep because your body keeps convulsing and your head keeps spinning. Maybe it’s a problem when you listen to artists like Kid Cudi and Phora on repeat because their music is so relatable that it provides some sort of faux-lifeline. Maybe it’s a problem when none of your habits seem to help for longer than a few minutes; smoking, driving your car like you’re on a racetrack, pushing yourself at gym. So you run to the pills, because it seems like the only thing that can help.

Do you know why people who are depressed cut? Because it can be very hard to feel all this pain internally and yet from the outside look like nothing is wrong. Imagine looking in the mirror, and you see exactly what you should see; your reflection. When you touch your left ear, your reflection follows suit. Every feature that defines you perfectly reflected. The problem is that, in the mirror, you look okay. You look like nothing’s wrong, and yet on the inside you’re barely holding onto life itself. Cutting then provides a way to physicalize that inner pain, and make it real. Cutting, or just self-harm in general, releases endorphins (feel-good chemicals) in the brain which can actually in that moment make you feel a bit better, which is why it can be so hard to stop. It is not always about suicide; sometimes people cut to try and feel more alive. Although I have never tried it, I can say that I understand, because it can be very hard to think that I may have to keep living feeling this way. That’s the thing about depression, it makes you feel like there’s no hope, which can be very dangerous. Depression is a bit harder to describe than anxiety because the symptoms aren’t as visible and it can be very easy to just think that someone suffering from it is just sad, but it’s so much more than just sadness. It’s a feeling of emptiness, numbness and hopelessness inside and nothing you do ever feels like it fills the missing piece. Not all the new phones, tv’s or sports cars you buy ever helps. It feels like the only hope you have is to run away, but the truth is that you can’t run and hide from yourself. You still smile, make jokes and laugh like everyone else but just like anxiety, it’s always there with you, like a dark cloud looming over you, while everyone around seems to basking in the sun, and it feels like you’ll never be able to join them.

I can’t say that I feel this way because of your absence in my life, these are things I’ve struggled with for a long time, but the situation I find myself in now is definitely a trigger, one which I can’t seem to avoid. Do you know what it’s like to feel your mental state deteriorating, knowing there is nothing you can do to stop it? The movie Joker had the most accurate representation of it that I’ve ever seen. Because it doesn’t happen all at once. It’s sort of like an inverse exponential graph, where you start off at this ‘high’ point where you feel relatively fine and then as time goes on you start to get bad, slowly at first. But once it starts getting bad, it gets worse quicker and quicker, until eventually you’ve lost yourself again. And each time it happens, feels worse than the last. What makes it even worse is having no one to turn to. No one who can help you get back up again.

I don’t know if you hate me, but you should know that I will always hate myself for the mistakes I’ve made, and the pain I’ve caused you and I know that doesn’t change anything but maybe it will help you realise just how sorry I am for everything. The hardest part of it all is knowing that there is no one to blame but me, but I guess that I just have to learn to forgive myself, no matter how long it takes. And I hope maybe you can too.

P.S. The waitress at Café Sofia, our waitress, asked me if we were back together. I told her we’re not and she asked why, so I just smiled and said ‘maybe one day’ but I know there isn’t much hope for that, only a fool’s hope. She told me we should get back together because we look like a good fit and I just smiled because damn, I couldn’t help but agree with her. She said she would pray for us because she’s a strong believer in prayer. But I didn’t write this to try and get you back or to justify what I’ve done. I wrote this for both of us. So that we both can understand better why I did the things I did and how I know now that it was a mistake. You told me you just wanted to know that I’m okay and at the time I had all these thoughts running through mind, things that I just couldn’t bring myself to tell you. But now you know and I guess you can decide for yourself if you think I’m okay or not. This isn’t even everything I would have wanted to say but maybe one day we’ll get to talk about it in person, but I know that isn’t very likely.

I know that no one else will ever be able to love me the way you did, and I’d like to think that no one would ever love you the way I do. I hope you find the happiness in this life that you deserve and sometimes I can’t help but wonder if maybe it’d be easier for you to move on and forget me if I was gone. And if I’m being honest, I don’t really know how much longer I can stay.

Sometimes, how good a thing was is forgotten in the way it ends and so if this is the end for us, I want the last words I say to be that I love you, my Princess. I always will. Always.