

SASHA'S LETTER

He had been trying since God knew when, and he had never stopped trying. Sasha was the type who never said "die." Most people didn't know it, but Sasha Covalev was probably the most sincere person on the face of the earth. Sasha was very much the introvert; he never raised his hand; he never spoke out of turn. In fact, Sasha was almost considered nonexistent by the rest of his class. To call Sasha shy would be an understatement, because he was painfully quiet.

Sasha Covalev had problems, which was not shocking, considering that he was a teenager. Sasha's immense will was under heavy burden because of the state of his country, his overwhelming fear of returning, and for the fact that he had almost no family or friends remaining. Sasha was living in America as a foreign exchange student. Denise Walker and her family warmly welcomed Sasha into their home, and they opened a place in their hearts for Sasha to step into. Quentin, Virginia was a world away from Bosnia.

Sasha had been living with the Walkers for the past school year. During that year, his senior year, he had lived his American dream, just by being an American high school student.

Nobody ever had any problems with him. Sasha made the honor roll everytime; he was a crowd favorite on the soccer team; and he had perfect attendance. Denise had become his best friend, because she was the only one who really listened to him. Denise was a warm, sensitive girl, who truly wanted to help Sasha. After her family had applied for the foreign exchange student program, they had received Sasha's letter. That letter tugged strongly at Denise's heart. Sasha had left out much of the horror of his everyday life, because it was so heartwrenching to explain to anybody.

Denise had asked Sasha many times over the course of the past year what his life was like in Bosnia. Sasha refused to tell her everytime, because this year in America would probably be the only happiness he would ever experience in life. He wanted these memories in America to be his one solace when he went back to his country to die. The year was almost gone, and he had one week left in America. Sasha felt panic, and his mind was like a turbulent storm. He finally opened up to Denise.

"Denise, I am scared to death," admitted a terrified Sasha. "In my country, it is common to see your family killed in front of your eyes." Denise listened in silence with wide eyes, because how could she comfort someone who was staring death in the face?

"I--I have one uncle left in my country. He is my only family. All my friends are dead," informed Sasha. Sasha was dealing with more than just frustration, because he was in a hopeless situation. "If I do not return, my family name will live in dishonor...I have to go back." There was no way Denise could help Sasha, and they both knew it.

One week later, Sasha boarded a plane to fly back to his country. Dread filled the air, as Sasha Covalev said goodbye to Denise, his only friend left in the world. They gave each other a

lasting hug.

"Write me as soon as you get home, Sasha," Denise requested.

Sasha's only response was, "I will."

It has been five years since Denise and Sasha parted, and she has not heard from him yet. Denise moved on in her life, graduated from college, and was just recently married. The same caring personality that Denise had always carried with her is still there, because she never forgot about her friend Sasha. Each day she checks the mail, and deep down, she expects to hear from Sasha. Although doubt has begun to enter Denise's mind, she is still waiting for Sasha's letter.