

Anywhere I go, she is there. Sometimes I don't notice her. Most of the time I do. There will always be an awareness in the back of my mind that she is following. The other day I was carrying something heavy up the stairs and paused, scrunching up my face. I can hear her giggling in the corner.

I put a hand on the railing and give myself a moment to tune out her gleeful squeals.

"I'm not going to die by losing my balance and falling backwards down the stairs," I tell her flatly. Because I have to.

"But you held the rail and stopped!" She cracks herself up.

"I did that because I have to."

"Because if you don't you'll crack your head open and—"

I continue walking.

For a while, when I was younger, I didn't know she existed. I thought her laughs belonged to me or those around me. I didn't know where they came from. She hid her presence for a long, long time.

But she underestimated me. She does not understand my intelligence or my strength. Even when I didn't know she was there, even before the revelation, I picked myself up and dusted off her influence.

I fought for my life.

I did before I knew who she was.

I do now because I know who she is.

She is not me.

I am not her.

With this distinction,

I fight a battle against her everyday.

She is a mischevious little pixie that gets a kick out of lingering. All so she can laugh at me. And sometimes she whispers. She likes to do that in the pauses. In the aftermath. I'll be leaving a place and she'll tease,

"You know they actually hate you, right?"

"No, they don't," I contradict. Defiance in my eyes.

"But you probably offended them when you said—"

I walk away.

"You know I'm right," she taunts. "If it wasn't a possibility you wouldn't check your phone or scramble to apologize or wince or mentally kick yourself."

"I do that because I have to."

"Because if you don't then you'll be an awful friend and—"

"You're a horrible friend," she tells me as I sit on the steps outside of a building, watching the crowds in front of me. "So much for being a good person!" She scoffs.

I look down at the ground, kicking myself mentally.

This is my fault.

"This is your fault," she tells me.

I feel horrible. I send the person I hurt some texts and continue to sit there, knowing I don't deserve to join the fun. A minute or so later I blink, glaring over at the pixie. She's done this before. She's twisted my perception of things.

"What does she gain by me punishing myself?" I ask her.

She shrugs, smirking.

I huff and get off the stairs, pretending she's not there.

"You're never going to understand that," she gestures. I close my eyes and take a deep breath.

"I will." I tell her. Because I have to.

"She'll think you're dumb anyway."

"I don't care."

"Yes you do, or you wouldn't be telling me that. You wouldn't be talking to me instead of doing your work."

I scowl.

"I'm not having a chat with you right now," I correct. "I'm giving myself some time to block you out. So I can *finish my work*."

"They won't understand that though."

"So I'll explain."

"They'd never believe you. A stalker pixie? Please!"

"It doesn't matter. I know I'm doing my best."

"But is that good enough?"

"Yes."

I'm having trouble breathing. Not because my air ways are constricted. But because my heart is pounding and my mind racing.

"It'll be like this forever," she tells me. "You're not safe."

"You'll go back and it'll be like it was before."

"You'll be powerless."

"You'll get yelled at."

"You don't matter to them."

"You can't tell anyone because it'll ruin everything."

"It's all in your head."

"But you're not making it up."

"The contradictions will kill you."

"Stop," I tell her, tears falling from my eyes. "You're wrong!" I snap. "You're always going to be wrong!"

"And yet you keep me around," she smiles wickedly. "Because you have to!" She snarls. "Because if you don't then you'll hate yourself and question

everything!”

I know that’s a contradiction.

But I still believe it.

Because I have to.

Not everybody understands. They can’t see her. They don’t feel her presence every waking and sleeping moment. The battles I fight are invisible to everyone else. Sometimes they want to tell me I’m a liar. *She* tells me I’m a liar.

I know I’m not.

I know she’s here.

I know she’ll be here my whole life.

I know these feelings aren’t fake. I know my tears are real. I know the way I feel isn’t normal. I know now that most people don’t have a seething pixie following them. It’s almost funny how little they understand. I’m glad no one else sees or hears her. Because I have to fight her every single day of my life and I don’t want anyone else to have to deal with that.

Not even those that don’t understand.

I’ll carry this burden.

I’ll carry it and bear her presence.

Because I have to.