**Shadow**

I stared at the picture that was framed with gold metallic borders and a glass cover. The beautiful sunset coloured the sky with warm colours as we sat on the edge of the mountain cliff. Harry was facing towards the scenery, while my eyes were focused on him. Our happiness shone through, yet I couldn’t find it anymore.

Before I could lift the photo off the counter, the whole object shattered completely. Glass pieces fell out of the frame, shining from the sunlight. The sharp sound rang through my ears and it pushed me to recall memories of Harry while pain started to crawl on top of my skin. Pain pushed me deep down into hell, and hollowness made the emotion difficult to explain. Then, my heart would throb as the ache controlled me, numbing down my body. The endless torture would force myself to sob and scream. Pain would never go away; because as long as he was here, he could make me miserable in every possible way. However, it didn’t disappeared without him either.

Harry always had this outburst personality which made people afraid of who he was. The violence he constantly got himself into gave him an image of a monster. Often, he would swear and became angry, adding a stronger barrier to communicate with others. It was difficult to remain kind because he grew up in a world that always haunt him. People forced him to become a nightmare where they only saw the darkness. At the same time, he had also became afraid of losing people he loved. The “monster” label led him to believe that he was what they all said.

I was the only person who saw the light.

He always criticized me for doing certain things. When I tried wrapping presents, he told me I sucked, but later laughed as he realized that he wasn’t better. Sometimes, he would call me dumb for not understanding the lessons we learned in school except he stayed up and carefully explained everything to me. Although he hated bowling, we would still go while we threw rude comments at each other. Harry was better than how people labelled him, but he could no longer fight for it.

We couldn’t fight the hatred with our love.

I continued to fold the dark clothing into a nice form, then placing them inside the cardboard box. The smell of his clothes were always minty and blended with a fruit scent because Harry believed cologne smelt like “rotten apples.”

Clearing this whole house was more difficult than I expected once I carried all the boxes down to the living room. The pair of hands that once provided assistance had vanished with the person.

In the back of my jeans pocket, I felt vibration from my phone that instantly snapped my thoughts.

*From Sasha:*

*Don’t start moving the boxes without me. I will be back with coffee in 5 minutes.*

I grabbed a long white cloth and began wiping every furniture in the area. Once again, I needed to use cleaning as an excuse to avoid seeing the truth of being alone.

“Hailey. What are you doing?” Sasha asked, coming inside with two coffee cups in her hands.

She placed them on the table and then held me from moving any further.

“I can’t let a new family move in with a mess.” I tugged away from her hold, continuing with my task.

“Hailey,” She began. “You already cleaned everything this morning. You’ve done it twice.”

I paused for a moment.

“Don’t lie to me, Sasha.” I fired back, unable to admit my mistakes.

“Hailey. You’ve done enough. You already helped enough. Stop pushing yourself to do something that won’t make you happy.”

“I’m happy when I clean.”

“We both know that it’s not the cleaning I’m talking about. It’s about accepting the truth. Hailey, he’s gone. Harry is dead.” Sasha stated.

I immediately clamped my hands over my ear, blocking out the sentence she last said. I didn’t want to listen to her. Everything she was telling me sounded like nails being scratched down on the chalkboard.

She yanked my arms down, forcing me to look at her. Her eyes were starting to rim with water and she looked as if she held fear that could destroy her. The twinkling she once had was already fading. I tried to hear her speak while hoping for a familiar male voice to save me from the misery.

“You have to listen to me.” She sternly said, hiding the weakness behind her voice.

“Listen to what? Listen to the fact that you’re forcing me to accept something that isn’t real?” I snapped.

“Hailey.” She sighed. “Don’t make this hard for us, please. I promised him to take care of you.”

“Stop.”

“He wouldn’t want to see you like this.”

“Sasha, stop. Stop talking.”

“He would like you to be happy. He wants you to-“

“I said stop!” I shouted at her.

She was startled by the volume of my voice. It was rare that I would throw my attitude towards her except I couldn’t help myself. Ignoring her voice didn’t help me escape the truth. If I wanted to survive, it wasn’t possible to avoid everything.

I dropped to my knees, resting my head against the side of the wall. Each breath I took felt rather poisonous and it burned my lungs. The air was being knocked out of me. As the silence fell upon us, Sasha slowly creep down to sit beside me.

Taking my hand in hers, she rubbed small circles around my knuckles in order to push off my sorrow. I remembered when he used to do the same. Harry would do it softly, giving me a sense of security. He would soothe me while speaking quietly. His thoughts stayed positive and comforted me that the problems we encountered will soon shift away. Sasha’s touch was warming, yet I felt unsatisfied. Her ease didn’t felt the same.

“Hailey.” She softly whispered and the other hand brushed my hair.

“No, no no.” I whimpered. “Please stop.”

I always wanted to be a survivor and an independent person who wouldn’t rely on anyone. I wanted to live for myself, accepting the darkness that comes towards me. Yet I knew it wasn’t true. The goal had disappeared since I met him. From the beginning of our relationship, he had already changed who I was.

*“You’re so crazy.” I said, smiling as I embraced him.*

*His skin was cold, but he sent sparks to my body as if we were atoms sticking together.*

*“I’m crazy for you, angel.” He said with his arms wrapped tightly around my waist.*

His nickname for me became more foreign. I could no longer hear him speak of it again because I wasn’t his angel anymore. He became my angel while watching everything I do above my head.

“Sasha, he’s gone. The love of my life is dead.” I said, barely audible.

“It’s okay. Time will heal your wound.” Sasha comforted, gripping my hand tightly.

*Wounds can heal, but they will always leave behind a scar. His death is a scar that becomes the darkest shadow of my life.*