

Undefined.

We all have fears. They are that heavy feeling that sit on your chest, the lump in your throat, and the sickening feeling you get in your stomach. They erode at the protective walls we put up in our lives. Slowly wearing away at every brave, courageous, positive thoughts we have. They shrink us down to nothing, till we are cowering in fear at the things we should be fighting against. The true question is, will you fight or run from it?

I tip toe through the empty hollow house. The old wooden flooring creaks and squeaks with each airless step I take. Peering around my bedroom door, I slowly step out into what seems like the unknown world. But I'm stopped. My feet became rooted like trees to the floor.

I close my eyes for a moment and take in a deep breath. Thoughts engulf my mind. *Should I do this? Is it worth the risk? I could get in trouble. I could be punished for it. I'm terrified.. But there's no other choice.*

With that last thought, I grab my backpack and determinedly continue my journey through the house. I make sure to step on the spots where the wood wouldn't make as much noise. From years of practice, I reach the downstairs with surprising ease, though I am not free yet. The doors have security locks and codes on them and the alarm will go off if I trigger them. So instead, I go to the living room. The windows are never locked and it should be an easy getaway.

I hoist up the window just as I hear footsteps slowly coming towards me. I freeze for a moment, only a brief moment, before swiftly shoving my body through the window.

Just as I go out of sight, I can hear the footsteps enter the room. They pause for a second. Then they quickly move in the direction of the window. I'm curled with my knees hugged to my chest, hidden in the bushes outside the window. My heart is racing and my chest becomes hollow. I can't breathe. He's going to find me, I know it. I can hear his footsteps stop at the window. He pokes his head out to look around. A tear escapes my eyes as I cover my mouth with my hand so he can't hear my ragged breathing. My entire body is shaking in fright. My father moves his head side to side looking around. Reluctantly, he gives up and slams the window shut. With the echoing sound of my past closing, I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding.

I slowly crawl out of my hiding place and begin running in the direction of the local park. I wince at a loud shattering sound. I can hear my name bellowing through the neighborhood.

He knows.

But he's too late.

I can feel the weight of my chains melt away from my body. I smile as I continue running through the streets. I know every inch of this my neighborhood. All the hidden trails, secret hiding places, abandoned houses, and the free supplies people throw out. For instance, a woman the other day was throwing away a perfectly good bike, I stopped her and asked if it was okay if I took it off her hands. She agreed and gifted me with the transportation.

I've been planning my escape since he first put his hands on me. He had never done it before, only ever yelled and slightly pushed me around. Those things never

bugged me because, well, what parent doesn't touch their child? Although, mine were never loving touches.

I have a current bruise on my left ribcage. That happened because I accidentally slept past my alarm this morning. I missed making him breakfast and coffee. He woke me by kicking me awake, it worked. I also have five purple quarter-sized bruises on my forearm from his grip, pulling me to the kitchen. He then continued to move about the kitchen, grabbing a glass, vinegar, and lemon juice. He forced the mixed liquid down my throat. It left as though I was drinking battery acid. It burned the insides of my throat and down all the way to my stomach. I haven't tried talking yet but I know I won't be able to utter a word.

I can't blame him for a single thing though. He has the right to hate me, to be disgusted by my existence. I did kill the two people he cared most about in this entire world.

I don't remember anything before my twelfth birthday, exactly six years ago. I remember waking in a hospital, a man and woman beside me with worried looks on their faces. I didn't know it at the time, but they were my parents. I don't remember exactly what happened but I do remember being told that my brother had died. He died because of me. Every year on my birthday, we'd make it a morning day for Carter. One year, my mother couldn't bare it anymore. She killed herself when I was fifteen. For the last three years, my father has used me as a reason for both of their deaths. But it's okay, because I am to blame.

Today is my eighteenth birthday, so legally, I'm not his punching bag anymore. I'm free.

Snapping out of my memories, I hear a rustling from behind me so I, of course, do the predictable thing.

I speak out to where I heard the noise, "Hello? Anyone there?" I whisper, unable to talk any louder. I cough and sputter out from the pain in my throat.

A male figure appears out of the shadows. I start to panic. *He found me.* I breath heavily and begin to walk backwards. I trip over a tree branch and squeal in pain. My butt slams to the pavement and immediately becomes damp from the wet ground. A laughing comes from the male but it doesn't belong to my father. It isn't evil or frightening. Its full of humor and happiness. He walks into the beam of the street light so I'm able to take in his appearance. He's tall, lean and fit with brown hair and brown eyes.

"Who are you?" I ask softly.

"A friend," He smiles friendly at me and outstretches his hand to help me up, "Did you lose your voice or something?"

I shake my head staring up at him. His eyes twinkle from the reflection of the street lights towering over us. I can't help but get lost in the golden brown. I find myself lost for words and speechless for a brief moment, but I quickly come back to my senses as I'm shaken out of my daydream.

I retract my body, scooting away on the cold, damp ground, "But I don't even know who you are. For all I know you could be a murderer or something," I pick myself up from the ground quickly. I shoot up and my head hits an outstretched hanging branch making me jump in fright as well.

His grin grows wider and he chuckles at my reaction, "Oh, then you're so smart to point that out to a potential murderer, aren't you?" he said sarcastically. "Maybe you're the murderer? Maybe it's *my* life that's in danger," He adds. He wiggles his eyebrows in a joking manner at me.

I stiffen. I know it's a joke but his words sink in along with the thoughts of my brother.

I am a murderer...

"I should go," I step away knowing that I should be getting on my way.

"Wait," He steps closer to me and grabs my hand gently as though to shake it, "I'm Scott," He said.

I give a slight smile and nod my head politely at Scott before before I try to walk away again. He catches my arm to stop me from leaving but I visibly wince in pain and in fright from his actions. He grabbed me. Though it was much softer and more gentle, it was in the same place my father had.

Scott sees that I'm in pain and his face quickly becomes full of concern and anger. He reaches to my arm to lift my long sleeve shirt. I struggle to escape his grip but he's successful. His breath hitches as he sees the dark purple blue marks on my arm, you can visibly see the hand mark now. Scott intensely looks from my eyes to my arm.

"He did this, didn't he? Didn't he?" His voice raises and for the first time talking with Scott, I'm frightened.

I start shaking, cowering backwards into my own skin. His face and eyes become soft and caring as he reaches out to me.

“Bentley, I’m sorry, I-” He was then cut off from a police siren. I don’t have time to comprehend the fact that Scott knows my name.

“Bent, run,” Scott whispers in my ear. He steps in front of me protectively.

But fear is engulfing me so much I can’t even move. I’m petrified. He found me. My father gets out of the police car and strides towards Scott, pure hatred written on both of their faces. With one punch to the jaw, Scott is knocked out cold.

My father then lunges towards me and knocks me to the ground.

“You lil’ bitch. You think you can sneak out of my house with some boy and get away with it?” My father bellows as he towers over me. I feel a quick, hard kick to my rib cage as I let out a loud groan. “I’m so sick of you acting like you can do whatever you want. You can’t, I won’t let you. You spoiled bitch,” He continues his rant as he lets another swift kick to my stomach. He’s done this before, that’s no secret. But he has never done it this hard.

“I saw you. Out there with that boy! You slut,” He bends down so he’s close to my face, hovering over me, “Why couldn’t you be more like Carter?” He grabs my neck with one hand punches me in the stomach with the other. The wind is knocked out of me but because his massive hand is tightly around my throat, I couldn’t let any breath. “*You* killed him! *You* killed her! She couldn’t stand to see you, the monster that took away her son, so she killed herself!” He punches me square in the face.

I couldn’t see anything anymore. Tears stream down my face at a rapid speed. Thoughts continue to fill my head that I’ve been pushing away for so many years.

I killed them.. They died because of me... I’m a monster..

His grip on my throat tightens even more and I begin seeing white spots. I can feel the life in me fading quickly.

Suddenly there's a pull on my throat and my father's grip is gone. In the process my head lifts and slams it to the ground, my eyesight going fuzzy. All I can hear is muffled yells and a gunshot.

Clouds of darkness fog my vision as everything disappears into black shadows..

I wake up nauseous, dizzy and disoriented. There's a ringing in my ears that grows louder and louder at snail-like pace. My eyelids flutter open and I'm greeted by a warm glow of piercing white.

Where am I? Am I dead? Did he kill me? My own father.

"You're not dead, Bent,"

Wait, I know that voice. It can't be.

I turn around slowly, not quite prepared for what I'm going to see.

I suck in a sharp breath as I lay my eyes on him.

"Carter?"

One look at him and it all come flooding back to me. I feel like my body is going at super speed as I'm overwhelmed with this feeling. The memories, the accident, everything. I remember.

He looks exactly the same. Piercing blue eyes, tan skin, trimmed blond hair. His smile, wide and full of pearly white teeth, gleams at me. I can't believe my eyes. This can't be real.

A tear escapes my eye as I let a smile appears on my lips.

“Hi, B,” He smirks and opens his arms to me. I don’t hesitate. I run to him full force letting my arm curl tightly around his neck. I feel his arms snake around my back, gripping tightly. I begin to cry again. I can feel him. This *is* real.

“I’m so sorry,” I whimper out in between my sobs.

Carter pulls away and looks straight into my eyes. I can see his eyes are glossy, tears attempting to escape but they won’t. He’s too tough to give into the pain. Unlike me, he’s strong.

He begins to speak, his voice slightly shaking with authority and compassion, “You have *nothing* to be sorry about.”

“But-” I protest but he interrupts me.

“No. I won’t hear it,” He pauses for a moment, taking in a breath, “It was an accident, B. You had no control over it. I was driving. I’m the one who’s responsible. ,” A tear slowly glides down his cheek, “I’m supposed to be responsible for you and I left you.. with *him*. If anyone should be sorry and needs to be forgiven, it’s me.”

“But I wanted *you* to drive me to get food that day, no one else. Not mom or dad,” I say slowly, the guilt is too much to handle, “and mom.. I made her- she couldn’t bare to live with the monster who took her only son... It’s all my fault.”

“She made her own choice to leave, you had nothing to do with her death. She was sad, alone.. even selfish. And as for him, you are no monster. He’s the monster. He let hate and rage make him into something that I’m no longer going to sympathize him for and neither should you. What he did was wrong and it made him the true monster,” He pauses for a moment, “You are not defined by the things that happen to you in life, you’re defined by your own choices, so live your life the way you want to.”

I nod my head in understanding. More and more tears fall freely from my eyes. I feel weight slowly lift off my shoulders as I let what he's saying sink in. Silence fills the emptiness the the room. There's so much I want to say except I don't have the words to say them. I can feel that the time we have together is going to end soon and I don't know how to savour the moments left.

"I miss you, Carter."

"I miss you too, B," He pulls me back into a tight hug.

"I don't know what to do anymore," I whisper.

"Live and be happy," He states simply.

"I wish it was that easy."

"It is," He breaks away and wipes away the tears on my cheeks.

"Will I ever see you again?"

"Of course you will," He steps away steadily.

I can see that he's slowing fading away, the last thing I see is him mouthing the words, 'I love you.'

I become dizzy and lightheaded as everything begins to fog into a black darkness.

"Bentley? Bentley! Wake up!" I feel my body being poked and prodded by an unknown source. I wince in pain as I continue to be shook. I let out a groan and the shaking immediately stops.

I slowly began feeling my senses coming back to me. I can feel the cold, hard pavement underneath my body. I can hear cars driving by and rain hitting the ground

next to me, but surprisingly, I'm shielded by it. I can even feel something warm and damp press against my lips. That causes my curiosity to grow. My eyes flutter open as I'm greeted by a familiar face.

"Scott?" I cough out.

"Morning Sleeping Beauty," He says softly.

He smiles down at me and helps me sit up. His smile quickly disappears as soon as he sees the pain and scars written across my face.

"I'm fine," I quickly state before he could ask.

We become silent as I take in the surroundings. I realize that I'm not at or near where I past out. I'm a few blocks away at a house that I've seen around the neighborhood that I can only assume is Scott's. I sit on a cemented porch with Scott next to me. My bag is near me so he must have brought it along with us.

"Wh- what happened?" I ask, my voice shaking.

"Bentley.." He trails off, but somehow I already knew the answer, "He's dead, after I pulled him off of you, he started yelling and waving his gun around. Bent, he shot himself,"

A tear falls down my cheek as the truth hits me. I can't stand this anymore, everyone I ever cared about has left me. Though my father was never one to care for me, it still hurts to know that my own father doesn't even want me. As quickly as I can in my state, I shoot up, grab my bags and start walking.

"Bentley?"

I try and move my feet faster but he's too quick. He grabs my shoulder and turns me around. Chest to chest, we stare at each other. He's holding me tightly, almost as though he's afraid of letting me go.

"Let me go, Scott."

"Are you going to leave?" He asks.

"Yes," I say truthfully.

"Then no," He smiles as though this is all a joke.

"I'm going to lose you anyway so I might as well go now."

"What are you talking about?" Scott questions.

"I hurt everyone I care about. They leave, they die. I lose them no matter what. I can't go through anymore loss. My future is dark and full of death and I don't want to drag you into it. I'm a monster."

Rain falls all around us now, drenching us both. I feel his grip around me tighten. Surprisingly it doesn't frighten me, it does the exact opposite. It calms me, reassures me, makes me feel safe. I feel at home in his arms.

"Bentley, I know you. Even though you don't think I do, I know you. I've known you since we were kids. We were best friends. After your brother passed, you isolated yourself from everyone, from me," He rests his forehead to mine as I continue to hear his words, "I know that you don't really want to leave. You're just scared of being left alone again. I'm not going anywhere, Bentley. I've never left you, I've always been here. You can't be scared of the past. Don't let the past define what your future is going to be."

I look up at him and let myself fall into his beautiful eyes. I remember. I remember him now. The hit to my head must have brought some of my memory back. My best friend. Without thinking, I lean towards him and press my lips to his. I immediately feel my hollow heart fill with happiness. He kisses me back reluctantly. This isn't me, not the me thought I knew.

I break the kiss and we rest our foreheads together again, our breaths matching pace, "I don't know who I am anymore," I say truthfully.

He backs his head away to see my face, looking straight into my eyes he says, "You're *perfectly* undefined."