

My eyes were still closed, but I was jostled into awareness by the open and closing of the door and the weight of someone on my bed. There was a glimmer of sunlight peeking through the heavy lined drapes of my bedroom. I knew morning had come and I didn't feel any better than when I'd slipped under the covers hours earlier. I felt the comforter lift and then the warmth of someone molding their body to mine. The smell of him and the way he fit around me made me shudder and my stomach tighten. I felt my small lungs give way to a dramatic rush of air and then tears started falling quickly with the realization that Joshua was finally here. He folded me into the cocoon of his love and stroked my hair as I fell to pieces against him.

"Shhhh," he whispered in my ear. "I'm so sorry baby."

I pulled his hand to my face and kissed his palm before slipping it under my cheek and cradling my head in its warmth. I missed his touch and his unwavering love for me. The passion in his eyes when he looked at me like I was the only woman on earth. The way he knew every contour of my body and just how to touch me. He knew what I needed before I did and I was ready to let him take a bit of that control. I didn't know how we were going to manage our future, but I was going to make sure he never left again. The next time he left it was going to be to collect his California life and bring it back to New York or he and I were going to be partners and nothing more. I couldn't keep riding the rollercoaster of our love. I was more fragile than I'd ever been and I knew I was going to bounce back stronger or be left a ghost of the woman I was before. It was all or nothing.

I was still crying but turned my body to see his beautiful face. His eyes were deep blue like the Aegean Sea. It felt like they were looking through me, to my soul. I wondered if he knew my thoughts, my dreams, my desperation and how lost I was. How I needed the world to just bend with me for once and help me find some peace. My life suddenly felt like a minefield and I was moving through it with trepidation instead of confidence.

"Josh..." I said it like I was unsure of my reality. And maybe I was.

"I'm here. I'm never leaving you again. I promise."

My face was messy and wet with tears and a runny nose, but he looked past my grief and smoothed his soft lips against mine. I whimpered at the remembrance of all we'd shared, as the memories of how we came to be, flooded my brain and took over my senses. I loved this man. He was mine. Time nor distance had mattered. My heart started swelling in my chest. His long fingers dove into my messy brown hair and our kiss proceeded as it always did, with unbridled love, passion, and complete understanding. Sad or not I missed him and wanted to crawl beneath the shelter of his skin. I needed every inch of him in me, on me and over me. I needed to drown out everything but us, till I could see my life clearly again.