

Jase ran his fingers viciously through his hair, then down to scrub viciously at his face with the palms of his hands, trying to claw back some kind of grip on reality.

He stared again at the computer screen in front of him, at the inbox from the one person he had never believed he would hear from again.

Hayley had left him a year ago, gone to god knew where. Her facebook page, what had once been the centre of her life now stood abandoned, unused. When she had left, she had left everyone, not just him.

There in the inbox were his last messages to her, begging her to come home, to call, to let him know she was alright. Begging for a call that never came.

Jase had been slowly pulling himself together, trying to live without the woman he had thought he would spend the rest of his life with. He had gone through all stages in the past months, swinging wildly back and forth between depression, sadness, anger, yet he was still waiting for acceptance.

A bit of a loner before she left him, now he was practically a hermit, barely seeing anyone that wasn't work related or immediate family, they just didn't understand. Their friends had tried at first, but one by one they had drifted away, not seeming to want him now that he was just a him, not a them. He'd driven them all away with his antisocial ways and his depressive thoughts. Only a stubborn few had remained, interfering in his life under the guise of 'helping' when all he wanted was to be left alone with his memories.

And now there it was, just one word, simple little letters that from anyone else would be so casual, but from her, nothing could be further from the truth.

***Hello***

That was all it said. But it was enough. It couldn't be her, he didn't believe it.

***Who is this?*** he finally typed back after staring at the message for more than an hour.

The reply came back almost instantly

***Hello? Are you there?***

Jase just stared at the screen before finally replying

***Why are you messing with me?***

He didn't like it, it wasn't fair. Why now? Why today?

He couldn't cope with it, it wasn't fair.

***Hello,*** came another message, and even though he didn't want to get sucked in, his heart beat quicker, his fingers reaching for the keyboard even as he brain screamed at him to stop and think.

***Hayley? Is that really you?***

He didn't want this, couldn't deal with the heartbreak, not now, not when he had a date next week, a date that he had been trying to wriggle out of, still not feeling ready. His friends had pushed him into it, telling him that he needed to get out more, to meet new people. even though it felt like the last thing he'd ever want to do, they promised him that he would feel better once he'd done it. He'd promised them he'd try, had been forcing himself to embrace the idea... but now, now she was in contact, and he didn't know what to do.

He'd begged for this, pleaded for this, prayed for this, wanting her back more than anything, not understanding why she had left him, why she had gone, leaving him all alone. She, who had coaxed him out of his shell from the moment they had met, she who had held his hand and promised him that she would always be by his side, she who had made him believe her. Then she had abandoned him, leaving him to cope alone.

### ***Are you there?***

She always used to say that when she got home from work, are you there? She would fling open the front door and yell out to him, seeing if he was home. They used to come home together, at the same time every day, but that was when they worked at the same office, the office where they had met. She had breezed in one day, this angel that became his beacon in the darkness that always seemed to surround him. She didn't care that he was quiet, she didn't care that he preferred to stay inside and read than go out with friends. She saw the potential in him, she took him by the hand and encouraged him to talk to people, to make friends, to really become a part of the world.

***Yes, I'm here. Where are you?*** His fingers moved quicker now, replying straight away.

***I miss you*** The message was simple but it tore at his heart strings, causing tears to form and leak out of the corners of his eyes. She missed him.

***I miss you too,*** he wrote back. Oh how he missed her, more than words could express. From the day that she left he had missed her, wanted her back, would have done anything. And now, here she was, finally communicating with him.

***I miss you*** the same words but they meant just as much.

He had to know, he had ask, even though he dreaded the answer.

### ***Do you still love me?***

She took almost five minutes to reply, five minutes that were agony. They felt like they went on forever, stretching into an infinite number of seconds with no end in sight. Then it came.

### ***I love you***

He hadn't realised he was holding his breath until that moment, and he let it out in a whoosh that ruffled the papery thin, dry leaves of the dead plant on his desk, the plant she had given him, but that he had neglected since she had gone, just as he had neglected himself.

That was all he needed to know, she still loved him, just as he would always love her. His mind made up, he quickly typed back, ***I'm coming to you***

He shut off his computer, not needing it anymore and drank down the last few sips of tepid coffee. He'd never have to drink the pig swill that came out of that coffee machine ever again. He was leaving, he was going to find her, nothing would stop him.

Now that he'd made the decision, everything in his mind became crystal clear, sharp and with such clarity.

He tidied his desk, for even though he'd never been one to like company, he didn't want to leave a mess for the next person that used this space.

He didn't bother leaving a note, or an explanation as to his sudden departure, no one in the office would miss him, not really. He had no one that he cared for, and no one that cared for him. He'd only ever had Hayley. And now he knew she was out there, waiting for him.

He crossed the office floor, the place that he'd spend almost every waking minute of the past year, trying to occupy his thoughts and waste away the time that he now had in abundance. He knew every inch of the cramped space, knew every picture and poster on the desks around him, knew the ticking of the clock as well as he knew himself.

He leant against the window, gazing out into the darkness, seeing the twinkling of a million lights below him, hundreds and thousands of people going about their evening. But he only cared about one of them. She was out there, waiting for him.

He wouldn't miss working here, but he might miss the view. He thought of the hundreds of times he had stood at this very window, in the quiet of the night, when everyone else had gone home, and thought about her, wondered where she was, was she safe, was she happy, was she OK?

And now he knew. He had been patient, refusing to move on, knowing she would come back to him. He'd known all along he would stand his date up. She would get over it. Hayley was worth it.

He opened the window, inhaling deeply of the freezing air, feeling it burning his nostrils and all the way down into his lungs. A year he'd been stuck in this limbo, unable to move forward. But he did so now.

Climbing out of the window, one leg at a time, he sat on the sill. He tipped his head back, gazing up at the heavens.

"Hayley, I'm coming."

Without hesitation, or even a backwards glance, he let himself fall forwards.

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The computer screen lit up, displaying the last loaded page, a new message blinking in the inbox.

***You're here.***

It wasn't just her anniversary anymore, it was theirs.