

An instant twinge of sadness made an appearance as I stared up at my ceiling. The graffiti artwork covered every inch of ceiling space I had, while the actual walls of my bedroom were plastered from end to end with various posters of the things and people who tied my life together; kept it from crumbling into nothing. Swirls of color and very random lettering swam before my eyes as I laid down on the worn, but comfortable blankets of my bed.

I was jolted out of my own world and into the real, cruel one when a resounding knock on my door sounded. I shoved my spray paint cans under the bed and scurried to the door, unlocking it. Standing in front of me was Cody, my younger brother. He was dressed up in very formal clothing, and polished black shoes. His blonde hair was combed to the side with gel, making him look like a young gentleman. Though he was only 8, I felt like a hobo, standing in front of him dressed in ratty sweatpants, an old t-shirt, and my caramel-colored hair pulled into a messy bun. My mom, whom I had seen last two weeks ago, appeared behind him, her eyes widening when she took in my appearance.

“Destiny!” her piercing green eyes, identical to my own, scolded me as she began to lecture. “How could you forget that we have an important dinner with our new neighbors tonight?!” It’s funny how she had been on a business trip and the first thing she did after seeing me was yell.

I shrugged, lying right through my teeth. “I don’t feel well, I’m going to rest.”

Her eyes softened, and she swallowed before smoothening the crease in her dress and stepping forward. Tentatively, she reached out and pressed her cold palm to my forehead.

“You don’t have a fever,” she commented, looking at me as if she knew I was lying, which I was, but I wasn’t about to give in that quickly. After what seemed like a year of a stare down, she finally gave in, her shoulders slumping for just a second.

“I still don’t believe you, so your consequence will be given later since we’re running late. Call me on my my cell if you need anything, okay?” she smiled stiffly, and with a swish of her formal dress, she was already making her way down the steep stairs.

Cody looked at me for a moment before sighing, “You never come anywhere anymore. I never even see you hanging out with friends.”

*It would be nice to hang out with my friends.. if I hadn’t broken off any connection with anyone I ever knew... I thought.*

I half-smiled, “Don’t worry about me.”

He began another sentence, and then, just as I was about to tell him not to keep our parents waiting, he said, “My friend Jaxon is coming over tomorrow, do you think you could take us to the park?”

I rolled my eyes, before shoving him lightly towards the staircase.

“Whatever. Bye!” I patiently waited for the low rumble of our SUV to pull out of the driveway, and when it was gone and out of sight, I hastily gathered the graffiti paint and spray cans and shaved it into a small backpack. Then, I changed into leggings, combat boots, and a sweatshirt, tugging my wavy hair into a ponytail. It was dark out: the perfect time for me to do whatever without getting caught.

I started becoming addicted to this little illegal hobby of mine two years ago, when I lost the only person I really had to brutal car accident.

Faye was my closest friend, and we were exactly like sisters. We did everything together, from going on vacation to hiding out on her rooftop where we could do everything and anything. She was the sister I never had. She was my shoulder to cry on and I, hers. My life fell apart the day I didn’t have her as a shoulder to cry on. I had just excused my way out of a boring dinner I didn’t want to attend, and Faye was on her way to pick me up. Her sister was driving. What Faye didn’t know was that her sister, Allison, had been drinking half an hour ago and wouldn’t be the best choice for a driver. We were only 14; Faye couldn’t come pick me up herself. I saw the accident with my own eyes, and it scarred me mentally for eternity.

*The car swerved to the right a little as Faye and Allison pulled into the parking lot of Olive Garden. I scrunched up my eyebrows in confusion, standing outside of the building and waiting for the car to roll down the parking lot. Allison was usually an excellent driver. Suddenly, interrupting me from my thoughts, the car swerved to the left and zoomed down the parking lot. I stepped back, my eyes widening. What was Allison doing? The last thing I saw before the car flipped and burst into flames was Faye’s terror-stricken eyes and her tear stained cheeks. I fumbled for my phone with my numb hands, crying hysterically as I pressed the cool metal to my ear. The firemen were there in less than a minute, but it felt like a century. Once the fire was out, I ran towards the crumpled, shattered, and burnt car, only to find pools of deep crimson blood leaking from it. I will never play with fire or be able to look at blood ever again. More importantly, I’ll never be the same girl and forgive myself for the loss of Faye. I knew it*

*was all my fault. I had been the one to call Faye and ask her to “save me” from the boring dinner I was facing with my parents. It was all my fault.*

Now, as I snapped back to reality, I could feel the cool, salty tears rolling down my cheeks rapidly, leaving a sticky trail behind. I couldn't bear to think of that night. It was too painful. I picked up the tote bag I had dropped and opened my window, pushing it outwards. I climbed out steadily, and wrapped myself around the large, oak tree. My feet lodged themselves onto the tree bark before jumping to the ground.

In a matter of minutes, I was running stealthily through an alley. It felt as if the brick walls were caving in on me; they were tall and looming, dark and scary. Just as I was about to arrive at my destination, a light flickered on the window above my head and a booming voice could be heard clearly,

“Who's there?” The gruffness of the voice gave me shivers as I took a heavy breath and pressed myself against the wall quietly, waiting for him to close the window and go back inside. Once he did, I arrived at the familiar wall of concrete that was a couple yards after the enticing travel through the alleyway. I felt like a criminal. Though I wasn't really one, I was pretty close. I didn't know what I would do if the police caught me.

However, I soon found I wasn't alone. The moment I arrived at the wall and array of buildings bound to be graffitied on, I bumped into someone. “Ow! Watch where your going,” I snapped. My voice caught in my throat when he looked at me and I got a good look at him.

He had gorgeous hazel eyes; ones I couldn't even begin to describe. They pierced through your very heart, leaving you with a feeling of being exposed- like he knew all your deepest secrets, all while leaving you mesmerized. It was, dare I say it, a different, but good feeling. His light brown hair was tousled, and his jawline was a perfect arch. A small, light dimple made an appearance as he smirked at me.

Snapping out of my little trance, I rolled my eyes and pulled out a red spray paint can. messing with the graffiti on the wall. I felt a presence next to me, and when I turned to look at him, the first thing I said was,

“Can't you go find someplace else to do your graffiti?” He was in the middle of drawing a depiction of skulls and money.

“No,” he simply said, an amused expression on his face. I sighed. I liked being alone, and this guy wasn’t letting me feel alone. I gathered up my spray paint and walked along the top of a brick wall, heading towards the next spot for graffiti: an abandoned warehouse around the corner. This was an area where I could be caught, but if I was, the worst that would happen is I run from the cops. It wasn’t a big deal for me, I had done it before. *With Faye.*

Faye and I had done graffiti before, but it was never something we would have imagined to be part of our futures.

I turned to the warehouse to graffiti, but to my dismay, the graffiti boy had followed me. Exasperated, I threw my hands up in the air and put them on my hips.

“Can you leave me alone?” I asked, frowning.

He chuckled, “Nope,” he said, popping the ‘p’.

“And why not?” I asked, raising my eyebrows and turning back to my graffiti.

“I’d love to explain. but I think we have a bit of running to do right now.” He was turned to the side, his eyes widening. I frowned and followed his eye sight to find three men in uniforms, clutching flashlights in their hands. My mouth formed an ‘O’ and I stuffed my cans into my bag, and slung it over my shoulder, motioning for the boy to start moving. It would be tricky running along the edge of a wall, but we pulled it off quite smoothly, if I may say so myself.

My heart was pounding as we ran through the alleys and pathways. The bitter wind stung my face as I ran faster than I had ever before. Dodging sharp corners and dead ends, I held my breath until we had lost them. I wasn’t about to stop running. The boy turned one way to go to his house, I assumed, and I turned the other way, not even acknowledging each other. I liked it better that way.

The moment I got home, I found that my parents were already home. Quickly, I climbed up the tree and scrambled through the window, stuffing the bag I had with me under the bed and changing into sweatpants and a tank top, trying to act as if I was here the entire time. I hoped neither of my parents had knocked on the door while I was gone. It was 1 AM. They were probably asleep.

The next morning, when I awoke, I felt weird. I felt different, though nothing had changed. It felt as if something important or special was going to happen. I showered and threw

on jeans, a regular shirt, and Converse sneakers. My hair was brushed and pulled into a messy side braid as I ran downstairs to grab a bite.

I was buttering a piece of toast when the doorbell rang. My piece of half-buttered toast was still in my hand as I swung open the door to find what I least expected to see.

“Hey, I’m here to drop off my brother Jaxon for- woah,” he looked genuinely surprised as he saw me. “Graffiti girl?” he asked incredulously.

I rolled my eyes, “Graffiti boy,” I addressed him.

He grinned, “In the flesh. I’m Drew, by the way,”

I nodded and called for Cody, “Cody! Your friend is here!”

Cody came along as Drew began talking, “Actually, I was gonna take the two of them to the park, would you wanna come with?” I thought about it for a while, Cody running out the door and standing next to Jaxon.

Drew looked back at me.

“I’m Destiny,” I introduced myself, not knowing why. I was usually socially awkward. I sighed. “The park really isn’t my scene.”

He looked at me, a twinkle in his eye, “Well then, I will meet you at the movies tonight, Destiny. 7:30, be ready.” With a wink, he left, tugging the boys along with him.

To my surprise, I knew I was going to go. In no way did I ever imagine that he would be my first friend after Faye. And that was the first step of my road to recovery.