

A M E L I A E . S .

DEAR HAYES,

YOU
SAVED
ME
ONCE

BOOK 1 "SECRETS"

A YA ROMANCE



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Dear Hayes

Loving someone so much you feel like you can't breathe without them. The feeling of the flutters that beat against your tummy, as you wait to hear their voice again. The wide smile you can't shake when you look into their eyes.

You want it to be a weakness, but truthfully, it's your superpower. Love is what keeps you grounded to this big world. So big, yet you only need one person in your life to make it complete.

What if that one person left your life, and you thought they were never coming back?

Those flutters turn into a heavy pulse that ache. You feel cold without them, numb to this big world. Everything feels more alive than you.

What if they suddenly returned.

The one person you love so much comes back.

Sadly, the flutters that tickle your stomach fades. The smiles turn to tears, and cries. Why? Life happens.

Life's a fucking vortex of so many up's and downs. As crazy as it is, life is still so beautiful. So is the love of your life that returns after's years. They return, and you know something they don't.

You know a secret. You know many secrets. Too many to carry, yet they feel like they pulse in your veins. Enough secrets to fill a still room.

These secrets are what drifted the love. These secrets are what killed, more than once.

You feel scared. You're scared to take breaths, you're afraid of the secrets you keep. You're afraid of them escaping your veins. You're afraid of what might come out, because



deep down you know, everything that happened. Everything that will happen, will be because of you.

That's the fault in loving another, right?

Loving someone can make you so fucking happy, and make you cry at the same time. It can ruin you, if you let it consume you. But, what if there's no other way, what if it's destined. Written in the cold air, in the pouring rain, in the waves. What if it's meant to be, no matter what? You save each other, by destroying one another.

Even if it's forbidden? What would you do?

Let's not get ahead of ourselves though.

I'm Alex Richards, a senior in high school. I live in Versa, a small town in WA. It's tucked away from the outside world, it's on a coast, it's beautiful. So is this story, it's beautifully tragic.

You're about to dive into some serious fucking heartbreak, are you ready?

“His name was Hayes, and I loved him so much. So much that I couldn't breathe without him.”



The First Day We Met

The only female in a house of all boys. Still don't know how I survived. Now it's just Jake and me. Jake's the youngest among the four of us. I'm the middle, then Adam, then our oldest brother, Jack.

They're both off living their lives. Just thinking about life outside of Versa, gives me chills, makes me envy them.

I miss them. We haven't been together, in forever.

~~~~~

I get out of the shower and wrap myself in a towel. I give it 3 seconds, before Jake barges in. I watch the steam in the room, vanish in the new air.

"Is it just me or do females take so long in the bathroom, it's insane." He says.

I smile at his comment. I'm happy to hear Jake's humor. It lets me know he's doing better than before. It got bad a couple of months ago for him. Sometimes I'm scared, that he might be faking it.

"10 minutes is forever Jake, you're right. Sorry about that." I say. He ignores me.

We share a bathroom in our 4-bedroom 2.5-bathroom home. We'd never use the downstairs bathroom, the room closest to the kitchen, closer to the laundry room. We haven't been in that room in years.

"Can't be late, got a game today. The team's already riding my ass." He says.

He's scrambled, and the day just started. Seeing him like this makes me worried. I call his name, but he ignores me. My wet hair drips on the steamed floor.

His cold hands touch the humid mirror. He slides it open. The faucet runs, everything else is quiet. I watch him



gulp it down with the water. He leaves the faucet running. He smiles at me.

“You’ve had like 20 games in the last two weeks, you guys haven’t won, one yet.” I joke.

Jake almost falls on the wet floor. This makes us both smile through the hate. No matter what Jake said, I could never hate him. It’s just cold, humor hate. It’s us showing our love to each other.

“Of course, you wouldn’t understand, the only thing your committed to is photographing oceans, and stuffing your face with ice cream.” He says. I laugh.

“Hey! Make another sexist joke again, and I swear I’ll-” He slams the door in my face.

“Fuck you!” I yell. He shouts it back.

I smile through the cold chills that now coat my skin.

~~~~~

Today was going to be just like every other day of the week. Super simple, super repetitive, yet tolerable. Tolerable enough, for me to breathe.

Without a routine, I feel like I would crash. Crash and burn.

Here’s a day in my life on a weekday. I get dressed, go downstairs, eat breakfast, get in my car and drive to school. The weekends aren’t much different. I party, work, sleep and repeat. I still feel the same, I still feel empty.

This is my last year of high school, sounds bittersweet. I’m thankful though, because I can finally leave this town.

We get inheritances from our father when we turn a legal age. We can do whatever we want with it. I want to get away. I haven’t told anyone yet. It’s another secret.



I don't want to leave Jake though. I need him as much as he needs me.

These are usually my thoughts every day. I sit on my bed, staring at myself in the mirror, daydreaming.

Sometimes I'm brave enough to stare at the reminders taped on the mirror, the collages, memories from the past. I can't look for too long, even if they're good memories.

From my bed, I can see my once perfect, happy family, frozen in time, taped to the mirror. Then I look at another family on the mirror, the Bartley's.

All of the memories are stained with black scribbles. Now it's just a shitty, smudged mirror. I should throw it away.

Through the smudges, I look at my short messy hair, and my baggy clothes. I force a smile.

It gets too quiet too fast. I can hear the shower running. I grab my camera, put it around my neck and go downstairs.

Food. We have a love and hate relationship with one another.

There was a time when food and I didn't get along. It was a super dark time for me, for all of the Richards. We all handled things differently. For me, it was avoiding food altogether.

Sadly, I let this dark coping, turn into a habit.

Then something happened, because of the habit. It's a secret though. One of my darkest secrets. I try to not think about it too much.

I bite into the dark red apple, it's cold. The crunch warms me. Stops me from thinking too far in the past.

Jake comes downstairs.

"Do you have a spare?" Jake asks.



“What are you talking about?” I ask.

I put down the apple.

“A spare. For my car.” Jake says.

His words are heavy, almost mean, yet recovered. We’re close to the laundry room, we’re close to her room.

I leave the kitchen and go to the garage. Jake follows me.

“Alex, do you have a spare?” Jake asks again. I ignore him.

There is a spare, inches away from him. It took him too long to notice it.

From the garage I see a car parked in front of Ms. Kristen’s house.

She’s been our neighbor for years. We were once close. We share secrets.

“Jake. Whose car is that?” I ask.

“Why are you whispering?” He mocks.

“Who do you think it is?” He laughs.

“Did Adam not tell you?” He asks.

“Tell me what?” I pry. He doesn’t respond.

“Are you going to fucking tell me, or just stand there struggling with a man’s job?” I say.

He drops the tire on his foot, it rolls off, then in a circle, until it finally stops. The tire smells new.

“Go ask her yourself then.” He huffs.

I feel bad for bothering Jake. I go to my car, turn on the radio, and scan my trunk for a jack, for Jake.

“Alex! Get your ass over here”



I hit my head on the trunk door by the obnoxious honking.

I close my trunk. My head is sore and thumping now.

It's Rochelle, my best friend. She knows me well, we've been friends for a long time. She doesn't know my secrets though.

Rochelle's standing up in her roofless car. She waves at Jake, he smiles. He's the happiest whenever she's around.

Jake has had a crush on Rochelle since forever. We've known her almost our entire lives. He's been obsessed ever since. He doesn't deny that he's obsessed either. It's puppy love, it's cute.

"You're looking beautiful as always Rochelle, even in this weather." He shouts.

It's storm season in Versa.

She honks at him, and smiles. He kicks the spare around.

"Got room for one more?" He asks.

"There's always room for you Jakey!" Rochelle laughs.

We both get in and close our doors in unison. Rochelle sits back down.

"Alrighty then, let's fucking go!" Rochelle cheers.

She blasts her speakers with music, then we drive off.



I Knew We Were Going To Be Best Friends

I was a freshman. We are supposed to be young, innocent, and youthful. I was none of those things, anymore. During the holiday break freshman year, I did something. It's another secret. Because of that secret I'm now cold, blue, and sick.

It's been two months, since the funeral. I feel worse then before, everything sucks. I feel like I'm pushing myself too much. I was too sick that day, I should've stayed home.

Food is minimal now, it's been this way for a while. After the funeral, I could only eat one thing, pizza. I should've eaten more. My habit started to make me look different. I wore heavy clothes now, warm clothes. Many layers.

I force myself to move, if I stayed still too long the secrets would flutter inside. I tried to make it through the day, gym was the first class.

Everyone just got back from winter break. Everyone is sluggish, wet, and cold. Our gym shoes are pressed with wet snow, we dry them on the gym mats, we fail. Our slippery sneakers squeak against the polished gym floor. Everything smelt cold, and wet.

I came in late. I was crying in the bathroom.

Class has already started, but it felt like it stopped once I walked in.

The volume lowered, the balls stopped bouncing, the sneaker squeaks, reduced. Everything was low, as if they were watching me. They were. I could hear them whispering.



No matter how hard I avoided attention, even though I needed it. I needed so much attention, but I never asked for it, yet it always found me. Everyone noticed my habit, everyone knew about the Richard's. Everyone knew about the Bartley's.

I try to hide the care I felt. I tried to mute the whispers, the talk. I didn't want to cry again.

My wet sneakers squeak each time I walk. They are dripping with the melted snow water I failed to dry on the mats.

The volume increases again. Everyone starts taking laps around the gym.

I join in, even though my fluttering stomach is pulsing. It's too warm. I keep swallowing the saliva that keeps coming up. I lick my teeth, as my heart races. I should stop running, but I don't.

That's the last thing I remember.

I fainted in gym class freshmen year. Most thought I was acting out, because of the death in my family. Most thought it was for attention. I nod to the lies, and the rumors, even though they weren't true. It's better than the truth.

The truth is another secret.

~~~~~

*I slam my locker. The memories make me feel sick again.*

*I stare at my boots, they squeak against the wet floor.*

*I walk the halls feeling paranoid. Sometimes a certain smell, or sound can take me back to freshmen year.*

***Highschool just isn't for me.***

*Everything in class is a blur, except photography. It's my red room for an hour. No teacher, no classmates in*



photography. Just a dim, red buzzing light, my camera, my photos, and my thoughts.

The red room makes me feel nostalgic, I think about the past too much in here, I cry a lot. That's what I do today.

The bell ringing was enough to break me from my crying spell. School was over for seniors.

I reach my locker before Rochelle calls my name. I pretend to ignore her. I hide my head in my locker, looking for tissue to wipe my salty face.

She's not alone. Jeff's with her.

I refuse to make eye contact with either of them, I'm too worried they'd know I was crying.

When I cry, someone can easily trigger me with three words "what is wrong?"

"Not today Rochelle." I say.

I walk to the bathroom, hoping they would not follow, but they do. Thankfully, I wiped my face enough. Enough for me to not feel insecure for crying.

Jeff smiles at me, puts his arm around me. His arms are warm, he's warm.

Jeff wasn't some stranger that needed introducing. I've seen him around, and I knew his name. He was a senior like us, and an athlete. He was Rochelle's ex.

Jeff looked like a person who'd attend an ivy league school. He seemed too perfect for this school, he was better, but didn't rub it in. He's dewy, and pale, like a vampire. His hair is long enough for a ponytail, yet he lets it hang loose.

He's quiet for the most part and has lots of friends. He talks to a lot of girls, and hangs out with stoners, which includes Jake. He looked quite young though. People say that about me.



Through it all, Jeff looked sad. People also say that about me too.

I knew him well, through my eyes. I didn't know him. Did he know me? Did he know my history? Did he know the rumors? Did he know the truth? Is he judging me, like I'm judging him?

He stares at me for a while, he smiles. He doesn't stop.

I push Jeff's arm off of me and go into the girl's bathroom. Rochelle follows me.

I stand at a sink, running my cold hands under warm water. The stalls are empty.

"I gave him your number." She says.

"Why would you do that Rochelle?" I ask.

I turn off the water, the rusty handle squeaks, loud. I wait for the water to go down the drain.

"Don't judge." She says. I bite my lip with guilt.

"He's your ex! I'm fucking judging." I mumble to myself.

"It was middle school." She murmurs.

Memories from some of the worst years for both Rochelle and I. The more we stay silent and reminisce on the past, the darker the mood was getting.

I knew Rochelle since pre-school, and we were always close, but when middle school hit, she changed. We both changed.

Seventh grade, she started off young, she was probably the first seventh grader in our school, to start exploring sex, or pretending to. Her and Jeff were a couple, back then.



She got this way for many reasons. When the summer hit, something happened.

She started dating, not just middle school but high schoolers.

There was this one high schooler, he liked her for her “rumors”.

They started to be a thing, then at a high school party, he got her drunk, and made her do things. His friends joined in too.

I’m one of the only people she’s told.

Since then, she’s never been the same. It hit her hard for 2 years. She numbed the pain by sleeping around.

Then over the summer of sophomore year she knocked on my door, and we started talking again.

Still, to this day I find it sad that half of the guys in our grade, has been with my best friend. Half of them lost their virginity in middle school to her. I feel bad for Rochelle. She let her coping turn into a habit too.

“No, it’s too weird. Jeff was with you.” I say.

I’m lying, it’s not weird because of that. I grab a paper towel to feed the silence.

“Alex, I knew you were crying.” She says. I squeeze the paper towel.

“There’s someone who thinks you’re pretty fucking cool. Honestly, I couldn’t agree with him more. I think you should give him a shot, he’s really great.” She says.

“Why don’t you two go to my party together!?” She insists.

“No.” I laugh.

“It’ll be fun.” She says.



“Yeah, having sex is so much fun. Highly-doubt he just wants to hold hands all night.” I mock.

“I know you’re a virgin Alex.” She says.

“Why does that matter?!” I ask.

The butterflies that have been silent for months come back. I squeeze the wet paper towel in my hand for comfort. I can’t look at Rochelle anymore.

Someone comes into the bathroom.

“I’ll see you tonight.” I say.

I leave the bathroom and walk home.



# Best Friends Forever

There is some heavy, and dangerous history with Ms. Kristen's, and her family. She's more than just a neighbor. She's a Bartley, was a Bartley, a long time ago.

Ever since what happened, she's never been the same, none of us have been. Everyone was affected by what happened between the Bartley's and Richard's, years ago. Since then, Ms. Kristen's been addicted to alcohol, and "legal" boys. Of course, the neighborhood hates her, and mindlessly judges her for something she did in the past.

She has no one to look out for her anymore, no one. I take it upon myself to make sure she's not letting someone hurt her, again.

## **I owe her that. I owe her more than that.**

When I pulled into my driveway, I noticed the car was still parked outside her house. Its mid-day. It must be serious.

I should go over there. I want to see Ms. Kristen, hear her voice again, but I'm too scared to walk through the front door. I haven't been over there in years, her house has lots of memories, and secrets. Bad ones.

I go up to my room to look at Ms. Kristen. I do this often, because I'm too scared to do anything else. I do this often, when I miss him. From my window I can see her youngest son's room, and the garage. It is open.

The garage at Ms. Kristen's is never open. That garage is from her past, her beautiful yet destructive past.

It's filled with children's toys, and her husband's 1963 baby blue classic he left behind. Everything that made Ms. Kristen's into what she is today, is what's in that garage. She'd never open it.

Rochelle calls me. I pick up.

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