

Many years ago, before the Americas were discovered, a legend was told about fallen angels from the heavenly skies. The legend went on to say that Miguel Warlin picked a fight with Angelico Ruem, for reasons unknown. For their misbehavior, they were expelled from the heavens and forced to live in ancient earth, during the year 1015, Common Era. The angels reproduced with human mates to continue their line. Their children would sprout wings at their turn into adulthood, making their mark on the world as angels.

This didn't stop the quarrel between Ruem and Warlin but only fueled it. Their children displeased with being angels, gave up their wings for witchcraft, animal forms, human blood and aquatic life. There was no telling what could stop the bloodshed that was to come.

The prophecy came from the first witch, who claimed that a child born with symbols of dark and light on their wings would bring peace between the Ruems and the Warlins. This would only occur on the eve of the thousand year anniversary since the angels had fallen. Said child would bring peace to the earth once and for all.

The child, however, must be protected at all costs.

Nico tilted her head at the mirror in front of her. She didn't like the image reflected, what she looked like. It was her image, clearly, yet... she seemed, or felt for that matter, different. She shook her head at the mirror. Today was a day where getting dressed meant grabbing whatever was clean. She fixed her bikini top once more, grabbed a shirt and walked out the door without glancing back. She ran her hand through her silky brown hair, sighing softly with the wind that swayed through it. The cream color sky showed how early it was; the dark circles under her eyes expressed her lack of sleep.

She stood a mere two blocks from her house, waiting for the bus. Though kids crowded around her, Nico felt alone. She climbed on the bus when it came to a halt before her, getting the usual curious stares. Nico didn't try to glare at them like she usually did. With a sadden look on her face, she sat on an empty seat and leaned her head against the cold window, shutting her eyes as the bus began to move.

Her high school graduation was tomorrow, after that she'd be an adult, a seventeen year old adult, but an adult nonetheless. It felt strange, suddenly being thrown into the adult world. She had neither a choice nor a say. Would she be trapped in the adult world? Stuck in a misery she didn't like? Would this summer truly be her last before college?

The scream was high pitched and sharp and before she knew what was happening her hands were crowded in front of her face, ready for the impact.

It'd been a laugh not a scream, Nico was on edge and she knew it. She sighed and closed her eyes again, trying to forget what today held. She would visit them after school, like she always did. The bus halted abruptly to a stop in front of the blue and white school, the last time it would do so for the senior. Some kids complained loudly to the bus driver. Nico remained silent with her head rested safely against the window. She waited for everyone to get off before reluctantly standing from her seat. She exited the bus, waving a sadden goodbye to her bus driver.

The chirpy redhead was planted at the door of the bus like she always was, every morning of every day. Nico would be worried if she wasn't there waiting for her. Her brown eyes shined brightly against her hair, something that she loved to point out about herself.

“Okay I’ve decided he is really not that bad.” Ryan Rogers smiled more to herself than to her best friend. The redhead made a disgruntled face soon after. It was like this almost every morning. The best friends had fallen into a routine they were both comfortable with and, though they would never admit it to each other, kept them sane at the same time.

“You change opinions about him almost every day,” spoke Nico taking small notes of her best friend’s face. It wasn’t something that she would likely miss.

“Yes, but I – I don’t know, I mean, we’re done with high school and then there’s summer, then college-,” Nico rolled her dark eyes and placed her hair to one side, clearly bored at the conversation already. “Plus he’s been in love with me for three years, how am I supposed to end it if I need to?” Ryan’s voice became a whine.

Nico stopped walking towards their usual hang out spot. “Don’t make your relationship a pity thing. If you need to end it. End it.”

“I’m not making it a pity thing. He’s just too nice and cute... and I won’t end it – any time soon-,” Ryan turned to face her but all Nico did was shake her head before walking again. It was very difficult to talk to Ryan. She was insecure about herself, though Nico could never see why, the girl was beautiful. Ryan would also always go back and forth about her feelings for her boyfriend.

Nico opened a door to the hallway. “You’ve been dating him for four months, you don’t have to marry the kid.” Nico flinched at the word and before Ryan could notice or respond, her boyfriend had entwined their fingers and kissed her on the cheek lightly. Clearly drew away Ryan’s train of thought. Nico could tell that much.

Carter Mitchell was a few inches taller than his girlfriend. The boy always kept his hair short, the way Ryan liked it. It matched his dark orbs for eyes. Over the years that they had known him, Carter had put on a good thirty pounds of pure muscles and, although Ryan would never admit to it, Nico knew it was for her.

“Marriage? Too soon, sorry Nico.” He smiled at her obviously joking. Ryan couldn’t stop smiling at the six foot tall boy beside her. This was why Nico never pushed Ryan to break up with him, she always looked happy when she was with him. He was also the only boy to have ever respected Ryan’s no PDA rule. She

hated couples that made out in front of people, and assured Nico she never wanted to be one of them.

"I told you, I'd consider it when I'm twenty," joked Nico right back smiling. Carter laughed but Nico had already unwillingly flinched once again at the subject, and this time Ryan had noticed and nothing was distracting her. Her best friend, unfortunately, wasn't stupid. Ryan's face came over with a look of pure shock and shame simultaneously.

"Oh my god... it's today! Why didn't you remind me?!" she asked slapping her own forehead in disgrace.

"Ry it's not a big deal." Nico placed her hand on Ryan's shoulder. Why she was comforting *her* was strangely odd, only for the fact that it was today.

"Yes it is! It's your parents' marriage anniversary!" Another flinch. Ryan didn't display any anger in her voice. The only emotions Nico felt were to crawl into a hole and cry all day.

"Yeah and they're dead." Nico's face was flat of emotion, Carter' mouth gaped softly.

"Nico-," Ryan made a move to reach for her hand.

"I've got - class." Nico pushed open the nearest door to her and walked away from her friend, something she'd never done since she was twelve.

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Jack Smith
Mar. 1, 1970 - Nov. 17, 1994
Beloved Father, Brother
Son and Husband

Renzi Leraoux
Jan. 16, 1971 - Nov. 17, 1994
Beloved Mother
Daughter and Wife

Nico placed a rose on her mother's grave, then another one on her father's. She didn't say anything as she looked at their graves. They'd only been married a year and a half before their untimely death, but pictures showed they were very much in love, at least she chose to believe they were. It gave her hope that true love did, in fact, exist. Nico had been exactly five months old when they died. She'd been told it had been the first time they had gone out without her, almost taken her with them. Some part of her always wished they had. She brushed her

hand over her mother's name and closed her eyes, allowing a small tear to escape. She wondered what it would have been like, growing up with a mother, someone who actually loved her and wasn't going to throw her out when she turned eighteen. That wasn't the case.

She didn't want to be alone, didn't want to live in an orphanage; she wanted to have a family, or at least she wanted to be happy. She wasn't asking for too much, she didn't think so. She sighed, she knew it wasn't in her fate. Nico didn't believe in fate, why would fate be so cruel to a baby if it existed? Nico felt her eyes start to water horribly and she sucked in a breath as quietly as she could. She wouldn't cry in the middle of the Denver Cemetery at eleven in the morning, she was above that.

"Need a tissue?"

The voice came out of nowhere; she hadn't heard anyone coming up the long path. If anything she'd been expecting it to be Ryan's voice. She was the only person who knew the exact location of her parent's grave. However, Nico highly doubted it was her, since she wouldn't find out that Nico was missing until sixth period and it was barely lunchtime at school. She stood and slowly turned around to face the person behind the voice.

The boy stood with a tissue held out in his hand. That was the first thing she noticed. Her eyes moved up his arm, the muscles slightly flexed and visible, including the veins popping out. Her eyes stopped for a second at his bicep, her secret weakness with guys, then to his shirt, a white v-neck and finally to his face; only noticing for half a second that he had a bathing suit bottom on.

His face was almost like a sculpture, crafted by the hands of Donatello himself, only better. This mystery guy's blue eyes shone brightly against the morning sun. His hair, barely taller on the top than on the sides, was so beautifully dirty blonde, she didn't want to look away. His eyes held a burning gaze in them, as if he was trying to figure her out. His entire face was quite distracting.

Her mouth gaped slightly but she shook her head in response. Nico wiped the tear away with her own hand instead. "No thanks." She picked up her bag from the ground. If she wanted to make it into town for the final bell, she needed to catch the bus leaving in a few minutes.

"I'm Ashton Jones." His hand was extended before Nico could blink or make a move to leave. The tissue no longer in visible sight.

"Nicolette Smith," she said taking a small step forward and shaking his hand. Ashton nodded towards her parents' grave.

"Do they have a story? I've heard when you have someone to listen to you, things are a lot easier," he spoke, smiling softly. He shrugged his shoulders, making it seem like it was no big deal if she didn't want to talk. Strangely, Nico didn't like that or him.

"They do, but - I don't tell stories to strangers, Ashton." Nico took the half a second when he looked down to smile, to look him over again, before beginning to walk away.

"Ash," he corrected softly. Nico stopped and turned to look at him.

"Sorry." Her voice was flat from any emotion. She turned once more beginning to walk toward the exit of the cemetery.

"I'm guessing you're Nico, right? You look like one." Nico stopped for the second time, turned, and gave the Ash kid the weirdest look she could physically muster. "Your key." Nico looked down at the key on her backpack, NICO'S KEY, it read. She glared at it, blaming it for making her stay with this Adonis longer.

"Getting a little cocky now, aren't we?" Nico plastered a satirical smile on her face before she walked away from him. She distantly heard him laugh, though he quickly covered it up. Against her better judgment, Nico glanced over her shoulder. He was gone.

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"Gone? Just like poof?" asked Ryan, using one arm to block her eyes from the sun, as she turned to look at Nico. On the last day of school, Rodway Park made itself available to the students, or anyone for that matter. The authorities even looked away when some jumped in the lake, something illegal year round. That's why everyone came in bathing suits; it was the only day of the year the lake was opened for swimming. Nico currently found herself lying next to her best friend and her best friend's boyfriend in the middle of the park, next to a large shadowy tree. Carter was sitting under the shade, reading a book, shirtless - to no complaints -, while the girls tanned only a foot beside him in the sun.

Nico propped herself on her elbows and sighed. "Yeah... just poof," she repeated softly thinking back to the events. Nico pushed herself softly off the ground. She pulled her shorts up then promptly began to look through her bag for her wallet. "I'm gonna go get water, want some?"

"Yes please," said Carter looking up from his book to grin at Nico, his attention was quickly reversed back to the clearly interesting book he was reading, about a magical school. Nico smiled at him. It was really rather a strange sight, seeing such a strong fit boy reading a book when he could be swimming with his girlfriend or tanning or doing something other than reading, especially on the last day of school.

"I'll share," Ryan whispered, flipping herself over to her stomach. Nico nodded and walked towards the nearest water station. They were scattered all over the park, the city provided them to avoid dehydrated teens.

If there was one thing that Nico could say she adored about living in Denver, was the seasons. Unlike other places, there were four. During the summer it was nice, and though they had to use almost every snow day possible and some extra this year during winter, the snow hadn't been that bad, it had been tolerable to say the least. She ran a hand through her hair as she approached the end of the water line.

"Couldn't stay away from me I see?" the voice was unmistakably familiar. Nico went slightly rigid; she hadn't expected to hear it so soon.

She turned her body only so he could see how big she was rolling her eyes.

"If I was looking to get away from you it would not have been a problem. Of course, that was before I knew I was dealing with an extremely cocky person." She turned herself back to look at the front of the line, forgetting for a few seconds about the boy behind her.

"Just living up to your word." she could feel his smile burning the back of her head. Nico couldn't help but roll her eyes yet again. She'd never rolled her eyes this many times at someone in such a short period of time.

"Do you need something?" Nico sounded meaner than usual but this boy had been there at her lowest point, a point that she didn't let people see, unless it was Ryan. She had known Ryan since she was four years old. Ryan was her exception to everything, including her sanity. Ash cleared his throat.

"Uh, no actually, I was just trying to joke around with you. You know,

humor?" His smile was infecting, like a zombie virus ready to spread. She refused to be infected.

"Well, don't," Nico spoke flatly. She turned back and smiled at the girl behind the counter. "Two waters please." Her voice completely changed, she sounded quite nice. She gave the girl behind the counter two dollars and grabbed the cold drinks. Nico thanked her and began walking back to her friends, a certain speed in her walk; she couldn't wait to get away. Ash was right behind her though, a water bottle in his hand.

"I don't understand what I did to you." His tone was demanding yet curious at the same time. He tilted his head softly, trying to figure out Nico's next move. Surprisingly she liked that. She was used to people knowing what she was going to do, but having someone not knowing... was oddly comforting.

"Nothing. You did nothing, so pretend we never met." Nico shook her head and pressed her lips together before she picked up her pace.

"Why?" He was a persistent bird, clawing at answers. She stopped.

"Because!" she snapped angrily.

"Because? That's the only answer I'm gonna get outta you?" he snapped right back. Nico flinched in surprise. She was expecting him to back down. She tilted her head, eyeing his face for any sort of reaction.

"Why do you care?" her words dripped with venom, though her features had softened greatly.

"Cause I want to see where we could go," he shrugged it off, as if it were no big deal. Nico kept her eyes from drifting down to his pecks and biceps when he said this. Why couldn't they have made everyone be fully clothed today? Make him jump in the lake in his winter clothes!

"You barely know me," she battled back, crossing her arms but then uncrossing them when the cold bottles touched her skin.

"Exactly. I want to get to know you." Ash's tone was calm, a little too calm for Nico's liking, however she let it slide.

"No." Her voice was forceful and the way she shook her head was even worse.

"Why not?" He sounded like a child who wasn't getting the cookie he wanted from his parents. Nico felt too much like said cookie.

"Because, we met on my parents' marriage anniversary!" she snapped once

more. Tears brimmed her eyes but by the life of her she would not let them fall.

Ash seemed immediately taken aback by this, but the curious look that remained on his face made Nico uneasy and queasy.

"Talk to me." his voice was softer, he was trying to reach out to her on a more personal level.

"No." her voice was stern, as it had been before. She didn't want to talk to this Adonis creature she'd just met. She'd rather talk to her friends.

"It's how I'll get to know you," he urged her causally.

"If I talk, will you finally leave me alone?" he seemed reluctant to answer. It was the only thing she could think off. At least this way she would never have to deal with him again.

"Yes."

"Good, come on." Nico walked up to Ryan and Carter, throwing a bottle in their general direction. Carter caught it with one hand, his brown eyes filled with confused. Nico held up a hand signaling for Carter to check up on her every five minutes or so. She glanced at her two friends one more time before heading over to the lake. She sat down slowly dipping her feet in. Silently, Ash sat next to her, also dipping his feet in. Nico was silent for a few seconds as she stared at the lake. There were people who walked around it, jumping in, having fun, overall enjoyed themselves and then there was her. "What do you want to know?" she asked the water.

"Everything."

"There's a lot." Her urgency to dismiss talking about her life was quickly shot down.

"I would figure." Nico shot him a look and he held up his hands in defense. She liked being in charge.

"It all started when I was five months old, my parents left me with a sitter when they went out to dinner for the first time since I had been born. They never made it to dinner... they died on the way there, a car crash. I was immediately taken to an orphanage. My mother was an only child and my father's sibling could not be located." As Nico dug further into her past she could tell that Ash became really interested in what she had to say, his facial expressions changed at the perfect times. She talked about her childhood, how she had met Ryan, and how Carter had moved down from Canada in the ninth grade, and how she'd

had three boyfriends, but none of them had gotten close to her angel.

“Your angel?” He seemed especially curious in this. Nico sighed; she knew how stupid it sounded every time she said it.

“Don’t laugh at me but when I was six and asleep there was a soft crack, a window breaking but it was so soft not many heard it. I’m a light sleeper and as soon as I heard it I rushed downstairs as quickly as I possibly could and there, on the counter was a kid, maybe eight or nine, no older than that, I’m sure. As far as I remember he placed a finger on his lips and jumped right out the window. I call him my angel.” Ash smiled softly as she spoke.

“That’s sweet.”

“And childish, are we done?” Nico got up as soon as she saw Carter making what seemed like the fifth move to stand.

“Why don’t you like me?” Ash urged, his tone holding a soft ring. He stood up as well, his eyes digging into hers.

“Why? Does everyone like you?” she laughed, feeling the sarcasm tickle her voice. It felt nice to mess with him, almost fulfilling.

“No, nothing like that..” He looked down for a moment, as though he was uncomfortable. “I was wondering if maybe you’d wanna go get dinner or something? Tomorrow night?” He smiled and Nico felt her stomach flip. A boy this attractive had never asked her out before, at least not one that enjoyed her sarcasm.

“Are you asking me out?” she questioned raising an eyebrow softly.

“No, I just want to get to know you.” He shrugged lightly as he smiled. She knew he was lying; he wasn’t very good at it.

“But you know everything,” she said moving her eyes to the floor away from his gaze. This wasn’t a very easy task.

“Then, if you want to get to know me you can meet me at Rock Jets, 7 tomorrow, if not I’ll eat alone.” He smiled knowingly and Nico felt her insides melt.

“Don’t hold your breath,” she said sharply. Ash smiled.

“I won’t, goodbye Nicolette Smith.” He did a mini bow towards the brunette then began to walk backwards in the direction of, she could only figure, his friends were.

“Bye Ashton Jones.” Nico turned towards her friends and walked silently to

them.

"Who was he?" Ryan and Nico watched him turn around and walk away. "He was hot," Ryan commented as Carter made a look of disgust and snorted.

"He looks overrated." Both girls quickly ignored Carter's clear jealousy.

"He asked me out," spoke Nico, a dream like tone taking over her voice.

"Are you going?" asked Ryan curiously.

"Good question," Nico slowly laid on her towel. Ryan lightly rolled her eyes.

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"She's the child? The one?" The first voice in the pitch-black arena demanded.

"Yes she is," whispered the second voice happily.

"Good... grab her."

Ryan gasped awake, feeling her heart jumping out of her chest. What's wrong with me? she questioned softly as she got out of bed. These dreams had been happening way too often and she didn't like them one bit. They were always about a girl and getting her, killing her, torturing her, always something horrible. She walked into the kitchen, opened the fridge, grabbed the pitcher of juice and poured herself a glass. The dreams were getting worse, more realistic. She shook her head softly, and went back to her bed. Dreams were just that, dreams.

Ash leaned against the wall of Rock Jets feeling the soft pain shoot up his spine, somehow he managed to pull off the cool and causal look rather easily, after all he had felt this pain dozens of times. His wings had only been retracted a few seconds and the skin on his back still burned from opening and closing. It was completely painless when his back didn't touch anything, but he decided leaning would give away a façade that he wasn't nervous. As he was waited for Nico to arrive his thoughts began to drift off.

Strangely, she attracted him, almost like a connection. It's why he had spoken to her in the first place and why he wanted to know more about her. The thing that really stood out to him, however, was not something she could have told him. She had no idea there were angels surrounding her. Oh Angelico, if only she knew that it had been him when he was nine, popping in to steal some bread. Not for hunger or anything of the kind but because it was part of the angel tests required of children. He recalled the night perfectly, even if her recollection had been slightly different.

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The sound of footsteps froze nine year old Ash in mid-move, currently on the counter top looking for the hidden bread. The noise he had made coming in had been incredible and he knew he had to hurry.

"Who are you?" six year old Nico asked, a soft blue blanket in her hand. He knew he wouldn't be able to complete the test of getting in and out of a house with her there. "Are you hungry?"

"No I just, I--," he stammered. She was beautiful, even at such a young age and looked more like an angel than the nine year old thief stealing bread.

"Why are you stealing our bread?" her voice was so pure, so perfectly beautiful and so innocent it stung Ash's heart.

"I'm so sorry." His finger went to his lips to tell her to be silent. Before she had a chance to blink, Ash had been out the window, vanished, without a trace of his presence ever being there, except for her memory... and the stolen bread.

He hadn't known it'd been her, never crossed his mind he'd see the six year old all grown up. That six year old girl he had met long ago was Nico... but now she was older, sassier, and sexier too. He pressed his lips together. Did she notice that he was actually an angel? That what she had been calling him for the past eleven years, actually existed? That he, Ashton Jones, was the only child to complete the 50 children tests before the age of ten? Did she know that he was protecting the most sought after angel in the world? That if he failed his mission all would be lost for another thousand years? Did she know any of this? He knew the answer to that final question, but he almost wanted her to know the truth. However, he couldn't do that. It would mean letting his feelings get in the way, the worst thing an angel as important as him could ever do.

"Have you been here long?" Her voice shot him out of his coma daze.

"No, not really." He pushed himself off the wall immediately smiling at her. He took a long look at her up and down, making sure to not stop at her chest. She was dressed in relaxed clothing, which was just how he had figured she would be dressed, since her graduation had been that morning. Her sandals were black with some unrecognizable design on them; she was also sporting white shorts with a black shirt to match the shoes. It made her look "beautiful, I mean you look - just wow. You look beautiful." She smiled softly, her face tilting downwards as blood crept up her cheeks.

"Thanks," she whispered as the red drifted from her face. A different Nico was meeting him for his date and he liked this one much more than the one at the cemetery.

"Come on, time to get some food in your stomach. You do eat, right?" he asked, a light tease in his voice.

"Course! I can clear out an entire table if I'm hungry enough." She smiled.

"Good." Ash let her in the restaurant. Rock Jets was one of the few places in the city that was operated fully by angels. It was Ash's favorite place to eat; he knew exactly what to order and what not to order, though there weren't many things that he wouldn't order. The light red walls resembled the spilled Ruem blood and on the far back wall there was a painting over a hole that Ash's friend, Darrin, had punched a few months back. The tables were all aligned perfectly.

Being a self-seat restaurant Ash immediately took a seat in a section he knew angels sat at constantly. A waiter came to attend them almost instantly after sitting down. Ash admired the perfect service.

"Hi, my name is Jon and I will be your waiter. Shall we get you started with some drinks?" he asked them nicely as he handed them menus. Ash's eyes flicked towards the waiter, he could have sworn they'd fought in a war together a while back. He placed cup napkins on the table.

"I'll just have water, thank you."

"And for the lovely lady?" Nico smiled again.

"Water too, please."

"I'll be back soon with your waters." And he was gone. Nico tilted her head at Ash, interest lighting up in her eyes.

"Now I want to know everything." The curious stare that Ash had known to be on his face when Nico had spoken her life story was now promptly placed on Nico.

"There are some things I can't tell you," he admitted. He could think of a few right of the bat. He knew from experience that girls hated when they weren't told everything.

"That's fine." Ash was at once taken aback by her reaction. Girls hated when they weren't told everything straight away, especially if it could lead into a relationship, yet she seemed completely fine with the idea.

Ash grinned at her.

"What?" Nico tried to look towards her nose, clearly self-conscious as though something was on her face.

"You're amazing." Nico blushed.

"Can't say that till date three," she whispered softly. Ash couldn't stop from grinning like a fool at her words. Nico cleared her throat after a moment of silence. "Your past? You promise I showed up, you'd tell me."

"That I did," Ash quickly rambled through his head for tid bits of his past. As he was about to begin to speak Jon came back with their drinks. Ash quickly ordered two hamburgers before realizing that Nico could have been vegetarian. When the look of pure shock took over his face, Jon was already gone. "I hope you're a carnivore?"

"Yes, but I can order for myself," said Nico, almost as if she could read Ash's

thoughts.

"I'll remember that for next time." He smiled, feeling the sudden weight lift from his shoulders.

"What makes you think there'll be a next time?" she tilted her head ever so slightly, not being at all seductive but genuinely curious.

"A feeling I suppose," a soft silence followed as Ash's eyes connected with Nico's.

"Your past?" Nico pressed after a few seconds the utter silence.

"Right, hmm let's see, well my childhood was a really uninteresting one." The stories of his life rolled off his tongue. How he'd finished pre-college education at the age of ten, strange to most but ordinary to him. How his best friend was a girl, and he'd never had any feelings towards her, though she was the most special woman in his life. However she had always been most special to him. He even mentioned how his father had passed away at the age of fourteen and his mother at sixteen. Most importantly, Ash mentioned that sometimes "I wish I was normal." The food arrived after those words were spoken, cutting an end to their conversation, or so Ash had thought.

"Why do you want to be normal?" Nico ate a fry and tilted her head softly; Ash was beginning to love that. His mind quickly racked over ways that he could possibly explain this to her.

"Have you ever felt like your life is planned out for you? Every second of every day? Ever felt like you can't change your fate? Your destiny?" Ash's blue eyes were locked on Nico's beautiful hazel ones; he searched in them for anything that could bring him a hint to what she might say next.

"There's no such thing as fate," she whispered. I wish, thought Ash, my life would be so much easier without it.

"Are you sure?"

"Your life can't be planned out for you," Nico's voice was stern. "It can't. Fate couldn't have said 'Oh I'm bored let's kill this baby's parents', it just happened. Things aren't planned, they just... happen." In that second Ash became extremely interested in her beliefs.

"Do you believe in vampires?" Ash searched her face for any note of reaction.

"Only the ones in my dreams. If we're playing this game. Do you... believe in... werewolves?" she asked pausing, to her this was nothing more than a joke.

“Wanna howl at the moon with me some time?” he asked laughing, Nico giggled softly. Ash smiled at her before looking down at his plate then back up to her eyes in a split second. He swallowed. “Do you believe in angels?” this time Ash could feel his own heart stop. Did she believe in his very existence? Did she truly believe that he could sprout from his back? Nico was quiet for a moment as she looked right back at him. Taking in a deep breath she uttered one word.

“Yes.”

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Ash searched her eyes for some sign that he was allowed to. He wanted to kiss her, right now, more than anything he had ever wanted. They had shared their past and Ash saw the possibility of a future with her. He knew fate hadn't been as lucky with him and love, but he wanted to try anyway, and he wanted to try with her. “I'm gonna kiss you now.” His voice was soft, barely above a whisper. She giggled quietly.

“You won't,” she whispered back, moving her face closer to his. She felt it; she wanted to close the connection they shared with each other just as much as he did. “I feel like this is something out of a really cheesy movie,” Ash smiled at her words, they were just inches away.

“I'm about to make it cheesier.” Ash grabbed her face with one hand and pressed their lips together in a smooth movement. Nico smiled softly against the kiss. Ash felt his stomach turn, love wasn't in his mission. How can something so wrong feel just perfectly in place though? It had to mean something; he knew it. All his life he'd been told to believe that his wings told him his mission and his soulmate, but Ash's wings had never showed a soulmate. He'd assumed that he'd die in war, or worse, alone. However, in those few seconds of the first kiss with Nico, feeling his lips against hers, Ash was almost positive that fate could be wrong. Fate had to be wrong.

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“When do I get to meet your famous best friend?”

Nico's head laid carelessly on Ash's arm as the newly formed couple walked

down a street holding hands. It'd been three days since their first official date, the day they begun going out. The question loomed over the air as Nico looked up at Ash.

"Why do you want to meet her?" it wasn't said roughly or mean, just curiously. It had been how most of their conversations were, filled with curiosity. She knew Ash dared not to look at the puppy dog eyes she was giving him.

"Because she seems important to you," shrugged Nico. It was the truth, though Nico still didn't know her name, every time Ash spoke about her his face lit up.

"She is, very," admitted Ash. Nico stopped walking suddenly causing Ash to stop. He gave her a curious look and at this point she was glad he wasn't exasperated with her.

"Then I want to meet her... tonight." She felt like a child ready to throw a tantrum but she didn't care. She wanted to meet the famous best friend, the one that Ash couldn't stop talking about.

"Just do me one favor." Ash looked down at her, pausing only to search her eyes. He seemed serious as he stood over her. "Don't get jealous." His eyes showed both kindness and worry.

Nico smiled glad to know that was the only thing he needed to know. What would she get jealous of anyway? She had Ash. "I'm not the jealous type." She shrugged off his comment.

"Good." Ash smiled.

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Twenty minutes later, they were standing in front of a mansion, so large it made the white house look like just that, a house. Nico felt flustered simply standing in its presence. Ash seemed completely relaxed; he pressed a button and said his name. "Ash? As in Ashton Jones? Well, why the hell are you using the gate, son of gun?" the voice on the intercom rang.

"I have a friend with me," The reason was enough to get the gate before them to open. Nico swallowed her worries away when Ash grabbed her hand and lead her up the driveway. Ash opened the door like there was no problem with just barging into someone else's house. The first thing to block Nico's eyesight was

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