



# MISTAKEN

A NOVEL BY

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This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

Mistaken

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# Prologue

As Jamie watched the seconds tick by on his favorite leather wristwatch, it never occurred to him just how soon he would die. Death was the last thing on his mind that evening. He turned his attention back to the grey ring box that sat open on the white-washed wooden dresser. The ring that was enclosed inside caused glimmering shapes to dance across the walls as the single marquis-cut diamond refracted the light from the wobbly ceiling fan. He tucked a neatly written note just underneath the front of the box, a thoughtful smile pulling at the corners of his mouth as his mind wandered to his girlfriend, Dillan.

It was just after 7PM, and she would be arriving home from work within minutes. He'd planned out everything meticulously. From her favorite little black dress that lay on the bed with the stiletto heels he loved to watch her in, to the dinner reservations at Porter's on Fifth for 8:30 PM. Tonight would be a night that she'd always remember.

He checked himself in the mirror one last time, fixing the collar of his dark blue dress shirt, and running his fingers through his short black hair. Then, giving the bedroom one last glance, he headed into the living room. Jamie's watch now read 7:08 PM.

At 7:12 PM, keys rattled against the front lock before Dillan's form appeared in the open doorway. She bounded into his arms as soon as she saw him, the white linen dress she was wearing flowing around her. Jamie caught her in his arms, her silky auburn hair brushing his face as she kissed him. He pulled her slender frame close, breathing her in as a calming lavender scent enveloped him.

"You know I love how you look in that shirt," Dillan's giggle twinkled in his ears as she pulled away, looking him over. The color of it was such a striking contrast to his icy blue eyes. Or so she told him every time he wore it.

"I know. He squeezed her hands, smiling at her as she leaned in, softly kissing his lips.

"What are you up to mister? Hmm?" Her honey brown eyes narrowed at him with the suspicious excitement of a child on Christmas Eve.

"I thought we could go out to dinner tonight, I'm sure you had a long day at work."

"I did, but that doesn't change the fact that you are up to something." Dillan tilted her head as she draped her arms over his shoulders. "You seem to forget how hard it is to lie to me babe."

"I have no idea what you're talking about Dill." Jamie put on his best angelic look.

Dillan wasn't buying it, they'd been together too long for either one to successfully lie to the other. She slowly pulled away from him, crossing her arms over her chest as one eyebrow perched high on her forehead. Jamie's smile only seemed to grow, the more inquisitive Dillan's expression became. He lifted her small hand to his lips and kissed the back of it gently.

"Why don't you get ready to go," He glanced down at his watch, "I made reservations at 8:30. It's 7:15 now." With a playfully dramatic sigh, she gave up her interrogation, leaning in and kissing his lips once more before walking past him toward the hallway. Jamie turned, watching her as she sashayed away. She threw him one last devious smile before disappearing down the hall. Only a couple more minutes now. Everything was going as planned.

Jamie turned away from the empty hallway, and began to shut the front door. It stopped abruptly with as a large fist with grimy fingernails gripped it from the other side. The door suddenly swung forward, sending Jamie stumbling back into the living room.

"If you're looking for money, my wallet is sitting on the table over there." Jamie's voice faltered as he nodded to the kitchen table. Jamie could hear his own pulse jumping loudly in

his ears as he stared up at the tall, menacing stranger standing before him. He couldn't disguise the anxiety he felt. He quickly pulled himself up, his back bumping into one of the side tables, sending a picture frame to the floor with a crash. The man stared back at Jamie, a callous smirk playing across his leathery face, deepening the set creases around his mouth. He took a few steps into the apartment, remaining silent. His hand reached into his worn black blazer, the light catching the handle of a gun as the man's fingers curled around the grip. Jamie knew he was backed into a corner and his options were limited. Maybe the stranger did just want to rob him, but that notion didn't seem very likely.

"You mean to tell me you don't recognize one of your old friends?" His words grated harshly in Jamie's ears.

"I've never seen you in my life. What do you want from me? I have money. I can give you money." Jamie pleaded, glancing around the room. The kitchen was a few steps away. Maybe he could grab a knife. He cautiously took a step back.

"I don't want your money. I want your life." The man's hateful dark eyes bore a sense of resentment that Jamie didn't understand. Maybe if he could just keep the man talking long enough this might not end as badly. Jamie took another step back, thinking he might be able to reach the knife set from there. He knew that there was a very slim chance that it would even matter. He looked back at the man, whose expression remained unchanged as he stared at Jamie. The gun slowly rose to point straight at Jamie's chest.

"There has to be some other way." Jamie's hand reached backwards as he tried to edge toward the kitchen counter. In the same moment, he noticed Dillan stepping into the hallway, clearly heading towards the living room. A second, chilling fear struck him as he realized that the stranger might kill her too. He couldn't let that happen. Without another thought Jamie lunged for the butcher's knife on the counter.

“Nice try, Alex.” The stranger smiled grimly. At that exact moment, the purpose of this man’s visit became as clear as the fear in Jamie’s eyes. He’d realized who the ominous stranger was. He knew why the stranger had come to find him. As the bullets ripped through his chest, he knew his life was coming to an abrupt end. His body lurched backward violently, absorbing the shots before collapsing against the hardwood floor. Jamie’s eyes stared up at the ceiling, widening with each breath he couldn’t take. His heart beat erratically, like the gears of a machine coming apart. The world around him seemed to be doing the same.

“Jamie!” Dillan’s voice pulled him back. She threw herself onto the floor next to Jamie, glancing toward the doorway, only to see a large figure exiting the apartment. She didn’t understand. Why had he done this? What did he want with Jamie? Bewildered and frantic, she eyed the growing pool of scarlet blood seeping out of Jamie’s chest and soaking through the deep blue fabric of his shirt. Her favorite shirt, the one that brought out his eyes. Her muscles locked as her screams trapped themselves in her throat. She was paralyzed by the scene of horror spreading before her. This couldn’t be real.

Gurgled coughs snapped her out of her frozen state as Jamie’s chest heaved. She didn’t have the luxury of being scared. She had to help. She had to save him.

“Jamie, hang on!” Her hands pressed against the free-flowing wound as she pleaded with him, the hot liquid flooding over her fingers. Too much. He was losing too much.

“I love you,” Jamie managed a faint whisper as blood sputtered from his lips, the metallic taste invading his mouth. Each breath felt like he was breathing in razor blades, and each breath became harder to take as he choked up more blood. His wild gaze held hers, full of disbelief and pain. How was this it? He couldn’t leave her like this. He didn’t want to.

As death's cold hand tightened its grip on him, his world began to fade away once more.

Dillan's face...her voice... everything slowly faded as reality went out of focus.

"I love you too Jamie! Don't leave me! Hang on!"

Jamie could barely make out her screams as the darkness wrapped around him. He wished he could honor her last request. He didn't want to leave her.

But as his watch struck 7:25 PM, the light faded from his eyes.

He was already gone.

# Chapter One

Dillan let out a sigh as she closed her laptop, looking around her cluttered home office. It was a quarter til seven and she hadn't finished any work. She'd been lost in her own head all day, unable to focus, unable to accomplish anything productive. Her eyes fell to the sparkling diamond on her ring finger.

*All I can think about is you.*

*One year ago today I lost you.*

Jamie's face flickered in her thoughts accompanied by a tight pain swelling in her chest, the sensation felt as though she had taken a deep breath too close to a campfire. This was supposed to get easier. It hadn't. She clutched a hand to her chest, pushing herself back from her desk before heading for the kitchen. As she grabbed the orange prescription bottle from the cabinet, the tightness in Dillan's chest eased slightly. Unscrewing the cap, she dumped a few pills in her hand. She didn't pay attention to the recommendations on the side of the bottle.

*Take one, as needed, for Anxiety.*

Officially her doctor had diagnosed her as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She certainly was "post-traumatic." A year ago, Dillan was what she would have deemed normal. Mentally stable. Content with her life. A year ago she had been standing in the bedroom, marveling over the ring that he had left resting on her dresser, along with a note attached:

*Marry me!*

How cruel to read those joyful words at the exact moment they were taken away from her. A life's promise cut short, unable to even come into fruition. As the ring had slid



onto her slender finger, her head filled with all the possibilities it represented. Just before those shots rang out, she had imagined herself in a much different place than her current state. A wedding, a family, a future. Those dreams and hopes blown away with two bullets from a .45 caliber pistol.

Her phone buzzed against the black Formica counter top as she downed the pills dry. The display flashed Kay's name on the screen.

"Hey Kay." She said flatly as she walked across the apartment to her bedroom.

"You are still coming, right?" She figured Kay would be checking on her. She was notorious for cancellations lately.

"Yes, I was just about to leave." Dillan rifled through a basket of laundry, digging out a faded DropKick Murphy's t-shirt.

"Oh good. I was worried you would bail on me." Kay sighed.

"No worries, I'm heading your way now." Dillan managed to pull on a pair of dark boot-cut jeans as she held the phone against her shoulder.

"Great, I'll have a beer waiting for you when you get here."

That pleased Dillan. At least something could.

She hung up, shoving her phone into the pocket of her jeans before slipping her feet into a pair of black Doc Marten's. Casual dress. She was heading to a bar after all. The Ledge- good beer and good music. It was a favored hangout for the college students and grads that still lived in town. Dillan had been going there for years. But she hadn't been there in the last year.

As she made her way to the door she slipped on an over-sized black leather jacket. It had been Jamie's. The arms were just a little too long, but she always wore it whenever

she rode. Before exiting the apartment, she scooped up her black messenger bag and her motorcycle helmet, then trotted down the three flights of stairs to the parking garage.

She reached the last landing and approached the glass doors that exited to the parking garage behind her building, thumbing through her keys until she found the one for Jamie's motorcycle. It was nothing special, just a beaten up plum-colored Honda Shadow. But she had spent so many nights out riding on the back of it. Her arms tightly wound around Jamie's waist. After his death she'd found herself riding it more, as if he was still there riding with her.

Pushing her hair back over her shoulders, Dillan slid her helmet on as her legs straddled the bike. *Here goes nothing.* She still had her reservations about going out, but Kay was waiting for her. Despite her generally reclusive behavior over the last year, she knew it was better if she wasn't alone. She knew she needed a distraction from the thoughts in her head. She didn't want to think about him tonight.

The dormant rumbling as the bike idled beneath her caused every other lingering thought to dissipate. She curled her fingers around the chrome handlebars before backing out of her parking spot and twisting the accelerator. The bike growled to life as she rode out into the street. Dillan could feel the adrenaline coursing through her veins as the wind hit her face and the thundering engine resonated through her body.

She was relaxed, *almost* happy.

Breathing the night air in a deep gulp, Dillan's shoulders eased, releasing the tension of the day. The red light reflected off iridescent shimmers in small puddles on the damp street as she waited at the intersection. Dillan hadn't even realized it had been raining today, too lost in her own head to even peer out the window. Now, as she sat at

the light she took in the dampness of the thick summer air and the slight gust of wind that rushed by with the moving traffic on the adjacent street.

Just as she could see the opposite street's traffic lights turning yellow, a Greyhound Bus came across the intersection. Dillan had been watching the traffic with disinterest, to her it was just one large mass of unidentifiable vehicles blurring by. Then the large blue bus rolled past her, seeming to slow down temporarily, which set it apart from the rest of the vehicles. Dillan's arms and back tingled; something pulled her attention towards the bus. She looked up at the bus windows as they rolled past, all the faces seeming to blur just like the traffic. Nameless faceless people. None taking any notice of her.

Then her eyes locked with a familiar icy blue gaze staring at her from the back window, and as it registered just who they belonged to, the bus flew past the intersection and out of view. Dillan remained at the light, her mouth falling agape as her brain failed to make sense of what she'd seen.

*It was impossible, right?*

*That couldn't have been Jamie.*

*Jamie is dead.*

A horn blared behind her, jarring her out her trance. The bike lunged forward as she over-accelerated against the wet road. It spun across the intersection, tossing her onto the sidewalk as the bike abruptly slammed against the curb, scraping the pavement. Several onlookers rushed over, hovering around her with horrified expressions. Dillan although jarred from the crash, pulled herself up. Her knuckles were fairly scraped up and there was a rip on the side of her jeans. All minimal damage. More embarrassed than hurt, Dillan tried to brush some of the gravel off of her wounds. Blood rushed to her

cheeks, her face growing hot as she drew the attention of both drivers and pedestrians on the street. She hastily thanked the few that had actually helped her back to her feet, pulling her bike back up, ignoring the concerned looks that were sent her way.

Dillan supposed she should just try to forget what she'd seen and go to the bar. No sane person would believe it was really Jamie. But those eyes. She *knew* those eyes. They were Jamie's. She wasn't crazy. Emotionally unstable? Yes! But crazy? No. It had to be him. She knew what she had seen and it had to be him.

She couldn't sit there debating any longer, there was only one way to find out. With the loud roar of the bike's engine, Dillan bolted across the intersection, zipping narrowly past several cars, dodging through traffic. Her eyes frantically searched for the bus, but she had lost sight of it. Zooming past each block, her eyes darted both ways hoping for a sign of its passing. A few cars honked their disapproval at her as she cut in front of them. Nearing the edge of downtown, her eyes fell on a blue sign with white lettering. The words "Bus Station" and an accompanying right arrow gave her a glimmer of hope.

She hooked a right, her bike leaning dangerously low as she maneuvered the sharp turn. Dillan's heartbeat hit heavy within her chest as the bus station came into sight at the end of the street. All she could think about was seeing Jamie step off that bus, running to him and kissing him. All the pain she had been feeling over the last year would simply melt away. It was too late to think of how insane or how irrational a thought like that really was.

Only 100 feet away, she spotted the bus she had seen him riding. It had to be the same one. People were filing out of several other buses all at once. It was a crowded and chaotic station as passengers arrived and departed. She stopped her bike next to the bus, looking up, but did not see his face in the window where she had seen him last. Her

stomach fluttered, as her eyes, still filled with foolish hope, were searching over the dozens and dozens of unfamiliar faces that were mixing into the mass of people.

Nowhere.

He was nowhere.

Dillan pushed herself into the endless sea of travelers. Still searching. Still hoping. Her short-lived fantasy was crumbling at the edges. The butterflies in her stomach dissolved into a nauseating pain that stretched up her throat with the bitter taste of bile. She got as far as the ticket counter and still found no familiar face. No Jamie. But by that time, she knew she had been deluding herself.

She'd watched him die. She'd held him in her arms after the light had left his eyes. She stood at the bus station replaying the scene from a year ago in her head. She remembered the undertaker lowering his casket into the ground. At that moment panic struck her. She'd finally lost it. If the bus station had been silent, Dillan was sure someone might have heard the definitive snap that she thought she heard as her heart broke all over again. Tears welled up in the corners of her eyes, blurring her vision as she haphazardly pushed through the waiting passengers. She just wanted to get back to her bike. She just wanted to go back home. Her phone buzzed inside her pocket. She already knew it was Kay.

"I'm not coming." She said, choking back tears.

"Dillan, you promised you wouldn't do this!" Her friend's voice was filled with worry.

"I know, but I just can't do this. Not tonight." Dillan whispered.

Dillan hung up the phone before Kay could object again. Guilt from her friend would only add to the pot of emotion brewing inside her. It took every ounce of self-control that Dillan had within her, not to let it spill over in the middle of the bus station. Climbing onto

her bike, she revved the accelerator, wanting nothing more than to get away from the damned bus station. To forget what she had just done, how stupid she had just been. All that mattered to her now was curling up underneath her soft cotton bed sheets and forgetting that the rest of the world existed. Forget that he existed. She knew the latter was impossible.

As she pulled into her parking space, Dillan's phone began to buzz once again. She pulled it out, glancing down at the screen. Her friend Kay had now called at least six more times. With an exasperated sigh, she turned off her phone, roughly pushed the glass doors to her building open, and ran up the stairs to her apartment. They seemed to multiply in front of her as she held onto the railing.

Her legs finally reached the last landing and she turned down the hallway toward her door. The closer she got, the harder it became to hold the pain back. Dillan could feel it trickling upward inside her, edging toward the top as she neared her door.

*Breathe, just breathe.*

As soon as her feet passed the doorway, the mask of composure she'd been hiding behind shattered. She stared at the spot where he had once been. The spot where he had died. Sobs spilled from deep in her chest as everything she'd been feeling tonight finally broke through her former semblance of composure. Dillan cried out in frustration, flinging her cell phone across the room. She pressed her back against the door as her body slumped down to the hardwood, her shoulders heavy and defeated. They shook as the waves of tortured sobs escaped her. After several minutes, Dillan looked back up through tear-filled eyes. All she could see was herself, pleading with his limp form, begging him to return. Screaming for him to return. Then his blood soaking into her dress as she knelt, holding his lifeless body. Her neighbors had heard the shots too.

They were the ones that had called the police. Ten minutes later the police and ambulance had arrived, confirming then what Dillan had already known. Jamie was gone, pronounced dead at the scene.

It had taken three officers to pry her away from him. She cringed, remembering the foreign shrieks that had left her body as they dragged her from the apartment. Dillan still couldn't recall anything from the three days following his death, except Kay coming to pick her up from the hospital. She remembered Kay bursting into tears as soon as she had hugged Dillan. Dillan had just stood there, catatonic, fully detached from the world.

So now a year later...did she feel any different? Any better? Any less fucked up?

No.

Dillan pulled herself up off the floor, her legs shaky, but steady beneath her, her chest still heaving, though her sobs had quieted. She made her way to the kitchen, her hands shaking as she turned on the faucet. She gingerly stuck her hands underneath the warm water bracing herself for the oncoming pain.

Dillan yelped as the water assaulted her raw flesh. She kicked the bottom cabinet, burying her face in her arms until the pain lessened. More tears escaped as she winced, attempting to wash out the pieces of gravel that were still lodged in the scrapes on her knuckles. She wrapped a dishcloth around her hand, then grabbed a beer from the fridge before heading to the bathroom to bandage her wounds. As she returned the first-aid kit to its place in the medicine cabinet, she saw an extra bottle of her Xanax prescription sitting there. Without hesitation she dumped a few more tablets into her palm.

“Happy Anniversary Jamie.”

Her tone was cynical as she tossed the pills back with a large gulp of beer. Dillan would not be going to The Ledge tonight and she would not be answering any more phone calls. Staring at her sad reflection in the mirror, she took another swig, waiting for the numbness to wash over her body. Waiting for the world to fade away. As the memories from a year ago swarmed around her, she wanted to feel nothing at all.



## Chapter Two

Dillan had no idea what time it was. She stared listlessly up at the high ceiling, her eyes following the exposed air ducts. After sufficiently ensuring that she'd shaken every last drop from the aluminum can in her hand, she let it tumble onto the floor next to the several others that already lay at her feet.

Her body felt warm, all sensations and emotions pleasantly dulled. She grabbed another beer off of the coffee table, flipped the tab, and took a large swig. The stereo played some nondescript music in the background as she tilted her head back, breathing in deeply. She lay inert, enjoying the lack of emotion and lack of care that the mix of alcohol and prescription drugs provided her.

Dillan knew this was only a temporary state of existence. The emotions would come rushing back when she woke up in the morning, but she couldn't afford to think of that now. She already felt a lingering tinge of guilt for blowing off her friend. Kay had stopped by the apartment earlier, begging to be let inside, but all Dillan had done was yell for her to go away. Eventually Dillan turned up the music to drown out her friend's pleas. After a few minutes the sounds at her door subsided. She'd have to remind herself to apologize to Kay later.

Lounging on her couch, drinking herself into oblivion, she knew there was no way to completely block out the thoughts of Jamie. Several pictures of the happy couple they once were stared back at her from around the apartment, but she felt oddly separated from them. Those people were now strangers to her. Their happy expressions betrayed her; she couldn't remember the last time she'd smiled like that. Not in the past year anyway. Dillan reached her hand out, picking up a small pewter frame. It contained a picture from a few years back,

a snapshot taken while they were out sledding. A candid shot of an impromptu kiss between them, conjuring up memories of snow and laughter. She ran her fingers over the image thoughtfully, only to slam the frame face down, while she gulped hard on another swig of beer.

Leaning back against the cool leather of her sofa, she breathed in and closed her eyes, willing herself to fall back into the abyss. Her muscles relaxed as her thoughts drifted away from Kay, Jamie, or anything else. Her breathing slowed as the lazy tempo of the music lulled her to sleep.

A sharp knock at the door jolted her back into reality.

Her eyes shot open, alarmed from the unexpected sound. She glanced above the entertainment center to the clock that blinked back 4 AM. Was it Kay again? Why would she come back so late? Another knock broke through the otherwise calm atmosphere of her apartment. Kay or not, Dillan figured she should at least see who was calling on her at this hour. She chugged the last bit of beer, then tossed yet another empty can to the trash heap on the floor before pulling herself up to her feet.

The full extent of her binge drinking kicked in all at once as her legs threatened to give way with a tremble. Holding onto the couch for support, Dillan managed to lurch forward just as her visitor rapped on the door yet again. Another step and her knee slammed into one of the side tables, sending the lamp tumbling off with a crash. She cringed at the sound and continued toward the door, eventually standing on her toes to peer through the peephole.

The hallway outside her apartment was dimly lit, and the visitor was clearly standing out of view. Against her better judgment, she answered, unlocking the deadbolt and pulling the door open the few inches that the chain lock allowed.

“Kay?” Dillan peered out into the dark hallway, her vision slightly blurred as she attempted to make out a lean male figure that stood with their back to the door. As the man heard her voice, he turned around. A sense of dread settled in her stomach as she made out the masculine jaw line covered in day old stubble that disappeared beneath the hood of a worn jacket. *Great, just what I need, some stupid thug attempting to rob me,* Dillan thought, her heartbeat quickening. “Look, I think you need to go...” Her voice slurred, her hand gripping the door.

“Dillan?” He stepped forward, pushing his hood back and reaching his hand out in protest before she could slam the door. A chill ran through Dillan’s veins as an icy blue gaze met her own, the very same one that had thrown her evening into chaos. She froze, breath unable to pass her lips at the sight of him. He stared back at her, furrowing his eyebrows, a look of confusion spreading across his face. She attempted to speak, unable to make a sound as her eyes studied the face she hadn’t seen in over a year. Her stomach churned and cramped as sweat beaded along her hairline. Her knuckles turned white as she gripped the door frame for support, her legs weakening beneath her.

“J-Jamie?” was all Dillan could stammer out before her legs turned to gelatin, her body tumbling forward as nausea overtook her. The after-effects of the evening wrought their full assault on her as she retched and gasped. He cringed as he watched her with deep concern in his eyes.

“Are you okay?” He asked. She couldn’t answer as her body involuntarily rid itself of the night’s indulgences. Everything seemed to be spinning out of control as her grip on the door-frame weakened. She glanced back up at him, a distressed expression marring her otherwise delicate features before her eyes rolled back in her head and her body slumped to the floor.

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Cursing under his breath, Trey scrambled to undo the chain lock, and reach his brother's girlfriend as she lay unconscious on the floor in a pool of her own vomit. He glanced around the apartment calling out his brother's name, getting no answer in reply. Maybe he was out.

Trey had felt uncomfortable about showing up at the apartment without warning, but he had run out of options. His brother's phone had been busy for hours now. Hesitantly, he slid his arms under Dillan and carefully lifted her off of the floor, carrying her into the living room. He glanced down at the beer cans littering the floor, kicking them aside before easing her onto the couch. Her breathing was soft and steady and she seemed to be sleeping after what appeared to be a rough night of drinking. Grabbing the blanket off of the back of the sofa, he gently laid it over her. He walked into the kitchen and grabbed a dishtowel, dampening it under the faucet then returning to Dillan, gently wiping off her face.

With a sigh he stood back up, cleaned the floor then threw the towel into the covered trashcan. Unsure of when his brother planned to return, he pulled out a chair, sitting at the kitchen table. He hoped Jamie would get back soon. It had been 10 years since he'd last seen Jamie and those years had been torture. He turned his attention back towards Dillan, who was sleeping soundly on the couch. Jamie hadn't given her justice when he had described her in his letters.

Even after a long night of drinking, she was still beautiful. Her auburn hair fell around her; framing her oval face as her chest gently rose and fell with each breath. She had creamy pale skin, slightly flushed cheeks, and full pouty lips. He was glad to see his brother had found someone to make him happy. After everything he'd put his brother through, Jamie deserved to find someone like her. His eyes surveyed several picture frames that adorned

their living room; every single one showed his brother with a beaming smile and Dillan looking equally content. It was certainly something Trey knew nothing about. If anything he had gotten used to being alone. It was just easier this way.

Dillan shifted and turned onto her side as she slept, drawing Trey's attention. He hoped that Jamie would return before she woke up, otherwise things could get awkward. Trey sat, waiting for his brother to get home, but as the hours crept by, there was still no sign of Jamie's arrival. He only felt slightly concerned at this. It had been so long since the last time he'd heard from him, maybe he had come at a bad time. Maybe Jamie was out of town for some reason.

Trey rationalized the situation with himself as he sat alone, barely awake from the long trip he'd just endured. His eyelids threatened to close, creeping down over his eyes as he started to nod off. He shook himself, attempting to stay awake. He was anxious to see his brother. It had been such a long time. He needed to see him. But by the time the sun peered through the curtains in the living room, Trey could barely keep his eyes open as his breathing slowed. He fought in vain as exhaustion took over. His whole body ached for rest but something didn't feel right. It was now eight in the morning. He had been sitting at the table for four hours now. He debated leaving and coming back later in the day but didn't want to risk waking Dillan. He glanced back over at her body stretched out on the couch. She was dreaming; every now and then moving around, twisting herself up in the blanket he had laid over her. He envied her. A yawn escaped his lips and another wave of exhaustion hit him. He could no longer fight it as his eyelids slowly closed and his head gently eased down to the kitchen table, his hands a makeshift cushion.

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