Apology

Kelaiah Horat

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he found his past footprints and began retracing them, walking clumsily backward. Ellie let out a cackling laugh when he nearly slipped. Jonah was just happy he could make her smile again.

She grabbed his hand tightly and pulled him into her, briefly kissing his cold lips, then each of his cheeks. “You didn’t wear a hat,” she commented.

“Guess my hair’s gonna freeze.” He smiled.

They walked together, hand in hand, walking alongside the footsteps of their past selves. Ellie tried her hardest to keep her mind on the past, knowing that if she thought about the future, even about the next twelve hours, she would dissolve into silence again.

She nuzzled her hair into Jonah’s shoulder and whispered softly, “I love you.”

“I know,” he answered. “I love you, too.”

They were hardly half a block away from Ben and Margo’s when she saw them. Two dark figures, loosely holding hands, walking in almost complete silence. Hey, she wanted to tell them. Don’t think about it. Be together, and don’t think about what’s ahead of you.

They walked past each other, Ellie’s shoulder nearly bumping into the stranger’s. She stopped and turned her head in their direction, watching their retreating figures. She almost recognized them.

“You alright, Ellie?”

Slowly, her head cleared. She knew those retreating figures, and she pitied them. They would have to see the morning light. They would have to say goodbye.

“Yeah,” she said. She turned to look at Jonah, giving him a soft smile. “I’m okay.”

He squeezed her hand. She squeezed back. They walked together through the untouched snow.