Lauren B.

To the End

The phone rang once.

Twice.

Thr-

"Hello?" Alexander rushed over to his phone that was lying on the kitchen table.

"Hey, Alex." A voice croaked from the other end. Alexander wanted to smile at his girlfriend using the nickname he learned to love, but he only frowned. She sounded in pain. He heard a cough on the other end.

"Are you alright?" He asked, pausing the making of his grilled cheese, wincing when he accidently ended up burning his skin on the pan.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just a little sick," she replied, but Alexander didn't believe her.

"Rey, don't lie to me. Do I need to come ov-"

"No!" she replied harshly. Rey cleared her throat, "I'm fine, Alexander. Don't worry." She sounded calmer this time, but her words were still lined with melancholy. Distress signals erupted in Alexander's brain. "If you say so. Why'd you call in the first place?" He asked, sitting down at his kitchen table. His half done grilled cheese sat on the stove, forgotten.

"What? I- I can't greet my boyfriend anymore?" Rey chuckled, but it came out sad and empty. It was different from her true laugh which was beautiful and would *fill* the room with sunshine.

Alexander wanted to rush straight over to her house, but he pushed the thought away. Maybe Rey *was* just sick, and that was all there was to be said. But why wouldn't she want him to come over? Before he could answer the question, he heard a sharp intake of breath.

Rey cursed and then coughed once more before speaking, "Alexander?" Her breathing was unsteady, causing worry to pool in Alexander's stomach. "Rey, what's wrong?"

"You know I love you, right?" Rey avoided the question. Alexander tensed; something was *definitely* wrong.

"Yeah, of course. I love you too." Alexander's voice was soft now. He could almost feel Rey smiling, but that didn't help his awful thoughts.

"Good," She stuttered out as more ragged breathing filled her end. Alexander couldn't take this anymore. There was something wrong with his best friend, his lover, and he had to get to her *now.*

"Rey, I'm coming over right now. I'll make it in twenty minutes. Hang on." He decided, grabbing his keys and rushing out the door. The cold bit at his pale skin; his coat was still inside. On a normal day, he would be admiring the snow, but fear overtook the urge.

"Alexander… no." Rey choked out, her voice slightly above a whisper. Alexander cursed when he heard the blaring noise of a traffic jam in the distance. He'd never make it to her.

"Alex…" She cried out softly, getting Alexander to freeze in his tracks.

"It's okay, Alex. I'm not… gonna mak..." She trailed off, but Alexander knew what she meant. He began to shiver in the cold, but his feet were rooted in place.

"Remember me?" Rey pleaded gently, her breaths becoming labored.

Alexander let the tears fall to the frozen, bare ground. His *best friend* was dying, and he couldn't prevent it from happening. The mental strain was enough to break him.

"Of course I will." His voice quivered. Rey was crying too. Alexander cursed whoever did this. With her living on the outskirts of town, no one would be able to get to her in time.

Rey was an amazing person who deserved the *entire world,* and now, she'd never live to see it. Dreams that the two fantasized about were *shattered*. Rey wanted to be a musician someday, Alexander being right by her side through it all.

Alexander wanted to *marry* her someday.

Now, that day would never arrive.

"Thank you." Alexander could tell she was attempting to hold on as long as possible. His entire body was freezing, but it didn't matter.

"Could you…" Her voice wavered, "sing?" Alexander felt like he was being stabbed in the gut. She wanted *Alexander* to sing for her? She decided to waste her final moments with him? It was painfully astonishing. He took a deep breath to calm himself. It was the least he could do, right? His girlfriend was *dying.*

"Wise men say…" He imagined Rey right beside him, leaning onto his shoulder as if nothing were wrong. As if they were just on another date. He and Rey would fall asleep under the stars like they often did on a date like this one. Everything would be alright.

Except it was not, and that was the reality.

"...only fools rush in." Alexander shook tremendously. Rey whispered encouragingly, "It's beautiful Alexander. Tha.." She coughed again. The sound was heartbreaking, and Alexander cursed aloud, earning a halfhearted chuckle from Rey. Afterward, Alexander was met with the sound of Rey's staggered breathing. The fact she held on this long was excruciatingly painful to Alexander.

A nearly silent whisper could be heard from the other line,

"Thank you."

The boy tensed, pressing the phone against his ear and turning the volume to the loudest setting, struggling to find Rey's breathing. Alexander let out a strangled cry, "Rey?"

No answer.

The other end was *completely* silent.

Alexander didn't stop. He continued to sing, pouring his very being into the final words,"But I can't help... falling in love…"

Memories of the two filled Alexander's shattered mind.

"with…" Another sob tore through him as he knelt to the ground, defeated by the loss of his best friend

"you."

He ended the call, clutching his phone as he screamed and cried for his lover. He prayed that this was just a horrible nightmare, and he would wake to find Rey in his arms once more.

Unfortunately, this was reality.

Seventeen-year-old Rey Foster was found dead in her house on the outskirts of town, shot by a robber who has yet to be identified. Her family was out, leaving Rey by herself. The robber broke down the door, stealing many of the family's items before shooting Rey in the stomach and leaving her for dead. Alexander Robinson, Rey's boyfriend, reported the incident...