Dullness of a Deathwish

"Ryan!" I screamed hoarsely as my best friend, whom I'd known for the better part of seven years folded his arms, in peace, closed his eyes and fell backwards into the darkening sky and disappeared into the blue and gray hue. The letter in my hand crumpled completely. That's when my memory rewound.

It was a calm, sunny sky kind of day, the blue atmosphere reflecting on the surface of the water somewhere around one-hundred feet below me, the sun's reflection glaring. I felt Ryan's warm body press up against my side, waves of fear and anxiety pulsing off of him like the blinding light of the reflection of the sun on water. The only sounds that could be heard were of our breathing and soft footsteps that sometimes made a satisfying crackling noise as we stepped on leaves, releasing a pungent aroma into the air around us. I looked at his pale freckled face, studying the floods of emotion in his usually dark, cloudy, cold eyes. It made my skin tingle, and if I'm being perfectly honest, It scared me.

We did have a bit of history together, going places, saving each other from the thoughts that crept into our heads, though why we were here, on this stone cliff in the middle of nowhere, I had no sensible idea. I got the feeling that this time around, one of us wouldn't be coming back. The cold of the stone on my shoes began to leak in, chilling my feet. I hopped from foot to foot, hugging myself in my jacket to keep what body heat I produced inside. Ryan was wearing only a thin orange Nike hoodie and thin ripped skinny jeans. I continued to shift on my unsteady feet, watching skeptically as he leaned over the edge a little more. His face, to my alarm, relaxed as he shifted his position so he was sitting cross legged, painstakingly close to the edge. I stepped back a little, feeling very acrophobic.

"Ryan. Come away from the edge. Please." I was starting to catch on to the grim intentions of our visit to the sheer cliffside on this chilly day.. His face darkened. I glanced up to see dark storm clouds beginning to form above us then turned around to look at the great oak forest at our backs, the leaves tinting the shades of late summer, like the shirt Ryan was wearing except... they seemed to have a dull gray tint. One leaf in particular, the exact same shade of orange that he was wearing suddenly gave up on holding on to the tree and fell, much quicker than a leaf should and just before it hit the ground, a strong breeze picked it up, blowing towards me. It blew past me and I turned to watch it, now noticing Ryan had resumed his position, with his face turned toward the 100 foot drop that lie beneath the cliff, his longish brown hair waving lightly in the wind. As the leaf blustered past him, his head snapped to attention as he too, watched it fly, his eyes filling with an emotion I hadn't seen there for a very long time. He sighed and stood up, looking at me, studying me as I stood by the tree line, a mischievous glimmer in his eyes. I breathed in and tasted earth in the back of my mouth, it was going to rain. The air was heavy.

Ryan smiled suddenly, dashing forward at me just as he did years ago, when we were young. His hoodie sleeves were flapping, held down only by the bracelets I had made him back in second grade. The one on the left was a red and blue twine, beads all over, and in the center it spelled out 'Rian', my sad misspelling of his name. I remember how he had laughed when he saw it and said, the cheer in his voice now foreign, "It's perfect!" and went to show it off to his other friends.

The other was a black braid and nothing more. I had given it to him about three years before. After he woke up from his four month coma. He had overdosed on his depression medication, trying to end the sadness he had felt permanently. I know why he still has them. Why he uses them like that. He has an open cat allergy and no excuse for those gashes that decorated his arms in a dark reds and pinks...

I was left wondering what caused the sudden change that I saw in how he was acting. Like a child again. Like the Ryan I knew all those years ago. Like he hadn't hated himself for so long now. As he ran at me, I stumbled sideways, my own dark thought had been forgotten in the enjoyment and nostalgia that came with the game. He laughed crisply, joyfully, turning to face me again. As I looked into his eyes, my breath caught. Inside of his seemingly bright, emotional eyes I could see something much darker. My eyes widened slightly as I stepped forward, my feet shattering the freshly fallen leaves underfoot just as he was about to do what I had feared we were here for.. "Ryan..." I said, my voice shaking like the quakes that used to terrorize me. "Why did we really come here.....?" my voice cracked as he slowed his pace, walking over to me , the light leaving his eyes. There's the dullness that I'm used to. The dullness of a death wish.

As he walked forward, his gray Nike sneakers falling to the foliage slowly. Hesitantly. He gave a shuddering sigh, his breath white puffs in the cold.

"Maddie... I think you know why we're here ... I'm sorry it came to this." he lethargically reached into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. He extended his arm tenderly, not wanting me to do anything but take it. And so I did, extending my hand in the now raw, bitter cold. A single drop of rain fell and landed on my hand... or was it a tear.

"Ryan please... you don't have to do this..." my voice was high pitched from the stress and fear. The world seemed to be losing more and more color. He sighed and sauntered towards the edge of the cliff, leaves being crushed into nothingness under his feet, as though there was a greater weight on his shoulders than that with which the world could see. As tears streamed down my sullen face, more rain began to fall. I knew I couldn't stop this. I was absolutely helpless in this situation. There was no hope of helping him. Panic and Anxiety, my old friends, had returned. My mind drifted into space for a moment, memories flooding my conscience. I inhaled sharply and could smell something that I hadn't in years. Ryan's grandmother's cookies. The warm scent was accompanied by the vision of a clean kitchen in a small house, the room tinted yellow with the lighting. I looked around and saw the dining room table not far away. I know when this was. The first time Ryan tried to bake. We were only 6 years old. I shut my eyes and shook my head, trying to clear my mind before what happened next. I already knew. He touched his arm to the smoldering oven door, resulting in a burn against the lower part of his forearm. He didn't shout out or cry like I had expected, but instead, his lips turned up in a crooked *smile.* I remember being confused. Then I remembered what he was about to do. I snapped back to the present and saw him peering over the edge, and took a step forward.

"Ryan please. Listen to me. You can do this. I...I cannot lose you!" my voice cracked as I raised it. He flinched. "Just remember our past! When we were kids!" I was practically screaming at him now, sobbing more as he glanced over the edge, that same crooked smile spreading across his cracked bitten lips. I held the paper tighter, like a lifeline. And in that moment I realized, as his hoodie went gray with the rest of the world, I was in love. He was the most important thing in my life and I was about to lose him. If only I had realized sooner.

"Maddie... I love you." he smile softened as he took the final step to the edge without falling.

"Ryan!" I screamed, my voice hoarse and broken. I reached out my arm as if I could save him as I charged forward, skidding to a stop as I watched him fall, to far out of my reach. I saw his mouth move in slow motion.

"Remember me..."