

Immortal Mistakes

Lizzy Lee (2011)

I was sitting next to my partner in crime as his lime green '01 Corvette convertible sped down the highway. The car was ancient, about twenty years old, but it still kept up with the fancy high-tech deathtraps in the lanes next to us. I stared out the window, the headphones connected to my music player blasting music into my ears as loud as it possibly could. I could barely hear myself think, which was what I was aiming for. I had my knees pulled up to my chest, my feet resting on the edge of my seat. I was dressed completely in black; a bulletproof camisole, and cargo pants that were tucked into combat boots.

The driver, my brother, wore similar clothes; instead of a camisole he wore a fitted tee. His face stared blankly in front of him. I could tell this was stressing him as much as it was stressing me. No matter the toll it took on us, we promised ourselves that we would not rest until our task was complete.

I was prepared for a very long journey. We were on our way from one side of the country to the other. After driving silently for ten long, painful hours, I shut the music player off, hoping to make contact with the man sitting next to me. I looked up to possibly catch his gaze. After he ignored me for a few minutes, I spoke up, looking down.

"We should re-" I began, my low, quiet voice softer than usual.

"Don't even say rest. You know we can't," he scolded, cutting me off before I could finish my sentence. His deep voice was apathetic and blank. I couldn't even find any pain in it, almost as if it wasn't even his.

"Riley!" I looked up at his face, pleadingly. "Please, don't do this..." I whispered. "I don't think Claire-"

"Shut up, now. Just don't say anything more," he growled at the sound of our sister's name.

I looked down, knowing I wasn't strong enough to win an argument fairly, so I used my emotions against him, praying his true self was not completely drowned with stress and pain. I buried my face into my knees with my arms wrapped around my head. I began sobbing, finally letting the tears go.

After a moment, he looked away from the road for the first time and looked at me briefly. "Don't cry..." he said firmly, his voice cracking, showing some emotion. After half an hour, I felt the car slow down, and when I looked up, through teary eyes, I saw we were off the highway and on an exit ramp.

I shook my head, wiping my face off with my hands, and looked around. "Thank-" I began.

"Shut up," he snapped at me, and I looked back down, understanding his pain. He pulled the car into the parking lot of the first hotel we found, and without shutting the car off, he ran inside to ask about vacant rooms. I stayed in the car, looking around, the top of the convertible down. The sky had darkened, and I could hear thunder in the distance. I covered my head again and tried to focus on the thunder.

Minutes later, Riley returned, put the hood up, and shut off the car. I got out of the car and followed him to our room, thanking the heavens there was one available. When we entered it, I sighed with relief as I saw two beds. I quickly threw myself on the first one, closer to the wall, and curled up beneath the covers. A moment later, I turned my body to face the window and

second bed, and saw Riley sitting on the bed with his back to me. "Please rest..." I softly said to him.

"Isabel..." he sighed. He stood up and walked to the foot of the bed. "Look at you, there, all friggin' comfortable and all, like this was a damn vacation!" he yelled at me, unsuccessfully keeping his voice steady. I could hear it quiver.

I sat up. "Are you accusing me of not... caring?" I half whispered, shocked of his accusation. Tears welled in my eyes. "Riley, I was just as close to her as-"

He put his hand up and turned away from me, walking to the window. I heard him sigh before saying, "Whatever, just sleep, then." He put his arm on the glass pane and rested his head on his arm. I heard him mutter something to himself, something that sounded like, "I don't see how you could."

My heart in tremendous pain, I laid back down and closed my eyes. If he wasn't going to sleep, then that was his own problem. Almost instantly, I fell asleep.

The three of us, all frozen at the age of eighteen, sit around the glass table, eating dinner together, just as any other evening. "Oh, Riley, come on, you know you want to just as bad as I do!" Claire says to our brother.

I laugh at her efforts, and Riley shakes his head, smiling. "Claire, you know it's a worthless piece of metal. Definitely not worth the money."

"But it's so big, and it has a mini television in the back of the two front seats and one that pops down from the rear-view mirror. All four seats are heated and recline, and even have a vibrating massager built in them! There is enough room in the trunk for someone as tall as you to lie down in and be comfortable. It gets, like, fifty miles to the gallon, holds about five hundred gallons, and gives off little emissions. It's so amazing, Riley..." she goes on, her mind visualizing the massive vehicle.

"It's not worth it, Claire. The car is a death-trap, and you know it," he says, firmly.

"Did I mention the massaging seats?" she exclaims. I laugh, shaking my head. "What, Iz, don't you want the car, too?"

I put my hands up in defense. "Hey, don't drag me into this, Claire. It's your dumb idea; I don't like being on Riley's bad side," I half laugh out. "Besides, you know you won't win."

Knowing I am right, Claire's smile fades, and she looks down. "Right," she says, putting her arms on the table and resting her head on them. I hear her begin to sob, and I look at Riley, containing my laughter.

He shakes his head. "Come on, now, Claire... You two have got to stop doing that to me!" he says, his tone remaining firm. Claire's back bobs as she strengthens her crying, and Riley shakes his head, trying to keep himself straight. "I'm trying to protect you, damn it!" As he swore, he stands up, heading to his desk, grabbing his wallet, and throws it to the table.

He sighs as Claire jumps up, grabbing it and wiping the tears off her face. She throws her arms around Riley, nearly crying again. "Oh, thank you so much, Riley! You won't regret this, I promise you!"

It was at that point in my dream that I shot up in bed, my heart racing and tears pouring down my face. Riley was at my side in an instant, one hand on my back for support, the other reaching for one of mine. I threw myself into him, still crying, and he pulled me into his arms.

When I lifted my head to look around the room, I noticed it was pitch black, and the green glowing numbers on the digital clock beside my bed stood out drastically in the darkness. After staring at the clock for a while, I registered it was a little past one in the morning. I looked up at Riley, though I could barely see his face. "Why are you still up?"

"I wasn't, actually. I guess I finally fell asleep, but woke when I heard you start to cry out loud..." he said carefully, still holding onto me. For the first time in ten years, I remembered what it was like to have a brother again.

"It's haunting," I managed to say.

"You weren't the stupid one who said yes, Isabel! How can you be *haunted* by this? It's not your friggin' fault!" he nearly screamed in my face, throwing me into the bed. He disappeared into the bathroom, and I just curled up into a little ball on my bed. I never remembered Riley having such a temper. What he's been through the last ten years, I'll never know.

I woke again when it was light out, and the clock read seven forty-two now. I stretched as I sat up, and noticed Riley was again at the window, looking out at the busy highway. Neither of us moved for a few minutes; it was I who spoke first. "Riley. If you haven't gotten any sleep--"

"I've slept plenty enough," he snapped back, cutting me off. After a moment, he added, "Let's go."

I didn't say anything, but instead left the room and headed towards the car. He checked us out at the front desk, then joined me in the car a few minutes later. We were out on the road again by eight.

He drove and I rode in silence for about an hour before my stomach started demanding food. "During the day, when you can't focus, you begin to regret not eating breakfast. Think you don't have time? Think again! Simply grabbing a granola bar on your way out can reduce your hunger, keep you healthier, and keep you focused until lunch," I explained quietly in my advertiser voice, mocking a pro-breakfast commercial. After a few minutes, Riley pulled into a rest stop.

We ordered two breakfast sandwiches to go from a fast food restaurant, and were on the road again, eating our breakfast. After finishing my meal, I placed my headphones over my ears and turned my music player on. I dozed off with the depressing techno instrumental music playing at maximum volume in my ears.

I'm sitting in the kitchen of the hotel's most expensive suite, drinking my French Vanilla coffee quietly as I stare at a map of America, planning my day. "I've already been

here and here," I whisper to myself as I point to various cities in the state. "I guess here's a nice play to go. I haven't been here in a few years," I say as I finish the coffee.

As I fold the mini map and slide it into my purse, I hear a brief rap on the door. Surprised, I hesitantly answer it, nearly losing my breath when I see Riley on the other side. It's been just over ten years since I've seen this face. Knowing we agreed to never speak or meet again after the unspeakable accident with Claire, I am afraid for what brought him to me again.

I usher him in, neither of us speaking, and he quickly takes a seat on one of the lush sofas in the living room. I close the door, feeling slightly light headed. I didn't think it would be this hard to see him again, but then again, I've never faced something like this in the couple hundred years I've been alive.

I sit down in the chair across from him, and wait for him to speak.

"She's alive," he says quietly after quite a long moment.

"I shake my head, not understanding what he means. "Who?"

He inhales deeply, and doesn't answer right away. He drags out her name, not wanting to say it. "Claire."

I don't know what to think, what to do, or what to say. I notice my face in a mirror on the wall blanching. I feel faint, as if I just saw a ghost. Suddenly, the realization of our sister, the third of us, being alive hits me, and I am joyous.

"Claire's alive! What? How?" I rush out, rumbling as I try to focus on one thought. "This is amazing, Riley! Where is she? How is she? Where's she been all these years?" Everything keeps flowing out like word vomit, but the feeling is ecstatic.

His face remains solemn, and I realize that he's been this way the entire time. Why isn't he excited about Claire? "What's wrong?" I'm almost afraid to know. I should have realized this sooner that this great news wouldn't come without bad.

"She was revived by Jean Claude Marc," he begins.

"Of JCM Pharmaceuticals? I don't think she had a bigger hero than him," I ask, making sure I stay on the same page as him.

"Yes. The thing is, he's not a hero, not in the slightest. He didn't revive her for nothing. He somehow found out about the fact we're immortal. He's been holding her captive, using her like a slave, trying to find out what about her makes her this way. He's conducted so many tests on her," he explained slowly, his eyes either closed or looking down.

It takes me a moment to understand what he's talking about. "How did you find out about this?"

"Well, after shunning myself from the world for the past ten years, I felt the need to get out and enjoy some fresh air. How ironic that thought was. I was reading an article on the company, and there were some rumors about this. So I checked it out, researched it. Found my way into some websites that confirmed the fact that he was holding this inhuman creature hostage. I saw a couple pictures that ex-employees of the company took,

and it's definitely her," he again slowly explains. His voice begins to go weak about halfway through, and trails off in the end.

I don't say a thing; I don't fully believe this yet.

"It took me months to figure this out. And another month tracking you down. I don't know if we'll get there in time, but, Isabel-"

I quickly shoot up, grab my purse, and run out the door. I don't even let him finish his sentence, knowing where he's taking it. We must save her, and we will get there in time. There's only a couple ways to kill us. Remove the heart or brain.

Because I have nothing besides my purse with me, I check out quickly and head out to the parking lot. I instantly see Riley's unique car. I throw myself over the passenger's door, something I haven't done in a while, though it feels right.

He's next to me behind the wheel by the time I pull my music player out of my purse. I put the headphones over my ears, and turn it on at maximum volume. Within an hour, I am asleep.

When he shook me awake, it was about two in the afternoon. I quickly noticed, as I gazed sleepily around me, that we were parked in a shady part of the rather vast lot. After getting out of the car and stretching, I took in the large buildings around us. "Which one do you think she's in?"

"Rumor has it she's currently in the building labeled A4. She'll be in the basement. From there, I think we can handle it," he explained as he popped the trunk open. The forecast predicted blue skies all day, so he left the hood down.

I nodded, threw my purse in the trunk, and grabbed two of the three silenced pistols he kept in there for emergencies. Our plan was never actually planned aloud; it was just assumed. Because they couldn't kill us, we were going to just break and enter now, and get her out. We would use whatever force we needed to, taking as much damage as they dealt us. We've done things like this before, just not in attempts to rescue each other.

I know to most people it would have made more sense to wait until night, but for people like us, it didn't matter. We just wanted Claire out of there as soon as possible.

While walking through the parking lot towards the first mass of buildings, we slid our guns into our pockets. It's not that we cared if people knew we had guns, we just wanted to free our hands for the moment. We searched around for the correct building, which thankfully didn't take too long.

We walked right into the building, and to my surprise, we entered into a lobby. There was a front desk, behind which a tiny young blonde sat. She smiled at us, but I could tell by the look in her eyes she didn't like us too much. I guess my brother was stressed to the point of no return, because he walked up to the woman and pulled out his gun. He pulled her out of her chair and grabbed her waist, the gun pressed against her temple.

She was too shocked to be panicking yet, and she was barely breathing. "I need to get to the basement. Now," he ordered, and she began to breathe heavily. She couldn't speak, but she was

panicking now. "Did you hear me? Basement. Tell me where to go." His voice had no emotion in it; it was cold and firm. I barely recognized him standing there, with the small blonde at his side.

She barely nodded. "G-go s-straight. T-to the e-elevators." she managed to say.

Riley jerked her forward and pushed her down the hallway as he walked beside her. I followed after pulling my own gun out, keeping my focus on the surrounding area. Though I didn't want the blonde, or anyone else, to get hurt, I was angry at Jean Claude Marc for doing this to our sister, and was just about ready to kill someone for it.

We entered the elevator, and it wasn't until after we stepped out that someone attempted to stop us. There were two security guards waiting, and as soon as the doors opened, they shot a few bullets at Riley. I kneeled behind Riley and leaned to the side, shooting twice at the guards. As the bullet hit the heads of the guards, blood splattered onto the wall behind them, and they were pushed against it. They suddenly collapsed, leaving a trail of blood down the wall as they fell.

The blonde nearly fainted at the sight of the blood spatters on the wall, but my brother pushed her on. "Now, I know you must know about Claire, the immortal. Where is she?" he asked, though it was more of a statement.

I couldn't see her face, but I could hear her gasp. "I-I didn't know it w-was even true." she barely whispered. Riley jabbed the gun gently into her side, and returned it to her head. She moaned in pain, but continued walking. "I don't kno-" she began.

"Where the fuck is she?" he screamed in her ear.

She let out a slight cry. "I don't know! Please, don't-"

"Let her go," a security guard yelled. Five turned the corner and formed a V in front of us.

"Release Claire!" my brother screamed, pain and anger now in his voice. The guards said nothing, but I could tell they were simply confused. "The fucking immortal one you've got locked up like an animal!"

I then stepped around Riley with my hands up, though not dropping my gun. "Listen, we don't want to hurt any more. We know Jean Claude Marc is holding a female hostage here. Release her, and no one else will get hurt," I firmly stated.

The guards laughed, but backed up. I wondered if they realized who we were, and if Claire has ever mentioned us.

"I think you realize you're not going to stop us. Make this easy on yourself and just release her," Riley demanded, still stressed but less emotional.

The guards seemed determined to stop us nonetheless, because after my brother spoke, they all raised their guns and held the trigger down. The automatic rifles fired rounds of bullets at us rather quickly, killing the blonde receptionist in the process. My brother dropped her, and as she fell lifelessly to the ground, blood splattered everywhere from the three of us. Though the pain, I managed to raise my gun and shoot a couple heads. My brother, angrier than me, filled two of the guards with about ten bullets each.

The remaining guard suddenly stopped shooting, realizing he was alone on his side. He threw his gun to the floor almost instantly, as if he were afraid for his life. *How amusing*, I thought.

My brother wasted no time. He took a step toward the lone guard and aimed his gun at the head. "Now, mother fucker. Claire." He barely raised his voice. Many times today I've not been able to recognize his voice, but this time if he was not before me, I would have never believed it was him who spoke. I've never seen him this stressed, but when will it stop getting worse?

The man began to shake. "T-this way." he managed to say before turning around. He led us to a door labeled *Experiments - Age Defying Products*. This must have angered my brother, for he suddenly slammed his gun into the security guard's head as he was opening the door, and pulled the trigger. The man dropped like a fly, blood squirting out of the hole in his head on his way down. Riley wiped the blood off his hand as he threw the door open.

We entered to an empty laboratory, and I assumed the building was placed under lockdown and the scientists were in hiding. Riley shot the last few bullets in his gun at some test tubes and beakers, and reloaded his gun quickly, shooting more JCM property. Finally, from behind, a male spoke.

"Enough!" he almost cried. We turned around to find a middle-aged man standing in the doorway wearing a suit and tie. Both hands were raised in surrender, and he was visibly shaking. I've seen enough pictures of this man in the news and articles Claire had shown us to know that this man was the Jean Claude Marc, himself.

My brother almost instantly ran up to the guy, forcefully pushing him up against the wall with his hand wrapped around the man's neck. "You mother fucking bitch, where the fuck is my sister?" he screamed in the man's face as he jammed the gun into his head. Jean Claude Marc was shaking beyond belief under Riley's grip. I couldn't say I blamed the man; Riley could be very intimidating.

The pharmacist didn't even have time to answer before Riley began yelling again. "Fucking answer me, you bastard! Are you fucking hard of hearing? Where the fuck is Claire?" He was going to continue if I didn't interrupt him.

"Riley! Let him go! He's not going to do any good if he's dead!" I screamed over him.

My brother dropped the man, turning around as he put his hand on his head. I shook my head as I walked over to Jean Claude Marc. "Get her. Now," I spat at him, firm and cold. He looked up at me, still shaking. He crossed the room and exited the laboratory through a rather small door in the corner of the room.

Riley followed him closely, but froze in the doorway as the pharmacist continued into the room. I knew, from the look on my brother's face, that Claire was sitting in there. He was relieved at first, but then in an instant, even more angered than before. I walked over to him, but before I could reach him, he darted into the room. As I approached the door, I saw him codling Claire in his arms. She appeared lifeless. I scanned the room quickly, and noticed a nurse standing next to Jean Claude Marc. I glared at the two as I walked up to Claire, tears welling in my eyes. She was almost in the same exact state as I last saw her, minus the decapitation. What Jean Claude Marc did to give her life again, I'd never know, but I was slightly thankful that he did.

Riley handed Claire to me before he threw his gun to the floor, and himself onto the pharmacist, pummeling him with as many punches as possible. Holding her frail body in my

arms felt so surreal, and I actually started to cry. I just stared at her porcelain face, bruises and cuts covering it. I began to feel dizzy, weak, and uneasy, and collapsed to my knees.

Riley looked up, a worried look on his face. "Isabel?" he wondered, rushing to my side.

I tried to voice my thoughts, but when I opened my mouth, nothing came out. Looking at Claire never gave me this kind of reaction. I couldn't tell if it was because I hadn't seen her face, identical to my own, in just over ten years, or if it was because her once-flawless face was covered in scars.

Riley avoided this entire problem by refusing to look at her face, and it was quite obvious. I was thankful, nonetheless, seeing how at least one of us needed to be functional. He took over carrying Claire as we just ran like hell through the building, making our way back outside. Security guards were after us like crazy, using every type of weapon they could find. Bullets were whipping past us like crazy, and many actually hit us. Most, since the guards were aiming for our backs, were blocked by the bulletproof shirts we wore. Riley and I were going to have a hell of a time picking the pathetic attempts of murder out of our arms and legs. In the past, the three of us would tally up all the bullets we'd find, making it a contest of sorts. I'm sure that's the last thing on Riley's mind at the moment.

By the time we got to the car, the guards had ceased fire, but when I glanced back, I saw a bunch of them chatting on phones. Calling in back-up, I assumed, but we didn't stick around to find out. Riley laid Claire in the backseat as I flung myself into the passenger's seat. In no time, we were on the road again, speeding to wherever the road took us.

"You can tell the toll of the war on the police force. All the training is focused on the military anymore." I never paid much attention to the news, or how the war in the Middle East was faring, but I've been in shootings like this before, and I could tell the difference. Granted we'd never been in such a large and public shooting, but if anything, the enemy should have been *more* experienced. "Not once did they aim at the head."

Riley thought about this as he drove. I could see the pondering look on his face, now that some of the stress has been lifted. Claire was in the backseat, safe with us again. She was the baby of the family, though the three of us were the same age. Riley had always been the father figure, and I was bounced between being the mother figure to being Claire's back-up.

"Yeah," Riley started after a long moment of thought. "I don't know if it's the Frenchmen they hired, or if it's the lack of proper training, but they're just very messy."

I shrugged. "A bit of a letdown." This wasn't really true, since we were covered in the blood oozing from every bullet hole on our bodies.

Riley nodded in agreement. That was probably the most agreeable he had been since showing up at my hotel room a few days ago.

"Good night." I looked up at the sound of Riley's voice, confused. He glanced at me just long enough to catch my puzzled expression. "You call Claire the baby, but the minute we buckle you in, you're asleep. Even on short rides."

I laughed a little, and looked down. My amusement quickly turned to pain, realizing what this meant on my part. I had forgotten how easily I could fall asleep in this car. Even with the metallic scent of the blood caked on my body mixed with the fresh summer breeze whipping my

long blond hair wildly, the plush seats of the Corvette could lull me to sleep. I had also forgotten that Riley actually once had a sense of humor.

I shook these thoughts out of my head. I've always been the one to over-analyze anything and everything, and worry about it for weeks until finally letting it go. This is why I tried to keep myself busy at all times, and why in cars, when there's nothing else to do, I always slept.

"Good night," I finally replied, resting my head on the seat belt and closing my eyes.

"She's immortal, Riley. She can't be dead," I demand after hearing the news of our sister's death.

Riley shakes his head, then slams his fist on the table. "Damn it, Isabel. Listen to me. She's been decapitated."

I, yet again, refuse to accept this and register it. "No, Riley. They've gotten it mixed up. That car couldn't have decapitated her. It's been rated the safest in the nation. Surely the hospital has gotten this all wrong. They don't know what we are. She's just playing dead to get them off her back."

Riley sighs painfully, closing his eyes. I don't know what he's getting all worked up for. Since the death of our obviously, and strangely, mortal parents, we've just pushed 'coping with death' to the back of our minds. And now he's pushing it all back forward, all for nothing. Claire isn't dead. I refuse to believe it, even a week later as we bury her.

I watch as her coffin is lowered into the cold earth, but I feel as if it's empty. "Open your eyes, damn it. C'mon, wake up. Tell us you're still alive, that we're making a big mistake," I plea, whispering.

Riley looks at me, but there isn't a single emotion in his eyes. No pain, no depression, no anger. No apathy, if it's even possible. I'm convinced now that it's his soul we just buried, not Claire.

A week later, we're sitting at the table, eating dinner alone. Just Riley and I. Neither of us has spoken since my mutterings of insanity at the burial. He silently passes a plane ticket towards me. A single plane ticket.

"You're leaving?" I ask, sounding as innocent and childish as Claire. I don't mean to; my voice just comes out that way. I don't even realize I've done anything wrong until Riley slams his fork onto the table.

"Yes."

"For how long?" I ask, deepening my voice to sound less like Claire. I'm looking right at him, but he's still staring at his plate, and I know why. My face is like a ghost to him; it is identical to Claire's.

"It's a one-way ticket."

"What? Riley-" I start, but he puts up his hand to stop me. He doesn't even say goodbye, he just gets up and leaves. He heads upstairs to his room for a few minutes, then leaves. The closing of the door pulls my heart out of my chest.

It is now that I finally accept the fact that Claire is dead.

When I woke, the car was parked and the roof was up. Claire was still in the backseat, but she was sitting up now. I avoided looking at her, and instead looked around, noticing we were at a gas station.

A minute later, Riley returned with some water and chips. "We've fucked ourselves over big time," he stated as he started the car.

"Why?" I asked, confused as to what he's even talking about.

"Shit's well documented anymore. We'll never escape it. We're not in the nineteen hundreds anymore."

I shrugged this off. "We've always kept to ourselves anyway. We'll just have to hide a bit better now."

"The longest I can go without eating is a month before I start tearing at my skin," he countered.

"What makes you think we won't be able to eat?"

"To hide from this shit, we'll have to dig a cave underground and never leave it. Where do you propose we find food in a cave in the middle of the earth?"

"If we buy enough canned food to last us for a couple years, and only eat every other week, we can last down there long enough for this to blow over. Then we'll just have to lay low and not attract attention to ourselves. It's a bit longer than what we're used to, but we'll adapt."

"Do you realize what you two have done?"

Riley nearly swerved off the road at Claire's addition to the conversation. It was so menacing and accusing... Even I was bothered by it. It was weird enough that she'd kept quiet this long, but Riley and I just brushed it off, assuming she needed the time for healing. It was impossible to tell what she'd been through, being killed then brought back to life. But to suddenly speak angrily just wasn't like Claire.

"What?" I asked, curious as to what was going on in my sister's mind.

"I have spent the last... I don't even know how many years it's been, coping with what's happened. I finally accepted the fact that I died, and you two were out of my life forever. Do you realize how *hard* that was?"

"Yes, Claire! Do you think we've been partying for the past ten years?" I exclaimed, turning around in my seat.

"Did you die? No, I don't think so."

I sat back forward, my head tilted down. "You weren't there when we buried you, Claire," I forced myself to mutter, my dream fresh in my memory. Riley quickly pulled over, and put the car into park as he clenched the steering wheel with whitening knuckles. Thankfully, we were on a seasonal road rarely traveled.

Claire stared at Riley with wide eyes. Sure, we didn't know what she'd been through, but she didn't know our side, either.

"Do you realize this is the first time he and I have even seen each other since a week after that day?"

Claire's jaw dropped a little, and I could tell that it was starting to sink in. Riley and I had buried our souls with Claire, but when she was revived, death kept all our souls.

Riley cursed, and I heard him mumble something about a mistake. I glanced at the side view mirror at Claire's face for the first time since she opened her eyes. The look on her face, the dark circles around her eyes, the emptiness in her pupils... They were more prevalent now that she was awake and alert. She was still dead, just being kept alive by something unnatural.

She glanced at my reflection in the mirror, and as usual, she could tell what I was thinking. "You're wondering how I'm alive, aren't you." It was more of a statement than a question. And it was what we've been dying to know.

"Apparently even when an immortal dies, we aren't actually *dead*. Not with the right technology, at least. Jean somehow knew about us, and had guys everywhere looking for one. Someone found the tombstone and recognized the name, so he went and dug up my grave. He did a bunch of tests on my body, and realized everything was still functional, but needed a heart and brain." She then tapped on her chest. "Artificial heart. And he soaked my brain in some kind of chemical to revive it." I could tell it was uncomfortable talking about it by the tone of her voice. "That's what the nurses told me," she added solemnly after a second.

Riley couldn't believe what he was hearing, and I could tell by the way all emotion had drained from his entire body again. He was no longer clutching onto the steering wheel, instead he was just staring at it. "Chemicals..." he muttered apathetically. He looked up and stared out the windshield.

No one said anything for long while. Finally, Riley put the car into drive and continued. At this point, I was too disturbed to fall back asleep. There were too many thoughts running through my head for me to even begin to sort them out. It'd been at least eight years since this much had gone through my mind at once.

Just after dark, we found a hotel for the night. Just a couple nights ago Riley and I shared a hotel room, without Claire. Now, it was the three of us again. I was torn between feeling like this was normal and feeling like this shouldn't have been happening.

Like in the past, Claire and I shared one bed, and Riley took the other. I don't think he slept much, though, because the couple times I got up to use the bathroom, he was standing at the window.

"Riley..." I sighed, walking up to him after my second trip. A quick glance at the clock told me it was almost four in the morning.

He didn't say anything. He didn't even move.

"Have you slept at all?" I asked, standing at the window with him now.

He simply shook his head, and walked over to the bed and sat down on it.

"What's going on?" Claire's sleepy voice mumbled. I looked over to see her pushing herself up with one arm while wiping her eyes with the other. She was always a light sleeper.

I wandered over to her and sat down next to her. Riley, who had been sitting with his back to our bed, got up and walked around to us. He was standing in front of us, almost as if he wanted to hug us, but he just stood there. After a brief moment, he turned away.

"I'm going to say it before I lose my chance," he whispered. I swear, under his breath, he added *again*, but I couldn't hear for sure. He then turned around and looked each of us in the eye. "Goodbye."

With that said, he grabbed his keys, tossed them to our bed, and left the room.