

Julian

He couldn't sleep again. Every night, Julian got sick of tossing and turning atop his Tempurpedic. White noise never helped. Meditation never helped. Tea never helped. If anything, they made him more alert.

Desperate for at least *some* peace of mind, he grabbed his Les Paul from its spot against the wall and crawled out the bedroom window.

The full moon smiled at him as he stepped onto the roof. Finding a comfortable spot with a decent view, Julian began to strum a tune about everlasting love.

**And if you were with me tonight
I'd sing to you just one more time
A song for a heart so big
God wouldn't let it live
-Hear You Me, Jimmy Eat World-**

Sammi

Most nights ended like this. With Sammi storming to her room, slamming the door against the rest of the world, and letting her pain out through the tears that streamed down her cheeks.

Tonight was no different.

The fresh, crimson marks on her pale skin made it even more unbearable.

She hadn't even *done* anything this time. He just lashed out at her while she was sitting in the kitchen doing her Trig homework.

Sammi had cried out each time the belt licked her sensitive skin.

**You could've saved me
But instead I'm here drowning in my own mind
And I'll be damned if you're the death of me
-The Final Episode, Asking Alexandria-**

Julian

Guitar over his left shoulder in a cloth case and a steaming coffee in-hand, Julian walked into his English class.

Room 139, Ms. Slain.

“Good morning Julian,” Ms. Slain croaked in her 50-year old smoker’s voice. The students had nicknamed her ‘Growling Greta.’

It was safe to say that her voice never put Julian to sleep.

“Morning,” he mumbled as he went to his seat, eyes to the floor. Just like he did every day, in every class, he opened his composition book gently, as if it would fall apart at the slightest touch of hand, and began writing.

**I see these people’s ears perk up as I begin to spaz with a pen
I’m a little bit sicker than most
It’s fixin’ to get thick again
They say the competition is stiff
-No Love, Eminem-**

Sammi

A long-sleeve shirt and dark jeans on to cover the welts, Sammi cautiously stepped into her first block class Monday morning. She hurt all over. It was painful to even blink.

She tried not to wince as she sat down in her seat.

Luckily, she was invisible to everyone else, so they never noticed the pain in her eyes. The scars etched into her soul.

She looked around at everybody talking, spreading the latest rumors, and inadvertently flirting with one another. Why were they always so loud?

But then there was Julian.

He never noticed her; he was always too busy writing in that notebook of his.

Sammi always made it a point to sit in front of him. She always felt he was different than the rest. And maybe, eventually, he would talk to her.

So why not talk to him first? Maybe he really *was* different.

**Waiting for the end to come
Wishing I had strength to stand
This is not what I had planned
It’s out of my control
-Waiting for the End, Linkin Park-**

Julian

Immersed in his own world, notes and chords and words flying through his head, Julian let them all flow from the tip of his pen rapidly as they came to him.

All of a sudden, this voice, almost a whisper, hammered its way into his mind.

“Hey,” twittered her small, almost inexistent voice.

Julian’s head snapped up at the sound, and his pen screeched to a halt.

“Uh, hi,” he answered, clearing his throat

This was the first time he’d actually *noticed* this girl. Julian knew she always sat in front of him, but he never had the chance to take in her cloudy grey irises, the short dark hair on her head chopped into a crude pixie-cut, or the pale skin that was such a stark contrast to her almost black locks.

Julian could tell that, even though she wasn’t bleach blonde and tan, that she was strikingly beautiful.

“You’re Julian, right?” she asked, tilting her head slightly to the right.

He hadn’t realized his mouth was agape. Snapping it shut, embarrassed, Julian responded,

“Yeah. And you’re...Sammi?” He silently prayed he had guessed it right.

Julian sighed with relief when a wide smile spread across her angular face and she nodded.

Sammi looked down at his composition book with a puzzled look appeared on her face.

“So, how long have you been working on that song? I see you writing in your book *constantly*,” she commented.

Without hesitation, Julian answered, “A year and a half... I guess it’s hard to write a love song when you’re not in love.”

Sammi looked into his eyes, “Yeah, I know how that is. True inspiration is hard to come by.”

**But we are the lovers
If you don’t believe me
Then just look into my eyes
‘Cause the heart never lies
-The Heart Never Lies, McFly-**

Sammi

Over the next few days, she and Julian talked each morning. They spoke about everything and anything, from what depressed them completely to what truly inspired them.

Little by little, they became closer and their conversations became more intimate.

Wednesday of that week, Sammi finally decided to ask the question that had been in the back of her mind all along.

“Why’s this song taking so long for you to write?” she ventured.

Julian immediately stopped doing his classwork and looked up at her.

“I don’t really know,” he said, “I just never feel like it’s complete; like there’s always something missing from it. Those few lines, a couple choice words. But it always feels like this incomplete *puzzle* with a missing piece...” he explained, avoiding locking eyes with Sammi, looking anywhere but her.

She put her hand on top of his, noticing how warm his skin was, and met his deep, brown eyes.

“That makes sense. When I start painting, I can’t seem to finish it... It’s almost like there isn’t enough emotion inside of me to put into it.”

Julian didn’t speak or respond, he was just looking down at her hand.

“Sammi...” his other hand, reached out, and slid her sleeve up, “What *is* this?”

She withdrew her hand as if it had caught fire and hid it underneath the desk. “It’s nothing. Just forget about it,” Sammi murmured, tilting her head down to avoid Julian’s hard, questioning gaze.

“That wasn’t nothing, Sam. Hell, it wasn’t even a *bruise*. That was a *welt*. With *scabs*, for Christ’s sake,” Julian reached out and took her chin in his hand. He pleaded, “*What’s going on?*”

**Damage done by a lost loved one
You will never forget
Questioning my faith in God
I know evil exists
-Morning Sadness, Madina Lake-**

Julian

He stared into Sammi's stormy eyes, desperate for her to give him an answer.

He was losing her.

"Sam..." Julian muttered, holding her face in his hand. Her cheek was so warm... So why was she being so cold?

"Does anyone know about this?" he asked. If no one else was going to help, he was going to.

Julian couldn't just sit back and watch this happen to her.

Sammi moved her head slightly to the left and right. Just once.

Why won't she look at me? Julian thought.

"Well, you need to tell someone, Sam. Who's doing this to you?" he moved so his eyes were level with hers.

But she still wouldn't answer. She just sat there, emotionless and unmoving like a life-size doll.

"Fine," Julian snapped. He began shoving his stuff into his backpack. For the first time ever, he *shoved* his composition book into his bag carelessly.

He stormed out of the classroom; Sammi hadn't moved an inch or spoken a word.

In the hallway, Julian stopped to think for a second. He didn't know where to go. The nurse? The principal? Guidance?

Finally, he came to a conclusion that guidance would be the best place to go. They always said to go there if you had a problem, right?

Well, Julian had a problem.

He was about to beat someone for beating Sammi.

**I had a dream last night
We drove out to see Las Vegas
We lost ourselves in the bright lights
I wish you could've seen us
-A Lesson In Romantics, Mayday Parade-**

Sammi

She hadn't seen Julian since he stormed out of class that morning... Sammi had gone through the rest of the day numb and emotionless. She just wished he hadn't seen the marks. Then everything would be the same as before.

As usual, she was lying on her lumpy mattress at 3 o' clock in the morning, patiently waiting for sleep to overcome her body and mind. Everything was silent then, the only moment she could find some quiet in this house was at night, after her dad had fallen asleep in a drunken stupor and her mother had taken her sleeping pills in order to escape the life she had married into when Sammi's father put that ring on her finger.

At around 3:15, just as she was about to drift into a welcomed, yet fitful sleep, Sammi heard a small tapping against the glass on her window. It was very quiet at first, only happening every thirty seconds or so. Then it became more insistent and frequent.

Finally, curious, she got out of her bed and peeked out her second-story window. Standing below her, holding a bagful of pebbles and his guitar over his shoulder, as always, was Julian.

"Julian! What are you doing here? If my dad wakes up and sees you, he'll kill you," Sammi said softly to him. All she could see was his smile, lighting up his face and the space around him.

"Come outside and bring some stuff, I'm getting you out of here Sam," he answered, gesturing to his truck idling in front of her house.

Sammi thought hard for a second, "I can't just *leave* Julian," she hesitated. "My dad would hunt you down and kill you as soon as he found out..."

"I know," Julian replied, "That's why we're getting as far as we can before sunrise. Maybe Vegas."

Sammi turned her back to the window, to Julian, and her thoughts began to race. If she left, she'd be free from all of this pain... She would be able to be with Julian... Everything would be different...

She wouldn't have to be scared...

Outside, she heard Julian strum the strings of his guitar softly, “I finished it, Sam. I found my inspiration. It was you that I needed...”

**You're the only one that shines for me
Like the northern star at midnight
Oh, I can't stop staring
It's hypnotizing me
I'm in a trance when you're around
And when you're not I'm just not the person I used to be...
They see us and they stare at me staring at you
At your body, into your eyes
Don't ask me why
'Cause this is what I do
When I'm in love with you
My pain is gone with you here
I have someone to lean on, someone to count on
Tell my secrets, confess my sins
So baby, pin me down and make me tell you every little thing, every little detail
I'd feel so much better if you did
You just have to look me in the eyes and say...
“They see us and stare at me, staring at you
Into your eyes, into your soul
Please don't ask me why
Because I do what I do, 'cause I'm in love with you”
They say we're too young for this
That it's not true, it isn't gonna last
They don't know we talk until five AM
Hold each other until the fear passes
And when all else fails, dry each other's tears
Then they'll see it and stare at it staring at them
They'll see me looking you in the eyes, at your body
Don't ask me why
'Cause this is what I'll be doing
Just 'cause I'm in love with you...
-Heartstring Lullaby-**

Julian

He saw Sammi disappear for a bit. Julian could hear some rustling in her bedroom through the open window.

When she burst through the front door and closed it carefully, she ran into his arms with full force. He wrapped his arms around her and kissed her forehead softly.

“Sammi,” he whispered into her hair, “I’d do anything for you. I’m going to save you from this... I love you.”

She looked up at him with the most adoring look in her eyes, tears glistening in the moonlight.

Julian’s own eyes began to water. He guided Sammi to the truck and opened the door for her.

Driving away from her house, the same place that had been Hell for Sammi for the last 17 years,

Julian felt a weight lifted off his shoulders and wrapped his right arm around her frail body.

Almost inaudibly, Julian whispered, “You’re safe now, Sam... I’m here.”

The Heartstring Lullaby is an original song written by the author specifically for use in this story