

Anna -

Anna couldn't remember a time without Will and Ava. It had always been them against the world. She never had a great relationship with her parents, they always fought about stuff like money. In Anna's eyes it was selfish. Her parents put pressure on her to do well in school and she spent more time at the library than at her own house. Currently, she sat at her usual table, the farthest table from the door in a dimly lit corner. She was finishing up the last of her pre-calc homework when her phone started to ring.

“Hello,” Anna answered, annoyed. She was almost done and this phone call interrupted her train of thought.

“Okay, rude,” Ava responded, jokingly, “I was just calling my best friend to see if she was doing anything tonight.”

“Yeah,” she replied with a sorry tone, “Will and I were going to have a movie night with his mom.”

“Oh, okay” Ava responded a little bit hurt, “I was just wondering.”

Anna felt bad, but this was something that she and Will had planned for a long time. Since school started they haven't spent much time together and her parents had been fighting a lot and she felt suffocated and she had been friends with Will forever.

Ava -

Ava learned from a young age how to hide and deal with her emotions. Her parents were never home and didn't care. Ava had grown to love her parents never being around, when she got older she threw parties that everyone loved.

Ava was sitting on her bed; the bland, white walls staring back at her. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to have present parents. How do people have freedom? These constant thoughts made Ava wonder if her parents were bad parents. She grew up with people judging their choices of leaving her alone every other week.

She needed to escape the thoughts that ate at her, making a barrier where she couldn't escape. The same way she felt about her parents, it wasn't possible for her to lose her mind and be too tired to breathe; so she called Anna.

What she wanted to say was, "I really need help, can you please come over." But that's not how it actually went.

When she heard that Anna had plans with Will she couldn't help but feel jealous, a nagging feeling that Anna would leave her in a dark whole with no escape. Where the only thing she could see is what she could've done for Anna to stay.

Anna -

"I love her," Anna started the conversation with Will that night, "but I don't want to spend every second with her. I need space to breathe and battle my demons."

Admitting that out loud made Anna internally scream, how could someone feel this way about their best friend. The same person who was always by her side.

"She's probably fighting her own battles too," Will responded, "Maybe you should communicate with her. Maybe she'll understand."

Ava -

Sometimes you feel like you're drowning, like you're anchored to the floor, but there's no anchor in sight. That's how Ava felt. She had problems with opening up to people and she felt

that she and Anna were drifting apart. They hadn't spent a lot of time together recently and she felt like a burden. Like she was drowning Anna. She needed to talk to Anna. Feelings were flying around her brain, flipping and twirling, with no sign of stopping. It was like the ideas were doing acrobatics; cartwheels of guilt, flying somersaults of not being good enough. The only person who was able to get her brain focused was Anna. She didn't know how to express her thoughts to Anna. She didn't want to come off as clingy, but she felt like there were walls getting put up and they didn't know how to knock them down. Why can't I solve my own problems? Why can't I just move on and not rely on other people to drag me out of my own mind.

“It's now or never,” Ava whispered, “if I don't get it over with I'm never going to come to terms with it and it will create more roadblocks in our friendship.”

Anna -

Hey...

U up?

Yeah

We need to talk.

Oh... okay

Anna didn't think this conversation would happen so fast. She began to panic, she didn't know what to say or how to convey her emotions. Her biggest fear was saying something that hurt Ava so much, she couldn't look at Anna the same. There was never a time when their friendship could crack and crumble right before their eyes.

Ava wanted to meet at McDonalds. Anna would've preferred a cafe, something a little bit more homey to calm her nerves, but at this time of night she knew it wouldn't happen. As she pulled into the parking lot the nerves started to kick in. She had the whole car ride to figure out

what to say, but 20 minutes didn't feel like enough time. As she walked in, she noticed the faded gray walls and strong smell that made her feel light headed. She saw Ava at the farthest booth from the door. Anna felt a slight bit of peace wash over her. Like a soft wave brushing over her as she dives into the mysterious, dark ocean.

The Mcdonalds was empty, which left an eerie feeling like all of the staff could hear every breath that left her mouth. Her footsteps echoed as she slowly walked towards her friend in the crimson sweatshirt.

“Hey,” Anna let out a breath, she didn't know she was holding.

“Hi,” Ava responded, though Anna knew she wasn't, “I felt like we needed to talk about things.”

“Okay,” Anna felt a little bit better, “I was just talking to Will about this,” She let out a breathy laugh.

“What?” Ava questioned, “You're telling me that you didn't feel comfortable enough to talk to me about *our* friendship, but you can talk to Will!”

“No, that's-,” Anna stuttered.

“Okay then... tell me what is going on,” Ava had a straight face, too scared to show her emotions.

Ava -

Ava saw red, she was irked that Anna couldn't even go to her about her problems. She kept having flashbacks of when they were kids; happy to be in each other's presence, no clue that later on in life they would be sitting in a Mcdonald's booth crying because they realized that they don't know each other as well as they thought. Ava hadn't realized how badly Anna's parents fought. Ava despised herself for not realizing earlier that Anna was hurting just as much as she

was, maybe even more. Hatred for herself rushed through her body, like rushing water after a big storm. She didn't even know why she blew up at Anna, she was like a tornado just waiting to happen and didn't know how to stop herself from hurting people she loved.

Tears slowly fell down her face, it was like she was watching everything from outside of her body, like someone watching the destruction on TV. She knew that Anna needed space, but space was something she was never good at. Her parents gave her too much space. To her it felt like she was drifting in a black hole and needed someone to keep her tied down.

They decided space was a good thing; there would never be a time where they wouldn't be there for one another. You would think that having parents who were never home would give you more room to grow, but really it was the opposite. Ava found herself wanting that attention.

As Ava sat in her room, 3 weeks after their meetup, she decided she was ready to rebuild that friendship. She missed the late night talks and the movie nights with Will 3rd wheeling. She never thought there would be a time without them.

Anna -

Anna never imagined not knowing what went on behind the closed doors of her bestfriend's house. How could she have missed all the nights Ava had mentioned her parents not being home. She realized that Ava never really had a home that felt like home. The people you considered your family were supposed to be your home; a safe space for you. At that moment she realized that they were each other's family. A haven from all of the darkness.

They met up again, this time at a cafe and talked about how they would have to continue in order for their friendship to work. Anna finally admitted to things she kept denying and Ava

and her worked out problems with some of the secrets they've kept from each other. She knew that things would be different, but at least she had the best part of her family back.