

She parked in front of the house. She opened the door to her car and got out, clutching her car keys in her winter coat pocket. The top of the sun grazed the horizon from under the houses to the west. Snow littered every inch of land, coating it three inches in depth, the sidewalks included. Some of the birch trees still maintained their leaves despite the weather. She stood next to her car, staring at the orange sun rays over the houses.

After a while, the sun retreated from any view, streetlights came on with delay, and she began approaching the house. She stood on the sidewalk, facing the walkway, with her head down, and hands in her coat pockets. She idled in the same position for nearly two minutes, seldom looking around. Her body grew colder the longer she stood.

She began taking tiny steps towards the front door of the house. It was a modest sized house, she knew the interior fairly well, but not the secrets it may have held. Two floors, the top floor smaller than the first. The stairs and a hallway to the kitchen would greet you as you walked in. To the left, a living room, and to the right, an office room with another entrance into the kitchen. The second floor... She simply couldn't think about.

Finally, with her face growing red from the cold, she reached the door. She could hear the sounds of pleasant revelry inside. Sometimes she'd hear laughing pierce its way through the indistinct wall of sound. She'd shiver at the laughing, as if it was directed at her. She toyed with an object in her left pocket and fidgeted the car keys in her right. Her head was fixated on the floor. She tried moving it as little as possible, almost unconsciously. She took her hand out of her right pocket, and stretched and squeezed her fingers, back and forth. She took her other hand out of the pocket, stretching and squeezing both hands in the winter air without any gloves to protect them. She took a deep, panicked breath; out her mouth and into her nose, it made her slightly dizzy. She steadied her breathing, and reached for the door bell with her finger out. As it neared, her finger trembled, her eyes widened, her

breathing was stable but heavy, and the button was clicked. She heard a doorbell ring from behind the frosted glass to the sides of the door. Quickly, she grabbed the object from out of her left pocket. It was a small leather box, with a magnetic closing mechanism hidden in its cover. She waited with her head down, frequently tilting it up to see if the door had opened. The sounds of revelry continued.

Two minutes passed, she held the box in her hand and continued to look down as if begging for something to happen.

More minutes passed. She turned around, still holding the box out, and walked back towards her car. A security camera dimly flashed onto the back of her head. She looked at the camera. "Oh," she said to herself. She looked back down at the ground, and opened the box for herself. Inside, a piece of melty chocolate on top of a soft base with a socket for a ring. She popped the chocolate into her mouth and lifted the ring holder out of the box. Under it, a note with scrappy handwriting, and the letters spaced randomly:

*thank you for everything*

*im sorry*

*i really miss you*

She got back into her car, and sat aimlessly. The moon glowed in full, stalking her under dark clouds.