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Ice Cream City

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Author Note
I am an aspiring visual development artist/painter.
Blaire didn’t leave her room for a week. Her mother had to coax her into eating any form of food. She felt smothered by grief and loss.

She had just emerged from her room on the following Tuesday, when a letter arrived for her. It was addressed in Dimitri’s familiar handwriting. He had sent it to her before he died. She braced herself, tears blurring her eyes as she opened the envelope, and read his enclosed letter.

“Blaire, I have failed. This play has become too much for me, and I can no longer act my part. It has become too demanding. We aren’t supposed to discuss this. They’ve told us not to because they want us to act out our parts as best as we can. Our parents hope that by concealing the knowledge from us when we are young, we will work harder to ‘be like everyone else’ and overcome the black holes inside of us. Everyone is born with a black hole in their chest, Blaire. We all don the same necklace to hide our own darkness. I thought I knew the secret to overcome it, but I was naive. I was wrong—becoming the best actor is not the key. Everyone is trying to overcome the same disability, and we all put on masks. We really should be trying to eradicate the problem, not disguise it.”

That was all he wrote. Blaire closed her eyes and wept, as the full gravity of what he wrote hit her.

The next day she sat under the oak tree. She longed for Dimitri, so much so that her whole body ached. She closed her eyes and imagined that the soft breeze that drifted through the mighty oak was the gentle whisper of his voice. He had given her so much hope, and yet ultimately, he himself had succumbed to the darkness. He had become such a good actor that when he finally realized he was just a character himself, he had given into despair.

“That’s the answer,” Blaire thought quietly. “The only way that a character can survive in this play is if he fully embraces who he is. A great actor never loses sight of who he really is, despite his many imperfections. It gives him joy to play his part, because he can step away from his own troubles for a while—but he cannot forget his true identity. An actor must also work on his true character, instead of only working on the character that he has fashioned for himself.”

“Just because there is a black hole in your chest doesn’t mean that you can’t create your own light to fill it with.” His words echoed in her mind as she closed her eyes and imagined again the sound of his beating heart against her tear-soaked cheek.