

Endings & Beginnings

A Short Story by Natalie Annabelle

Nova didn't expect it to happen. For any of it to happen really. She didn't expect to meet someone she thought was perfect, that checked off all the boxes on her list of attractions. She didn't expect to get along so well with someone so different, yet so alike. She didn't expect to feel the things she felt, what she never felt before. It all happened so fast. There was a saying she kept muttering to herself every once in a while, “It *is* too good to be true.” Which then turned into, “It *was* too good to be true.” And it broke her heart, shattered her trust and damaged her soul.

In the month of May, Nova met a boy. A boy online. Luther was his name. He was tall, fit, funny, attractive and fit all of her standards. Painted nails, chain hanging from his pants, rings, he had a style that she liked. Her friend had told her of this app to meet people and make new friends, she was feeling lonely at the time so she gave it a try. She expected nothing, she knew the precautions to take with online encounters with strangers. Nova shamelessly fell in love with this boy the first day she met him, they were talking and texting non-stop for hours the night they met. They had so much in common, so much to talk about that it was almost like she was talking to herself. They had met up a few times within two months, three times to be exact. And each and every one of those times he couldn't keep away from her. All was going amazingly until one summer night, Nova and Luther were having a calm night just texting, then suddenly Luther stopped responding, and left Nova on “*Seen.*” She didn't understand and she was confused, she waited till the next day to ask if he was okay, but again was just left on “*Seen.*”

A week had passed and there were still no words exchanged between the two. She thought giving Luther some space was what he needed, given the fact of all he was currently going through. During the time they had been talking, she knew that he was moving roughly two hours away in the middle of August, he has to leave his friends behind, but not only that; his parents are divorcing, and his father is moving out of the country. She knew he developed feelings, she saw it in the way he touched her and spoke to her. She was only added to the list of things he has to leave behind, so he decided to cut ties early

in July and save himself some heartbreak. She doesn't want to justify his actions, of straight-up ghosting her, but she can understand why. But the least he could have done was say what he was thinking.

It was Labour day, Nova spent the evening hanging out with her best friend Emma, and her boyfriend, Andrew. As much as she absolutely hates third-wheeling, she enjoyed the night with her friends, no matter how much her heart still hurts from recent events. That same night, pulling into Emma's driveway, Nova gets a text message. An all too familiar name, a name of someone who brought her so much distress and heartbreak. She was surprised and a bit too hopeful. She thought to herself that maybe he wanted to try again, or at the very least still be friends. But no. It was him. Apologizing to Nova for his own guilty conscience. Apologizing for ghosting her, abruptly ending things when he knew he should have been truthful with her. He answered her question, he didn't want to talk to her or be friends anymore, and she couldn't bear to ask why. He tells her this is the last she will hear from him, and to contact him if she ever *really needs* him. She knew he didn't really mean that. She needed him all that time before he moved, and after. He ended their very last conversation with;

You need to forget about me Nova, and move on.

The month of September was hard. Nova was still hung up on Luther, so she decided to take a piece of advice Emma had given her and put it into action. She wrote a letter. A letter to Luther. She poured out the entirety of her heart and every unspoken question that she wish she could have asked him that night he apologized. Tears dropped to the pages of the letter as she furiously wrote down her emotions. She knows he will never read the letter, maybe it's better that way. Nova wrote as if she was writing to a ghost. A ghost she will never see again.

Nova had stayed on the app a little while longer in hopes to fill a void with a new friend. She had no luck, they all wanted nudes and tried to sext with her, which just made her immediately uninterested and quite literally bored. She didn't hesitate, she deleted the app, and further distracted herself from her own life that she felt was snowballing with each day that came. During the months of September and October, she was barely hanging on with her schooling. Although, in the last week of October, a spark ignited. She was browsing social media and came across book blogs. She remembered as a child how

much she would read fan-made stories online of the characters she loved. Nova loved the feeling of getting lost in the story and feeling like you were a part of it. It was her escape, then and now. Despite Nova's emptiness she needed to fill with someone significant, she filled it with romance novels. She bought a few books to start with, then with every book she finished, she would buy one or two more. She called it her healthy addiction. At this time, Nova was content with herself. She found happiness and solace in the stories she read. She had started writing poetry and writing down ideas for stories of her own, that she would one day hope to publish.

Nova had read eight books by the time New Year's Eve had come around. Throughout the month of January, she read another eight books in just the first two weeks. But that all didn't matter when the day she knew would come, Death lingered in the doorway. When the end of days came for her furry best friend, her companion. He was there at her feet, at her head and beside her through all of her sorrow, heartbreak, and sadness. Emma and Nova agreed that Nova had already hit rock bottom with all that she went through in the last little bit of the previous year, but being told the news that she has to put down her furry companion was a breaking point. Nova felt lost, the house felt empty, and her bed felt cold. She didn't know how she did it, but she went to work the next day. Despite crying on her breaks, she felt she made a good decision going to work. It helped take her mind off of things and put her mind to use elsewhere. Helping customers and mixing paint for part-time money.

Four days had passed by. Nova was sitting at her desk with her feet up, working on second-semester assignments. She had a friends list open on her desktop, briefly looking at the list she saw a familiar name. A name that sparked a face to a memory that she never thought she would ever see again. Ace Santana. "What a nerd," she thought. She pulls up their chatbox, letting him know that it has been four years and that she's curious about what he has been up to. There wasn't an immediate response, so she occupies her time continuing her written assignments. It wasn't till around midnight that she heard a ping on her desktop, indicating to her Ace had responded.

"Hey, Nova! Sorry I didn't see this until now. It's crazy that it has been 4 years, I'd love to catch up when there's a chance. Here's my number, text me whenever. I'm interested in what you've been up to."

She couldn't believe it. Stunned he gave her his number right away, and even more stunned he remembered her. It was twelve AM on a Tuesday, so he was probably heading to bed. She quickly added him as a contact and sent him a message to let him know it was her. From that day on they talked, every day for two weeks, and even met up several times for tea. Until one day during work on a Friday afternoon, they had decided to make plans to watch a movie at his house. It wasn't until that day in his basement, that Nova had realized that her crush on Ace had surfaced, even after these four years. She of course found him attractive before those four years had gone by when they would briefly talk to each other in high school. He kissed her. A little more than just kissing her, but he kissed her. Nova didn't think he felt that way towards her, she was oblivious to his almost obvious flirting, a kiss just confirmed her thoughts. Each time the pair had gotten together, they couldn't keep their hands away from each other. They didn't have to say anything to each other to know that they had become "official" or "exclusive" as modern-day calls it. A label didn't seem necessary, but they themselves knew they were for each other. A week before, Emma and Nova had planned a date, a double date to go skating. It wasn't too cold on a Thursday night, and the outdoor rink wasn't too crowded. As cliché as it is, Nova couldn't properly tie her skating tight enough, it was too cold and her hands were ice. Ace sat down beside her and propped each leg in his lap to tighten her skates. Her already pink cheeks turned a brighter shade. He was a sweetheart and she knew it. The four of them skated laps in switching pairs for an hour or two, laughing and joking to see who falls first. They all agreed that it was time to eat, deciding between Wendy's and Tim Hortons, they went with both. Nova didn't want the night to end so soon, so she suggested going back to her house to play a game and watch a movie. Their game of choice was a short game of Settlers of Catan, which ended in Nova and Ace tying but a game over Rock, Paper, Scissors quickly ended that. Nova lost. Nova drove everyone home once the movie ended, they watched Beetlejuice. Ace was last to be dropped off, her heart was happy but she wanted to spend more time with him. Instead, she sent Ace off with a kiss and watched him go inside. She knew she would see him again, and she did.

It's Valentine's Day and the pair keep growing closer. Nova was very excited and hopeful to see him, and he was dying to see her. Their plan was to go downtown and walk around in the underground

mall and hopefully see the CN Tower. But the weather had other plans. It was cold, too cold for their liking. They ended up cutting it short by getting hot chocolate and going back home. As much as they would have liked to enjoy their evening downtown, they both agreed that snuggling up and watching a movie was just as good. When Nova was wrapped in a blanket beside Ace, she took a long look at him. She realized she was happy and in love. She wasn't heartbroken anymore. The ghosts didn't haunt her anymore. She wasn't afraid to trust someone and give her heart to him. She trusted him. He made her feel beautiful when he caressed her face and stared into her eyes. He stared and her the same way she stared at him. With pure adoration and admiration. She wouldn't have it any other way, and with anyone else. As they were cuddling, he whispered in her ear the three words she least expected to hear. Causing her to hitch her breath and bring tears to her eyes. Three words that she herself had been dying to say to him, with all the emotion she felt for him.

“I love you”