

Me, Myself, and Hayden

by Sarah Antonetti

There's times in life where things happen and you don't know why; you're just so upset by it and you want to know why it's happening to you, what you did to deserve it, but no one seems to know the answer any more than you do.

Hayden feels that way about what happened to Bridget and his grandfather.

Oh, sorry. I guess it would be helpful to tell you who those people are.

Well, Hayden is the main protagonist from my first official novel, which I've finally managed to come up with after nearly five years of trying to write an actual novel.

Bridget was his girlfriend; he met her on the first day of preschool, and they were best friends for years before they started dating in the ninth grade. Then when they were in the eleventh grade, they had a daughter, and then six months later, Bridget was murdered.

As you can imagine, this crushed Hayden as if he was a tin can.

When he was a sophomore, his grandfather had a stroke in front of him and died in his arms, and now his girlfriend, best friend, and the mother his child gets killed?

What did he do to deserve this? Why, in just two years, has he lost two people that mean so much to him?

Well, Hayden couldn't get the answer from anyone else, so he finally asked the only person who did know the answer; me.

You see, I was working on the first chapter, and I had just typed the part where Hayden finds out that Bridget was murdered... when a pair of hands with black nail polish on the fingernails came

out of my screen and grabbed my wrists.

Before I knew it, I was standing in Hayden's room, which was just how I had imagined it; band posters all over the walls, bed up against the wall in the far left corner of the room, hardwood floor, big screen TV, wooden desk.

And there, sitting standing next to his bed, arms crossed, hazel eyes glaring straight at me, black hair slightly messy, was Hayden.

"Hey, Hayden," I say. "What's up?"

"Don't "Hey, Hayden, what's up?" me," he says. "I'm not happy with you."

"Hayden, you're a character that I created on my laptop with the 2007 version of Microsoft Word," I say. "What did I do to make you so mad at me?"

He looks like he can't believe me. "Well, for starters, you wrote that my grandfather has a stroke right in front of me and then dies in my arms when I was a sophomore, and then you write that the most wonderful person I've ever known is murdered the year after that. My daughter will never know her mother. Why?! Why would you write my story that way?!"

He's crying now, looking at me in sheer frustration. He wants answers. I've got them.

But I can't tell him.

"Hayden," I say calmly, "I know you're angry and confused and hurt by all of this. I know you're frustrated that they Bridget's killer hasn't been caught yet."

"You think?" he asks as he wipes away some of his tears.

"I know," I tell him. "But I promise you, you're going to be okay. Your last name isn't Armweak; it's Armstrong. Do you know why?"

"Because you love Green Day?" he asks.

I nod. "Okay, that's the first reason. And here's the second; you're a strong person. You can get through anything life throws at you, whether it's balls of fire, sheets of water, chunks of ice,

gusts of wind; you can get through all of it because I made you that way.”

His face, though, still teary, has grown softer. He wipes the rest of the tears away as he nods.

“I guess,” he says. “I just... I really miss both of them. And I want to know who it is that took Bridget away. You’re not going to tell me, are you?”

I shake my head. “Sorry, buddy. I can’t. But you will find out. It won’t be any time soon, but I promise, her killer will be caught and brought to justice.”

He smiles. He doesn’t seem so mad now. In fact, all of the tears are gone from his face now.

“Anyway, I have to go. It’s almost midnight back in my world, and I’ve got school tomorrow.

And so do you, so get to bed, mister.”

He laughs. “Alright.”

Hayden walks over and gives me a hug. I hug him back, and then wish him good luck with his senior year.

“Thank you,” he says. “Good luck with the rest of yours.”

Suddenly, I’m back in my dining room. The time is 11:55, just as it was when Hayden brought me into his world.

“There you are, Sarah,” my mother says. “I was wondering where you went.”

I smile as I save my work and shut down my laptop. “Oh, I was talking to a friend; a wonderful friend.”

She smiles back. “That’s great. Well, go on to bed, okay? It’s a school night.”

I nod, and she goes to her room. I stare at my laptop, turned off but still open on the table, and smile again.

“Goodnight, Hayden.”