

## *From Shadows to You*

It was a dimly lit apartment, where the shadows danced across the walls, becoming intertwined with the lines of solitude. Alone on the balcony, she was a silhouette against the city's muted glow. The ambient cityscape sprawled beneath her, a labyrinth of streets and distant murmurs. The cool metal railing pressed against her fingertips, a tangible barrier between her and the void below, echoed the unspoken tension within her soul. A symphony of emotions played within, each note a nuanced dance of temptation. . .

*You held her back. You just happened to enter the apartment, witnessed this scene, and pulled her back inside. She stared blankly at you, as if in a trance.*

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She found herself hugging the sofa – a sanctuary for bleary-eyed reveries and tangled thoughts, her disheveled hair a testament to the chaos within. Ever since she had entered middle-school, she yearned to have a happy ending like those protagonists in movies. But her suppressed emotions made this aspiration as elusive as a mirage in the desert. She reached for her phone on the coffee table and began to mindlessly scroll through her contacts, looking for someone to call, to confide in. But she felt like no one would want to listen to her story. She let out a groan before falling back into the sofa. Somewhere, under the corner of the eaves, crows held council, their discussions hidden from the prying eyes of the world, as shadows lengthened and the world held its breath in anticipation.

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Once upon a time, people looked up to her. They still do. Everyone thought that she knew what they didn't, could do what they couldn't. She had so many friends.

But that was just a facade of smiles. Through each smile, she questioned why she was even alive. If the life she was living was reality, or if she herself was some sort of hallucination. Whether she was at school, work, or home, she felt like a lost soul. Except she wasn't just existing. Her body burned with shame of not belonging, for being undeserving of the space she took up. They tell her that she is not herself anymore, but do they really know her? She knows she's slacking and tells herself to get back on track, but it's just too hard. She's struggling to breathe, but the water is unrelenting, drowning her continuously. But isn't she just making excuses?

Her wounds, her irreparable past, are etched into the fabric of her existence. The narratives told by others, their subtle expectations, and the unseen scars on her mind that compelled her to contemplate departure.

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*She doesn't want to leave anymore, after you told her that you were still there. That you didn't leave. She began to look forward to the future. . .*

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The canvas of her existence is painted with the hues of the setting sun as she flips through her contacts. Maybe this loneliness was what she deserved, something self-inflicted. She shoved her phone into her pocket and continued to walk alongside the river, towards a single, lonely, wooden plank bridge. A solitary plank weathered by time. Its grain is

etched with tales of solitude, whispers of isolation. The bridge seemed to beckon, an invitation to a place where the world might feel less heavy.

A solitary tear traced a path down her cheek. She was fighting for a lifeline that would pull her from the depths of solitude. In quiet desperation, she stepped onto the wooden plank bridge. It creaked beneath her weight, assuring her it was still there to support her.

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Damaged people are dangerous. They know how to make hell feel like home. But she was starved for affection. . . . Shadows clung to her every thought, a pervasive darkness enveloping the entire world. The sun hid behind the heavy clouds. Colors dulled, drained of their vibrancy, as if life itself had been leached, leaving behind only a desolate canvas. She didn't venture out of her apartment, locked inside. Staying in bed for days, unable to drink or eat. In the beginning, they sent her messages, asking about her wellbeing. But as time went on, no one seemed to care anymore. It was only when raindrops began to fall from the sky that she was reminded of the emotional tempest raging within. In this world of perpetual dusk, the concept of a future faded into obscurity. The will to live waned, leaving behind a hollow shell navigating the somber terrain. Yet, within this darkness, there lingered a silent plea—a flicker of hope that struggled to pierce through the heavy clouds and illuminate the path forward.

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The melancholy clouds, heavy with the tears of abandoned dreams, guarded her at every moment. But she didn't expect you to desperately part them for her, didn't expect you to pull her towards the sunlight. When your smile blooms, her world transforms from its monochrome palette to vibrant spectrums. She is on the sofa, hugging a cushion. Her hair was disheveled and fatigue had yet to leave her eyes. Nevertheless, her cheeks were still tinted pink as she stretched, yawned, and walked onto her balcony with her phone in hand. The once-vivid blue canvas overhead had surrendered to a kaleidoscope of colors—soft pinks, warm oranges, and hues of lavender intermingled with wisps of cotton candy clouds. As the sun sank lower, it set the western sky ablaze, igniting the clouds in a spectacular display of radiance. She leaned against the railings, bathing in the sun's warm, golden rays. Looking at her phone, she began to scroll through her contacts, each name a whisper of her past. After a while, her finger finally rested on the screen. Bringing the device to her ear, she waited. The dialing tone sounded once. Her hand was becoming sweaty. The dialing tone sounded again. Her forehead wrinkled. She brought her phone down, about to press the small red button, when the screen changed. A small smile of relief graced her face before the other end spoke.

*Hello?*

You picked up.