



The Whistling Bridge

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The rain began to come down in a steady drizzle. All around me umbrellas began to open and people hurried to find shelter from the coming storm.

I didn't stop. I held the paper tight in my hand willing my legs to move faster as I weaved my way through the crowd.

"Hey!"

"Slow down girl."

"Watch it."

"Whoa."

"Look where you're going!"

I ignored them all and kept pushing my way past, pushing my way past blurs with faded umbrellas trying to leave before the storm picks up. I had to get there before it was too late. I had to stop her.

The crowds of people began to thin and the sound of traffic soon became distant as the street lights spread further apart. I could see the bridge up ahead illuminated by a single lamppost. Silhouetted behind that light, stood a lone figure balancing on the edge.

"Elina!" I call out rushing forward, "Elina please..."

"I didn't know if you would come," she said softly stopping me in my tracks as I strained to hear her words over the rushing wind, "I still don't know if I wanted you to come."

"Of course, I came you know I will always come."

"Do I?" she questioned her voice low and emotionless, "I don't even know if I know you anymore."

"It's me, Elina. It's Katherine your best friend, the one who has never left your side."

Her eyes hardened as her voice rose, "Never left my side. Never left my side. You know that is a lie. Never left my side," she shook her head gently as mirthless laughter filled the air, "You, just like everyone else left. You, just like everyone else, could not handle my family's cancer or the grief we felt, so you left."

A breeze blew down the bridge as silence filled the air. Elina's dress billowed over the edge and the sound of rushing water echoed in the quiet night air.

"Elina, I never left. I stayed right here, I always stayed right here ready for when you wanted to start the conversation," I took a shuddering breath as I blinked back tears, "I'm here now, I'm here to listen, please, just come down so we can talk."

Elina looked at me her own eyes shining, "I needed you, I needed you to come to me..."

"I know..."

"I NEEDED YOU TO FOLLOW ME!" she shouted, "I didn't need you to wait, I needed you to follow me to come find me but you didn't," her voice tapered off to a whisper, "but you didn't."

"And I'm so sorry Elina, but I'm here now, I followed you now and I'm ready to listen."

Elina shook her head, "It's too late, it's too, too late."

"No, it's not," I protest taking a step forward, "Why else would you leave me a note, a note where only I would know the location of? The whistling bridge, that's our bridge. It's the bridge where all our valuable memories are held. It's where we would talk for hours about our crushes listening to the wind as it whistled through the bridge. It's where we played ice queen and snow princess running around without a care in the world. It's where you first told me about your dad's cancer and how he only had a year left. Remember, I held you close as you cried on my shoulder. We stayed here for hours that night, in silence, just listening to the water and the wind."

Elina smiled at the memories just as a strong breeze blew by creating the famous whistle that entranced us so much as kids. Her hair blew around her face and, for a moment, time seemed to still. Her face relaxed into a soft smile, and at that moment she looked so angelic. It had been a while since I had seen that smile, since I have seen her so in peace.

"There's a reason I asked you here and no one else," she whispered so softly I moved closer to hear, "You were the best part of my life these past few years even if you left me in the end. I'm glad I got to see you one last time. I love you, Katherine, thank you for your friendship."

Before I could process the words, before I could process what they meant, she grabbed my hand and gave it a light squeeze.



I saw her mouth move before she took a step back and disappeared over the edge. It took me a moment to register her last word to me.

Goodbye.

I don't think I made a sound as I stared at the place my best friend once stood. My mind couldn't grapple the situation as my knees gave out from under me. My body curled up into a ball but no tears fell.

I felt empty, vacant.

I don't know how long I sat there before I felt something slip from my hands. In a daze, I picked it up and saw a sun-shaped necklace with the word *forever* inscribed. My vision blurred and I felt the hot tracks of tears left on my face. I held the gift closed and sobbed. But that night I cried alone, with no shoulder to comfort me.