

A Shooting Star

Written by Nanako Dobashi

He was like a shooting star. A sudden, bright streak of light entered my dark, but somewhat blissful, night. I entrusted him with my heart not even a month after getting to know him. How long I had known him did not matter. Stars are billions of light years away, burning with passion of the past. And I thought to myself that if that were the case, perhaps he might as well have known me forever.

I was captivated by his kindness. How he worded himself made me feel exceptional. He never objectified nor belittled me, which was uncommon among men - since they rarely bestowed sincere compliments upon me. He described my hands as soft as a baby, my smile as radiant and warm like a ray of sunshine—think what wonder it is, to be a Sun to a star. He held onto every aspect of me, from my grand dreams for the future to the cherished things I held dear. I had always dreamed of a man who would bring me flowers and pick me up on dates. A man who would hold my hand firmly and talk to me gently with a smile on his face. That was exactly him, exactly who I had wished upon the shooting stars for.

It felt too good to be true. Being prone to overthinking, I've occasionally wondered if he's staying close to me because I offer him the attention he craves - particularly considering his lack of genuine interactions with others. But the way he talked to me eased my needless thinking, and I felt so secure like never before.

Romance had never been kind to me. Men from the past took me for granted, never really valuing the relationship we had. Their immaturity caused them to only look at what was below my neck, and never care to look at who I really was. To see their lustful eyes looking at me was always painful and disgusting, as it felt like they were stripping away my dignity. Amidst a sea of men who sought shallow affairs, I yearned for deep connections. Every romantic encounter I had turned to dust, solely because of my tendency to feel too deeply. With him, it did not matter. Rather, he appreciated my heart and its capability to love and care more than it should. In a

galaxy full of stars, the one bright enough to light up my night sky was him. His delicate soul could not hurt another, and that quality of his drew me into him like a black hole.

Summertime reminded me of my first heartbreak. My first-ever boyfriend from middle school was someone I looked up to for his humor and athleticism. Someone I considered more of an idol than a boyfriend. He knew me very well and cared for me very much until he forgot my birthday, lost in the world of gaming with his friends all day and not giving a damn about me. It shattered the pedestal on which I had placed him.

But winter had been no better. I always hated the cold, because it brought back memories of the most gut-wrenching heartbreak ever. Arthur and I were together for 2 years in High School. He was tall and handsome and had an amazing sense of style. Not only was he a runner, a basketball player, a swimmer, and a golfer, but he was also academically driven and focused on his future goals. We were compatible because I, too, was actively involved with basketball, and competitive swimming, and relentlessly pursued my dreams. He supported me and I supported him, and everything was picture-perfect from the outside, which most of the time it was. Arthur was academically smart but his emotional intelligence lagged behind (like most high schoolers), and that was bearable while we could see each other in person every day.

Things drastically changed once I had to move, as communication through digital means was more confusing than interpreting each other's expressions in person. Even though I could visit him and he could visit me, there was no guarantee that it would happen soon. My constant need for reassurance was not met, and more fights emerged. Soon normal arguments over texts turned to shouting on the phone, as our feelings strayed further away from each other. One winter night I sat on the porch of the lodge we had come for vacation, freezing, but enduring it to call Arthur and to hear his voice. We started off talking about our day and what went well, but it soon escalated into a full-on fight again. This time it ended with me telling him that we would be better off as friends, but his response? "I still love you."

I cried on the car ride back home, and tears fell down my cheeks as I sat trying to control my breathing. I cried because I felt the same but I didn't know what to say, and because it felt like a curse; a curse that held both of us back from bettering ourselves and working towards our

future. With Arthur, I learned how to love and communicate, but it came at the expense of my mental well-being. So I thought to myself, *never again would I trust someone this much, never again would I care for someone this much*, but that was just a bunch of tomfoolery.

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He was like a shooting star. A sudden, bright streak of light entered my dark, but somewhat blissful, night. On the coldest and loneliest nights, he kept me warm with his loving words, wrapping me up like a Christmas blanket.

There came a day when our souls connected. I finally entrusted him with all of me— my body, my heart, and my soul were his. Our bodies intertwined into something that felt like pure love, and time seemed to stand still as we surrendered our vulnerability to one another. Each touch, each breath, pulled us closer, and closer together.

We talked for hours as I sat in his arms, and the tunes of love played in the background. I listened as he passionately talked about enchanted treats that unlocked a whimsical journey through his mind. He talked about music, and how deeply involved he was in its world. How consumed he was by it, and how it made him forget about everything. His form of escapism was different from mine, but I can accept him for who he is—

Oh.

He just told me that—

He's still caught in the shadow of his past flame.

What.

I push away from his embrace and move back in horror. The hands that he used to caress my body now looked like a bloody knife.

It felt as if my skin was peeled off of me with my worth and dignity.

He's still caught in the shadow of his past flame.

I felt betrayed. Ashamed. Dirty. *Objectified and belittled*. It was just after I had given him my all that he chose to reveal such a thing. Perhaps, his feelings towards me were never genuine. Perhaps, just perhaps, it was lust yet again, the Achilles heel of all men. When he left the room, he took whatever strength I had left with him. The world began to spin as my knees collapsed and I fell to the floor in tears, struggling to even breathe.

He was like a shooting star. A sudden, bright streak of light entered my dark, but somewhat blissful night. But after it all passed he left my night darker than ever before, as no other star in the sky shone brighter than him. The shine of the other stars dimmed, and my blissful night turned into plain darkness. But the darkness was lonelier than I anticipated. The sun burning in my heart was no longer intact– it had burst like a supernova. Each flame was extremely fiery and powerful, like my mix of emotions; anger, sorrow, hatred, and despair. It burned away, leaving nothing there but dust and darkness.

I couldn't believe what had happened.

For days I sat on the cold floor alone, trying to scratch off the feeling of his touch. Each aspect of myself he once cherished – my hands, my lips, and my smile – now felt tainted with disgust and anguish.

For days his words haunted me.

I only liked you because you reminded me of her.

I realized that last night.

Last night. That was exactly when I thought our souls truly connected. For once I didn't feel lonely at night, for once I felt accepted and understood by a man. For him, I was just a reminder of someone else. For him, it was something merely physical.

Blinded by his kindness and charm, at times I had disregarded his brutality disguised with honesty. He lacked the kindness to articulate his words without causing me pain. I should've taken his child-like sense of life and habit of escapism as a sign to reflect more on him as a person. He always ran away from reality. Away from his dreams, and even his true feelings. It wasn't a temporary escape but a rigorous pattern, aggravated by his reluctance to confront his emotions.

For weeks I could not accept it, for weeks I fought the urge to ask him back. But I needed to forget. Because no matter what I did, or how I felt, he was gone. Gone. Scurried back to the arms of his former love, beseeching her to reconcile and live out the same story. I could not let him bring me down any further. I could not let myself endure disrespect once more. I could not lose my goal-driven self to someone who could not even bother to think about his future.

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I stepped out onto the balcony. The wind whispered and whistled, creating a harmony so peaceful and serene. I watched as the sky tinged with hues of apricot, and as the sun slowly dipped below the horizon. Tints of midnight blue covered the vast sky, swallowing the apricot-orange trails of the sun. The clouds faded away and the moon faintly emerged above the mountain range that loomed over my town. The cold winter breeze stung my dried-up eyes, forcing me to shut them close.

In the presence of nature, my soul found solace, soothing the ache of my pain. The cry of the owls steadied my heartbeat, and the sound of swaying trees dissolved any thoughts of surrender to darkness. I wanted to be like the trees, gracefully swaying with the rhythms of life while withstanding strong against the storms that tried to topple them. I wanted to be just like a sycamore, blossoming with resilience and grace as I grew.

I opened my eyes. The darkness of the night, once touched by loneliness, had now become somewhat blissful once more. The stars were shining bright again, each one shimmering

and sparkling. I was alone but I did not feel lonely. I was tired but I was still standing. Still standing, still dreaming of my future. *I'm still standing.*

He was just like a shooting star; just a sudden, bright streak of light entering my dark but somewhat blissful night. He was not the moon. Not the one that would stay through both the bright and the dark days. He was just a shooting star during an eclipse. Without the presence of the moon, he shone brighter than anything else in my night sky. So let the shooting stars move around and light up your night sky. Let them pass, even the brightest ones. Because one day something just as bright – even brighter than a shooting star – will start to shine brighter for you. Not only will your moon light up your night sky but they will illuminate your path. They will linger by your side throughout the day, gently rocking your tides and anchoring your world in a sea of love. Let the shooting star pass.