

Losing All Hope

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This book is dedicated to everyone who has supported me in this endeavor thus far. It means the world to hear all the words of encouragement.

The Cedarvale Saga:

Surviving the Dark: Book 1

Playing the Game: Book 2

Losing All Hope: Book 3

**Be on the lookout for the final
installment:**

Leading the Battle: Book 4

Trigger Warning

These writings may contain any or all of the following: mental abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, child abuse, rape, bullying, profanity, self-harm, violence, suicide, nudity, sex, death, PTSD, panic/anxiety attacks, addiction, kidnapping, and torture.

Please proceed with caution.

If you or anyone you know is suffering from a mental illness, depression, or suicidal thoughts, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Likewise, if you or anyone you know is suffering at the hands of domestic violence, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

You are not alone, and there are people who can help.

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Chapter 1 - Waking Up in a Nightmare

Piercing screams drifted into my unconscious. Pleading cries for me to return pulled me from the darkness. Resisting the lure didn't work. *What's the point?* The words echoed in my head. Energy flowed into my body, drawing me closer to the surface. I tried to resist, to stay in the comforting depths, but their magic was too strong. They wouldn't let me float away. They refused to let me rest.

Gasping for air, my eyelids flung open, thrusting me back into the kitchen. My son's piercing wail tore through my ears from recent memory. My arms reached for my baby, but he was long gone. Strong arms wrapped around me. *Kian*. My recollection was choppy and incomplete. Reality battled dreamland. The splatters of blood, tearstained faces, and screams chased me back into safety. Into my own world.

My body lifted into the air, but I cared not what happened to it. *You couldn't even protect your own son*. The inner critic spit venom from its crooked grin. I shuddered. The beast rose and awakened with each step up the stairs. A roaring howl filled my mind, drowning out the others' commentary. Floating back and forth between the two hells, Kian's arms held my broken pieces together.

He laid me in bed and gently removed our torn and bloody clothes. *Our party*. With shaky hands, I looked down at my stomach. *Our son*. The scar stretched from hip bone to hip bone with pinkish hue from the several healings that took place. My eyes burned, and despite the overwhelming evidence, I clung to denial. He emerged from the bathroom with fresh clothes. His

bloodshot eyes offered no comfort. He sat next to me, handing me fresh pajamas.

“I’m sorry. I failed you and our son.”

His voice was hoarse and gruff. His shoulders slumped forward. His body wracking sobs shook the bed. He collapsed onto my legs, repeating his apology, his admission of guilt. His hands gripped my thighs. His fingers dug into my sensitive flesh. His energy broke through the barrier keeping me separated from reality, from the torment. He searched for comfort I didn’t have. Robotic fingers ran through his hair, soothing his suffering as much as I could.

“Please forgive me. I’m so sorry I failed.”

“We were ambushed. It’s...it’s not your fault.” *It’s mine.*

It wasn’t the words he needed, but it was all I had. The intense whirlwind crashed into me, and I joined him in wailing for our loss. *Dangerous for you and the baby....* The warning sent chills into the mix. We shattered together. We clung to each other like life rafts and held on like it was the only thing tethering us to earth. *I can’t do this.* Letting go and sinking back into myself, the static returned to my mind, and my crying lessened.

He got up first, and an empty stare replaced his flooded focus. Silence padded the hurt. Neither of us were able to meet the other’s gaze. My body went through the motions of dressing and lying down. *Sean. Robert. Xavier.* He got into bed next to me and pulled me into his lap. And now, Ryan. Pathetic. The beast snarled and puffed out its fur. *You’re not helping.*

He cradled me despite his own anguish. My vocal chords refused to offer kind words of compassion. They refused to vibrate at all. A light knock on the door, and mom’s energy flooded the room. My stomach twisted, but I remained perfectly still despite the urge to recoil further away. The empty vacuum beckoned me, called to me, and begged me to let it engulf me as

well. It promised to take away my suffering if only I gave up. It was tempting.

“How is she?”

“She woke up a little while ago but cried herself back to sleep.”

His monotone voice responded empty and devoid of his usual inflections. My mind replayed the clips and small bits of memory. The pieces didn't fit. *We were ambushed.* The whispers of the void grew louder. *You didn't even fight.* I didn't blink, staring beyond Kian at the door to the nothingness. A craving to return to the power of the darkness slinked across my chaotic mind. *Revenge...* It slithered across my shoulders, urging me to act.

“How are you doing?”

“As well as can be expected.”

“We will get him back.”

She assured him with a pat on his leg. Her optimism called to my aggression, but my body remained heavy with grief. Her presence drifted away. *Good.* I wanted solitude. Tears spilled from my eyes. Breathing seemed too difficult for a moment. The pressure of my emotions threatened to break me, and the quiet whispers of the void only added to the stress. Noticing that I waited for Ryan's comfort, I lost all mental control.

Internally, a tantrum tore through me. A burning rip sped down my ethereal form. My aura froze and fractured, spraying the room with shards of chaos. My chest imploded on itself, suffocating my attempts to expand my lungs. Waiting for my ribs to crack and my body to be crushed under the strength, a fuzzy film covered my mind. The room transformed in blurry waves into a washed out cartoon.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too, Cassidy.”

He kissed my forehead. His voice was tender and gentle as it had always been towards me. Tears slipped from my eyes and onto the pillow. There was no efficient way to communicate the empty power inside. If I couldn't have my death, I wanted everyone else's. If I couldn't have my happiness, I wanted to take it from anyone who still had theirs. His innocent question interrupted my mental tirade.

"Are you hungry at all?"

"No, not really," I whispered back to him as the chaos and void battled within.

My muscles tore away from my bones and my skin shrank too small. Closing my eyes, I willed it to go away or kill me. *Burn down everything until we find him.* The idea caressed my inflamed agony with pure aloe. The pain of failing fueled my need to take out anyone in my way. There wouldn't be many options. The intensity had to go somewhere, or it would burn me alive.

"Would you mind if I went down to the kitchen and got a bite to eat?"

"No. Not at all."

The impulse to scream in his face and purge my feelings fought to gain priority, but I knew he didn't deserve it. The fury twisted and churned, begging to be freed. A tiny thread of purpose held me together. He was hesitant to leave me and for good reason. *I could disappear at any time.*

The chaos and emptiness battled and left me with no capacity for his feelings. It was impossible for me to make sense of the reality into which I suddenly awoke. Apart from his swollen, still red eyes, there was no indication of turmoil in his expression.

I lifted his hand to my face and let my lips linger on his skin. He returned the gesture to my forehead before he left. His absence highlighted the torment tenfold. Everything inside

shimmered, halfway nonexistent. The hopelessness descended, settling into my skin and seeping into my muscles. You weak fool. There wasn't anything but foggy numbness and damning insults inside my head.

My mind ran rampant picking through the small details of each morsel of memory. *How could I have let this happen?* My hand traveled to my stomach and the injustice done to me. *I don't understand!* My fingers twisted around my hair, threatening to pull it out. The dull burning spread over the patch caught in my grip. Strands snapped and gave way under the siege.

The air rushed into and out of my lungs too quickly. The entirety of my being seized under the pressure. *I can't do this.* The swirling chaos sparked a raging inferno that dried my tears and suffocated my pain, but only for a moment. The waves of grief splashed over the lava, hardening it. Internally at war, I retreated to the depths of my mind, to the safety of my inner world.

Chapter 2 - Grasping for Straws

Not a hair on my head shifted while he was gone. Motivation shrank away into a distant memory. Heavy steel replaced my blood. My static mind had not the energy to think. The sun slowly set below the horizon, bringing nightfall crawling over the land. Not tired enough for sleep but exhausted from living, I was trapped in the in-between.

My thoughts raced unabated through my mind. The guilt overwhelmed my ability to slow down. Even though a buffer kept the most painful at bay, the shame stole my breath. It constricted my ribs and robbed my lungs of inflation space. *My box! Where's my box?* It was my only source of relief. I bolted from the bed to the desk, searching in a panic for my backup stash.

Slamming each empty drawer, heat spread up my body. The last one held my treasure. Air rushed into my body, quenching the rising fire. *Finally!* My shaky hands lifted the prize from its hidey-hole. Bringing it to my face, I inhaled deeply.

The chair creaked under my weight, and the lock clicked open. My fumbling fingers retraced their steps. Sweat poured from my palms, so I paused and wiped them on my pants. His returning presence swept over me like a cleansing wave and padded the psychological warfare.

"What are you doing, babe?" He asked calmly.

His hand gently ran down my arm. His aura reached for me with gentle tips, attempting to calm my erratic motion. Everything in my body screamed action, and burning away the small leaves gave me jurisdiction over my feelings.

The self destruction countdown started the minute they knocked me out. My reserve bud would slow me down and delay the inevitable, but it was better than spiraling into the raging inferno at full speed. Shoving down the impulse to give up, I tested the lighter. The flickering flame lit a small circle on the desktop.

“I’m getting fucked up. What are you going to do?”

“Looks like we’re both getting fucked up.”

He pulled his face slightly upwards, releasing a single tear. He put his arms around me, and I didn’t let him know that I noticed. The numbness captaining my heart refused him comfort. *You can barely sustain yourself.* His embrace surrounded me like heaven, sending uncomfortable pricks through my grief. *You don’t deserve to feel good.*

Empty and emotionless, it was easier to lack than include the chaos. He desperately pulled at my mental door, but it was useless. Stuck in my head, he didn’t have a key, and I couldn’t even find a window. The outside reality tugged at my thoughts, and the inner agony wouldn’t release.

We pulled the bench from the front of the bed over to the window. The pane of glass easily lifted, locking into the second space. The pipe shook in my hands regardless of the craving flowing through me.

The flame licked the green top, sizzling and burning the delicious plant. He cautiously grabbed it from my hands and took a hit. The smoke danced out the window, and my chest fully expanded. It had been awhile, and I immediately started feeling the effects.

“Do you think we should with the danger alert so high?”

“I don’t care.” Pleading eyes met his concern.

He nodded in concession and handed it back. His nervous energy shivered with hesitation. The thought hadn’t crossed his mind before partaking. My functioning returned, bathing me in

personal authority. It made breathing possible, but my lost soul drifted in a different world, leaving me cold and isolated. It didn't make me care.

I mentally begged for him to save me from myself, to save me from Victor. I pounded against my cage, pleading with him for only a moment of relief. The words refused to form and flow out. The high helped me climb above the internal conflict that churned and boiled. His warm hand rested on my knee, but I stayed silent.

We stared into the night, passing it back and forth. I internally climbed higher and higher away from the raging battle. For a moment, I wasn't gripping onto life with one finger. My tense muscles relaxed into the fabric. Not yet ready for the party to stop, we loaded another.

Halfway through, the clarity in my magic pulsed with his hurt. My perspective finally reached beyond myself. His wounds stared at me, gaping and bleeding. Energetically, he was an open book, showing me the anguish that plagued him.

I shamefully shrank away from my sealed away pain. The distance in his eyes confirmed his inability to process the attack. His gaze snapped to mine, and I let him see the swirling storm that fit into the small windows of my pupils.

Our fingers intertwined, and he brought my hand to his lips. Gently, he placed a kiss on each finger and on the top. He opened my fingers and placed my hand against his face. The stubble from his beard poked my skin, and our gazes met. The wall between us crumbled. The moment arrived quickly but fluttered away in an instant. I cleared my throat and took another hit.

The clock tracked the seconds. The more that passed, the more his eyes drooped. The white around his golden irises reddened. The understanding between us tethered me to him, opening it a bit more.

Our energies intertwined in comfort. I melted into the chair, and he slouched against the wall. The weightlessness lacked substance, but it was better than drowning. The hurricane's swirling arms reached for me, but I was too far away.

Handing him the pipe, it rolled smoothly from his fingertips. No part of him moved to catch it. It tumbled onto the bench and beyond to the ground before raising his eyes in confused humor. Spasms erupted in my body. Laughter spilled from my mouth.

"What's so funny?"

"You are so baked right now."

"Yeah, well, you look." He stared at me intently. The grinding gears narrowly produced smoke. "You look like a chair."

The giggles took away my breath with their frequency. Instead of deep grief gripping my body in spasms, it was joy. Tears squeezed from my clenched eyes not in pain, but in delight. Lightheadedness settled me against the chair back. Every time I caught a glimpse of him, I giggled all over again. He joined in the contagious laughter while I attempted to answer him in between gasps.

Uncontrollable howling spewed from both of us. His fit of joy collapsed him into my lap. *How can you be laughing? The critic snarled and froze my breath. Disgraceful.* Before he could see any change, a knock drew both our attention. Adrenaline squirted into my stomach, flooding me with the need to prepare. *Must be mom.*

Chapter 3 - Surrender

“Come in,” I called over my shoulder.

He attempted loading his first bowl on the window sill. His intense focus and careful fingers entertained me. Mom and Julia cautiously entered like they didn’t know what they would find. I understood their investigative desire from the sudden influx of emotion into the atmosphere. Our empty voids existed well in harmony, but lifelessness wasn’t radiating from me. The house had been void of any joy for months, and I hadn’t spoken to anyone except Kian for days.

“It sounded like a party in here, and we wanted to join.”

His mom grabbed a chair from the bathroom and placed it next to Kian, and mine grabbed the one by the desk and situated next to me. We made a semicircle at the window. Handing her the fresh bowl, the strike of the lighter and the burning sizzle settled the rising anguish. The tension of the last several weeks lifted amongst the smoke.

Mom stared out the window ahead of her, deep in thought. Her proper shield returned, and I couldn’t discern without entering her mind. It should have made me nervous, but my high reduced my care. She always kept a certain level inaccessible to me. We both had our secrets, but hers somehow manifested in my life.

Breathing slowly with eyelids shut, relaxation sank me again into the cushions. The chaotic battle raged below me. It reached for me, waiting for my unavoidable descent back. Running wouldn’t be an option, and it waited with drooling teeth. *Get your bearings. Your son needs you.*

“I found a couple leads to check on tomorrow.”

She sat forward in her chair. Her dim aura shifted from gray and lifeless to vibrant and pulsing. If I let her, she would lure me back into the fight, losing every bit of pleasure I scrounged before she entered. Ignoring her bait, my mind wandered and floated in spontaneous peace.

I didn't know the appropriate response. Was I supposed to be excited that I had to go and find my son? Was I expected to react like she shared a revelation and some great discovery? Was I anticipated to be motivated to search all the ends of the earth for him when Victor could have taken him anywhere? It wasn't an adventure. It was life or death.

“Sure. It sounds like the only thing to do at this point.”

The conversation put me within its reach. It sank me low enough for the tendrils to wrap around my ankle, threatening to yank me down. Desperately wanting to return to the lightness and laughter, I was powerless to stop her sweeping energy. It wasn't time for my descent back into the torment. The darkness in myself absorbed any relief from her words, not allowing me a productive response.

Seemingly proud of her revelation, her posture straightened to a familiar rigidity. Despite being under the influence, her shoulders pushed back, and she returned more to herself. The fidgeting hands and constant resituating lingered in her behaviors. The strange blend drew my focus and calmed the increasing torment. The grips around my feet disappeared, and I rose just outside its reach.

~*~*~

Two in the morning chimed on the clock, and our mothers finally went their separate ways. We shuffled around, getting ready for bed. Cuddling up, he held me and played with my hair while the night settled over us. His hand froze on my shoulder,

and his breathing slowed. Normally, the calm of his resting form lulled me into comfort, into rest.

Lying there in the dark, change washed over me. Dreamland refused to whisk me away. The quietness of the night, and the emptiness in my stomach quietly assaulted me. The awaiting storm swelled and fought the hours of rest. I had failed at being a mother. My child was cut from my body, and I couldn't do a damn thing about it. Powerful or not, it didn't matter; I couldn't protect my child.

The high didn't keep me from the swell of sadness and guilt that erupted from the inferno below. Its cold fingers wound around my ethereal body. It yanked me from the clouds, ripping pieces off me. *It's hopeless.* The slithering words slid through my being. It poisoned the secret well of hope. It blew out every flame. The warmth of Kian's body was deemed treason to my punishment. Thrust unexpectedly back into the chaos, I underestimated the impact of the impending reality crash.

Tired and lost, the impulse tingled through my muscles. My lips lingered on his shoulder one last time. *He will die because of you.* The laughing taunt sent shivers racing over my skin. Withdrawing my hand from his body, I hoped I could remove the curse of loving me. Slipping from bed, I laid the comforter back over my spot. My silent footsteps hid my movement. The desk drawer silently cooperated.

The nightlights illuminated enough of the room that the overhead lights were unnecessary. The rush of the water from the faucet crashed loudly. Heart pounding, I stared at the door, waiting for the swinging entrance, waiting for my plan to be compromised. Placing a dagger by the tub, I hesitated. Flashes of the future beckoned me to an alternate path. Undressing from my pajamas, the mirror mocked my suffering. The deep purple colored skin stretched just above the counter. I stepped into the heat, and the steam rose to meet me.

Tears streamed down my face. *There's no way out.* The slimy intrusions continued. My hands ran over my stomach. *He's always one step ahead.* Victor's words from my apartment echoed in my head. I grabbed the knife, and the sharp tip pricked my finger. No other choice. I failed all of the tests. I couldn't save my brother, my sister, my father, or my mentor. *Why would I be able to save my son?*

Destiny needed a kink in its plan. I firmly grasped it in my right hand and placed the blade about an inch down from my wrist directly on top of the old scar. Future visions flashed, desperately fighting the submission. The internal beast whined and pleaded from behind its chains.

The edge pierced my skin, traveling deep. The intense pain rushed past my elbow behind the razor sharp metal. *Good girl.* Repeating the same motions on the other arm challenged me. My left barely held the blade, but I plunged it regardless. Red poured into the tub in tiny arms. The beast howled and fought its binding. The sweet lullaby of sleep whispered in my ears. The gentle embrace of warmth closed my eyes. *For the last time.*

Chapter 4 - Revived

Consciousness flooded through me, and my heavy eyelids inched open. The sharp nightmare returned, playing in my memory. Thick pink lines from wrist to elbow ripped a hole through my delusion. *No. No. NO.* My peace drifted away the more my body woke. *Not again.* Barely beyond Kian's silhouette, the stars twinkled in the night sky. *Trapped.*

Water dripped off his sleeve. The wet bed under me connected the dots. *He healed me.* A fierce rage flared through my limbs. Lunging forward, our bodies collided, and we collapsed onto the floor between the bed and window. You asshole! My fists and forearms rained down on him, and he blocked each assault. *I can't believe you!*

"Why? Why did you save me? I didn't want to live, damn it!"

Through gritted teeth, I screamed through the tsunami flowing down my face. He didn't get a chance for a reply. My shoulders slumped forward, but I didn't let go of his shirt. My body shook with sobs. I begged him for release, for freedom from my perpetual fight.

In one swift motion, his body raised under me, and I tumbled onto the carpet. His eyes narrowed, and his jaw tightened. Power pulsed from him. A thick vein of anger flooded my system and protected me from his forceful hits.

He firmly pinned me to the ground despite my struggling. His feelings projected towards me. The wave crashed into me. After letting it all go in the bathroom, the intensity raced through me. There was nothing abating its progress.

"How dare you make me feel this-,"

“Make you feel it? You don’t think that I don’t feel? You at least were incapacitated while they stole our son.” He cut me off. Large drops welled up in his eyes. His anguish pierced my soul. His words were released in a growl.

“They forced me to sit there, helpless, and watch as they cut you open. I was useless. How do you think that feels?”

My diverted eyes refused entry into his hurt. The energetic rampage raced through me. His guilt matched my own. The intense fingers of his aura pinned the edges of mine. He unleashed the magnitude of his wound, and I snapped out of the void’s grip. *He’s in the same boat.* Underneath him, I shied away from the force.

My guilt kept my focus on the twinkling stars. Holding the death card in my back pocket brought me comfort and control. It lay shredded at my feet, unusable. I was sufficiently locked in my own hell. The quick and newly built dam was challenged by the relentless tears. I begged them to stay pent up for a little longer. My perception didn’t reach beyond my own suffering.

“I’m sorry.” I responded softly.

“Look at me.”

The aggression in his gravelly voice scratched more holes into the newly formed barrier. His feelings had never come through so clearly. His suffering put mine into perspective. The weight of attempting suicide settled on top of it all. *You’re toxic.* A shudder ran down my spine. The critic stretched and cracked her knuckles. *Selfish bitch.*

“I can’t right now,” I said, keeping my eyes diverted.

“Look at me.” He repeated.

Quivering beneath him, I couldn’t face him. His fingers curled around my chin. He turned my face towards him. *You can’t avoid his judgment.* Avoiding his eye contact only tightened his grip. Our gazes finally met, and the depth of his passion and grief sunk its claws into me.

My body trembled with each word. The tears tore at the barrier, urged by the core of his being. His harshness on me hadn't lessened. His gaze reconnected us, patching the holes in the bridge from my destruction. *You don't deserve his gentleness.*

"Tell me that your pain is worse than mine, and I'll let you die."

"I can't," I whispered. "I can't tell you that."

My cries spilled from their cave. We stood at an impasse. The silence between us grew uncomfortable for the first time. The tension pulsed in sparks around us. My tear-soaked face and shivering form cowered under him. His fingers dug into my arms. His weight crushed my body against the floor.

"You have no right making me lose you, too." His voice hadn't lost its brashness.

"Fine. Then tell me how I'm supposed to deal with all this."

"I don't know that. I can't even deal with it on my own."

Kian whispered and released me, shoving me back towards the bed. His raging storm flooded the room with each step. It pressed against my chest, pounded against my shield, and slowly broke inside. Instead of pitiful worthlessness, the beast rose up instead. Each word he spoke cracked my shield more.

"I refuse victory for my defeat. You, on the other hand, are ready to throw in the towel and give up on him. Not even spend one day looking for him." His pointing finger speared my soul.

"You think that was me not wanting to fight for our son? That was me accepting defeat, Kian. I have no idea what's going on. Was there any validation of what Selena was saying? She told me that Ryan was in trouble. I am not even sure who we are dealing with anymore. I don't even know where to start."

"So since we aren't sure of the situation, let's go die in the bathtub? Does that make a lot of sense, Cassidy? Let's not talk about the situation, go die?"

The carpet dug into my kneecaps while his question floated in my head. *Why did I do it?* Suddenly disconnected from my feelings, I froze. He's right. Wracking my brain for an answer, he paused directly in front of me.

His constricted face and tiny droplets of spit that landed on my face beckoned my locked away chaos. Rising from submission, my thoughts swirled with venom. We searched each other's chaos for answers we knew didn't exist. I advanced on him, and he backed up several steps. The familiar prickle of fur shoved me aside.

"Answer me!"

"You want an answer? Yes, it made sense. You're not the one that has seen the devastating things that Victor does for pleasure. You haven't had to constantly wonder who is on your side or if anyone even is. Have you gone through some shit? Absolutely, you have never had someone blatantly attack you for the sole purpose of terrorizing you."

"Oh, I don't know what it's like to be attacked for another's enjoyment? Wasn't that you who did that?"

As Kian's sharp words hit my ears, my chest cracked in two. The boiling inferno sizzled out. His defensive aura prepared for an attack, but my wisps surrendered. Sucking my energy back into myself, I called forth an impressive shield. I turned, placing my hands on the windowsill

"All the more reason for you to not have saved me tonight."

"That's not what I meant."

You're a monster. The twinkling stars offered no comfort. The place I craved didn't exist. Acnos' garden and peace evaded me. Life crumbled around me, and I was powerless. *He regrets saving you.* The beast snarled at the critic, bearing teeth and threatening attack. Arms crossed, I faced him.

"Then what did you mean?" Our words sliced each other to bits.

“I’m angry. I’m hurt. I’m upset. I’m terrified. I’m confused, and I was all of those things before I had to pull your barely breathing and bloody body out of that tub in the middle of the night. My words are not forming right. I can’t think clearly. I can’t comfort you. I can’t make any of this go away.”

“Then why did you save me?”

My chin quivered under the weight of my burden. He closed the distance between us in two steps. He searched my eyes and face. His hand gently caressed me, fooling my wall into accepting his love. His hand moved from my hand to my face. Naturally, I leaned into his warmth. *You’re too much for him.*

“Because regardless of what I’m feeling, no matter how chaotic, confusing, painful, or whatever adjective goes there, when I wrap you in my arms, I know that I still have a reason for fighting. You are my reason. I saved you because you are my reason. Without you, I have no reason, and I need a reason to find our son.”

He pulled me close and clung to me. His powerful and courageous heart beat with a passion unlike my own. *You’re going to let him down.* Pushing the thought aside, I reached deeper into myself than ever before. A silver thread of soul pulsed with newfound strength. It was small, but it was strong.

“I love you.”

“I love you. Promise me no more attempts. You know they say the third time’s the charm.”

He was my lifeline, and I clung to him. Nodding yes into his chest, he clutched me. His aura covered me, protecting me, and showering me with concern and care. Life could throw whatever curveballs it wanted, death wasn’t an option anymore. I couldn’t subject him to more loss. We were a team, and I couldn’t fail him like I had everyone else.

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