

When Water Finds Fire Prologue

I don't remember much; only bits of the thoughts that had swirled through my head at the time—though these, too, weren't exactly clear. I vaguely remember two boys, a girl, and a man, though I have no earlier memory of his intense blue eyes paired with messy, uncombed hair, which was continuously graying with passing time. I may not remember him, but I do remember thinking: He had seen me fall. He had tried to help me. The memory is a blur, but I'm good with that. Stranger or not, all I needed to know was that I was okay for the moment. A very sharp—and very sudden—jolt had me shaking, thrashing, screaming in pain. Dark, cold shadows spread through my consciousness like a wildfire. Forming into claws that ripped and shredded at my memories, tearing through them like wet paper. Weak and defenseless; unable to fight, to resist. Only able to give in. I felt the same way as the shadows expanded, crashing through every barrier I tried to put up. The darkness tore through my mind relentlessly, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. The shadows of darkness haunted my thoughts, taking over every memory. Tears formed in my terrified eyes. I shook and shook as a haunting voice seethed through the shadows. Whispering of my weakness, taunting me with the truth. I'm sure it lasted only a few seconds, but it felt like an eternity. By the time it had ended, the only whole memories I had left were the ones I'd wanted to forget. My mind started towards those memories without my permission, forcing me to relive every painful detail that remained. It wasn't much, but it was far more than I wanted.

An ear-splitting shriek. A scream. A shout. A wail. Then pain. Lots of pain. I remember a pair of shaking, trembling arms picking me up, cradling me like a baby. I remember hearing the sobs—likely from my parents—and feeling their cold tears land on my cheeks. I remember a hand holding mine, squeezing it tight. I remember a hug so rough, I thought I was being strangled. Then everything faded to black.