

Hero of Darkness

Chapter 2: The End

3 days later, he finally received a call from Katherine at night.

"Hey, it's me."

"Where are you? What happened? Why didn't you pick up any of my calls ?" Elric asked.

"I'm sorry. It's been hectic recently. I just didn't have time to explain." Katherine replied.

"Now tell me exactly what happened? I at least deserve to know that, right ?" Elric said.

"Well.. It's my Dad. He... He.." Katherine suddenly started sobbing & her words stopped coming out of her mouth.

"You can tell me, I'm always here for you." Elric said out of genuine worry.

"My dad has been diagnosed with stage 3 Cancer. We just found out. He didn't tell me & my mom because he didn't want to worry us. And we don't have enough money for the treatment either. That's why he hid his illness." Katherine said and started crying loudly this time.

"I don't know what to do Elric. My Dad is dying and I really can't do anything to help him. I have no money, no insurance.. Nothing." Katherine's sobs didn't stop. Elric was listening to this on the other side of his phone felt as if his father was dying at this moment. Due to his attachment towards Katherine, he felt her pain as his own. He quickly replied.

"How much do you need ?" Elric asked

"What do you mean ?" Katherine replied

"I meant how much money do you need for your Father's treatment? I can arrange for it. I'm an accountant, remember ?" He said with worry & care in his voice.

"Around 30 Thousand Dollars."

"Don't worry. I have some savings. I can help." Elric said with a resolute voice.

"No, I really can't ask you to help me. We haven't known each other for that long. Even our relatives won't give us that much money even if we begged them. And I have no way to pay you back even in the next couple of years." Katherine said hurriedly.

"It's okay. The truth is I really like you, Kate.. I know this is coming out of the blue and at the wrong time but hear me.. It's okay. I trust you enough to know that you won't cheat me. And I won't be able to sleep knowing what you're going through and I could've helped. So please don't refuse." Elric said in a soft and gentle voice.

After a few moments of silence, Katherine spoke again.

"Elric.. Thank you. I mean truly thank you. I had no way to get out of this. I knew you felt about me this way. The truth is that I really like you as well. But I never thought we'd be confessing our feelings this way."

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"Yeah, we'll have that talk again when you're in a better position. Now send me your bank account. I'll send the money." Elric said.

He wasn't a dumb guy when it came to money. Aside from his groceries, rent and other taxes, he never actually had to spend much on anything. So in the past two years, he certainly made up some dough and did some side hustles for some private customers as well. If it was someone else, he'd go deep in first to see where his money was going.

But for Katherine, blinded by his feelings and given the fact that she was the only person he actually felt a connection to in such a long time, he didn't think much of it and wanted to help her in her worst scenario.

And appearing out as a Hero who helped her family would also leave a deep impression on her parents if there came a day to meet them.

Katherine sent him an account number registered in her name & Elric transferred the money without a second thought.

Over the next week, he didn't get any calls from Katherine. He thought it'd be bad to disturb her in such time. On the 9th day, he finally decided to call her again to check up on her & her dad's condition.

"The number you have dialed does not exist". Suddenly, the network voice-call lady responded after he tried to call. Elric got curious and tried again. But still nothing. He found it odd and tried from his other number which he barely used. So nobody knew his other number. But the same response came. He didn't know exactly which Hospital Katherine was at so he could only go to her apartment he once visited. But after talking with the landlord and her roommates, he found out that Katherine came to her

apartment the very next day after he sent her the money. Paid her 3 month overdue rent, packed all of her stuff and left for good.

Elric didn't believe what was happening around him.. He chose not to believe it.

HE HAD BEEN DUPED!!

He asked for an address to the landlord. And later he searched that address on maps only to find it non-existent. Her other information was obscure as well. Also, he found that her roommates weren't her friends from college, rather they met through an app used to search for renting apartments. There was really no other way to look for Katherine any longer. He quickly took a cab and went to the coffee shop he always went in. The owner was already familiar with Elric so he offered all the information they had on Katherine. But to no avail, this was bogus information as well.

"Where the hell did she go ?!" Elric shouted. He found it unbelievable that he was conned. It was one thing if she ran off out of fear of not being able to pay him back. But everything he came to know about her seemed to be a lie.

Probably, Katherine wasn't even her real name. Nor did she have a dad with cancer. She seemed more of a professional than someone who did such a thing for the first time. He was nothing but a mark for her...

After spending an entire day trying to find a clue for Katherine, Elric was exhausted and finally came back to his apartment. He was drained both physically and mentally. He was hungry but didn't have the willpower to eat something. He was still in shock. For the first time in a long time, he actually felt connected to someone. He'd go as far as to say he had fallen for her. And yet, in the blink of an eye; everything before him crumbled to dust. Everything was a lie to begin with. Finally, he fell asleep due to exhaustion.

The next day, Elric didn't leave the house. He was still not over what happened yesterday. All his hard-earned money from the past 2 years was gone. And don't even talk about the emotional trauma that incident left on him. He called in sick leave for the next few days and contacted the Police and filed a case. But there was barely anything he could offer up for investigation. He didn't even have a single photo of Katherine. All he could do was to hope for the cops to somehow find her.

The next week when Elric returned to his job, everyone was sneaking glances at him. One of his colleagues came to him and said in a low voice.

"Didn't take you for such a fool Johnson. If you wanted to fuck a woman that badly, could've just hired a hooker. Hahaha!" With a smug smile on the face, his colleague made the last part very loud for others around them to clearly hear it.

"What do you mean ?" Elric asked, astonished.

He found that one of his colleagues was present at the coffee shop when Elric asked the owner about Katherine. And later news spread about how she was a con. Which surprised many people including the coffee shop staff. But to have cherry on the top, her scamming Elric for 30K Dollars also got leaked. It didn't take much time for the news to reach his office. And literally, everyone in his department knew about his unlucky story.

This put a lot of shame & mockery on his head. This was their chance to berate Elric with an excuse. Because Elric had always been a guy who got the job done at right time & never actually refused a major task. He did win the hearts of upper management based on his track record alone & they found him as a promising person to promote in the future.

In a dog-eating-dog world, even a simple rumor is enough to drag down your name in the mud. And the truth doesn't even matter when that happens.

Elric never entangled himself in these office shenanigans but he too had his pride.. He barely made it till the working hours ended. Every breath he took felt like an eternity. After the shift ended, he didn't immediately leave; he went to the uppermost rooftop of their building which was around 32 floors tall, to get a fresh breath and cool his mind.

The past week gave him the worst experience of his entire life. This hurt more than the beatings he got from the kids who bullied him in school. This hurt more than the look of disappointment his parents gave him. Never was his mental fortitude & his pride was tested up to this extent. Tears dripped down across his cheeks like a river.. He had finally broken down. He could no longer tolerate how messed up, lonely and pitiful his life had become. He knew very well that his own actions played a very big part in it as well. He wasn't a hypocrite to blame it all on the world and play as the victim.

But at this moment, he was simply clueless. He was lost, helpless, alone, desperate, yearning for someone to put a hand on his shoulder and tell him that it was gonna be okay. But there really wasn't anyone who'd come for him at this moment.

Who'd he call? His parents he hadn't talked with in the past 3 months? His siblings who never actually had any form of bond with him since childhood? His fictional characters & idols he looked up to in his teenage days? Friends.. What are those mythical creatures?

A man no matter where he fits inside a society, from someone working as a janitor to a multinational company's CEO had their own self respect & pride. But today, all of it was shattered for Elric. And he asked himself..

"Man, why am I the only one living so miserably? Will anything for once, go the right way for me? Why am I the only one always getting the short end of the stick? It's as if the world itself is trying to tell me that I really don't matter at all."

At this very moment, he walked towards the edge of the rooftop. And looked down.

Author : Now we're at the exact moment where the first chapter started.

"Is my life worth living at all ?" Elric asked himself.

The years of unhappiness, escapism, loneliness had brought Elric to this very moment. Katherine teaching him that one life lesson & breaking his heart was just a hole that let out the volcano that was under the ground from all these years. Her act was just an outlet. His state of mind would've shown up sooner or later anyway.

Elric wasn't an emotional moron who did things based on a fit of rage. He was a very rational person since his childhood. But his desperation took out the best of him. He had 2 choices now. Go back to his Apartment, cry it out. Then continue his mundane life where no one would be bothered whether he lived or died. Where he is replaceable like a pen. Or do what he thought of doing just now..

Because even if he went back, what was he gonna do? Find Katherine & get his revenge on her like some movie or novel story? He very well knew that it was no longer possible for him to find her. She probably did this to many others like him. He was a fool not to see through her act.

And don't mention the work environment. From now on, no matter what he did or how well he performed at work, he'll always be used as a laughingstock. Even if he quit & went somewhere else to work, his lifestyle would be the same, just a different place.

Elric wiped off the final drop of tear from his cheek. He found no way to move past his current mental state. He stood on the ledge and looked up towards the midnight moon. Only now did he realized that he had been crying & lamenting for nearly 7 hours now. He didn't even notice the flow of time.

Elric Johnson took a deep breath & closed his eyes. He could feel the cold breeze trickling on his face and he said,

"Man, what a pathetic life it was".

At this moment, he let go of his body and jumped down. As his body descended from the tall building, the pressure of air at such height pushed his body like a kite, his body changed angles few times until it finally landed on the ground.

THWACK!

Blood, guts, bones & eyeballs splattered on the side of the street. A completely gory scene that even horror movies can't imitate came to be.

Dozens of people who were walking across the same lane of the street were shuddering in fear & shock. Some women among the crowd started vomiting the moment they saw what was next to them. An old man among the crowd started calling 911.

Quickly the cops patrolling across the street saw the commotion and started running towards the scene.

Over that puddle of meat and blood, lied Elric Johnson who chose to give up on his life than suffer any longer. To him, it seemed like the only way out. A man forsaken by the world & his kin died a tragic death.

NEVER TO WAKE UP AGAIN.