

WHAT WE WERE AFRAID TO CALL IT!

CHAPTER 1 (Sky)

There are people you meet who change the way you feel without ever becoming a chapter in your story. He was one of those people, and somehow, everything between us, from our laughs, our fights, our quiet mornings were both everything and nothing. I wanted to tell him how I felt or maybe I didn't. But the words got stuck between my chest and my throat, and we stayed there, on the edge of something we were too afraid to name. The way he smelled like rain and sandalwood and ice lavender, the way his jokes and a laugh made the room feel smaller and bigger all at once. I should have walked away then. But I didn't. And maybe that's why we never had a chance at forever. We laughed until our ribs ached, our hands and bodies brushing like electricity, and for a second I thought... This is it! This is what being with someone should feel like. And then I remembered we had no name for it.

I remember the first time we stood across from each other, and the world didn't exist outside we sat on my porch and talked and looked up at the stars and it was like we knew each other for way longer than we did. His laugh cut through the hum of strangers like it belonged to me, and I caught myself leaning closer, not even realizing I was holding my breath.

We had a rhythm that made no sense to anyone else. Long talks that wandered into philosophy and bad jokes, arguments that ended in silence and then a quiet, almost shy reconciliation. Every time we touched, it was electric, like we knew things about each other we hadn't said out loud. The sex, when it happened, wasn't just physical.

It was the kind of connection you read about in novels but never expect to live.

And yet... we never said it. We never called it anything. There was a line, invisible but sharp, that neither of us dared to cross. Maybe it was fear, maybe it was timing, maybe it was just that we liked it too much to ruin it with a name.

I watched Apollo cry once. And somehow, those small cracks made the whole thing feel even more real. It wasn't perfect. It was messy, chaotic, alive. And every time we parted ways, even after the best nights, I felt that strange hollow mix of satisfaction and longing, knowing we had everything and nothing all at once.

We were amazing together in all the ways that mattered and fragile in the ways we couldn't face. And so, we stayed there just dancing on the edge of something we were too afraid to call it.

There are people you meet who leave fingerprints on your life without ever staying. He was one of them.

We smiled too much, talked too long, and somehow understood each other in ways words couldn't hold. There were arguments, yes, but even those felt like part of a language only we knew. And in the quiet moments just watching him, hearing him, being with him made me realize that perfection isn't always about being together. Sometimes it's about knowing what it feels like and letting it go anyway.

We had everything anyone could want, except a name. And maybe that was the part that mattered the most.

I could feel him before I even saw him from the brush of his hand on my arm, the way his gaze lingered a second too long. It wasn't just attraction; it was a pull, like gravity had a favorite person that day.

Our conversations started light and ended in confessions we hadn't meant to say out loud. The nights we shared weren't just sex. They were a map of what it could be if we ever dared to name it. But we didn't. We never did. We stayed in that perfect in-between, where longing and satisfaction tangled and no one got hurt enough to walk away.

And still, every touch, every laugh, every whispered secret left me shaking with the impossible clarity that he might have been everything... if only we'd called it something.

He was danger wrapped in laughter, and I couldn't stay away.

I remember when we first met, he approached me, and I wasn't interested one bit and everything he said went over my head but over time we got to know one another and I grew to like him. The way he kept me laughing but when he got serious, he didn't play around and even in those times he was still a comedian and knew how to brighten the mood. I remember there were times when I felt like he played so much but one day he got angry I experienced a glimpse of how serious and firm he could be. I knew that I was not only into him, but I learned that he could be authoritative when he needed to be and chose not to react to meaningless things. Emotional intelligence at its finest.

We met for the first time that night under the dim glow of streetlights, the air heavy with rain and the faint scent of asphalt. He got out of his car and walked up to me giving me the eye that sent chill down my spine and the hug we shared was intense. Somehow, it felt like he was sheltering both of us from the storm, from the world, from everything that threatened to break what we didn't even name.

He laughed at something I said, the kind of laugh that makes your stomach flip and your chest ache at the same time. I stepped closer without thinking, and he didn't move away. Our hands brushed once, twice, and the spark shot straight to my core. I wanted to grab it, hold it, claim it but we both hesitated, the line we never crossed pressing between us like a silent warning. He pulled me in and hugged me to know how I would feel in his arms.

"I shouldn't..." I started, and he just shook his head, smiling, the way he always did when he knew exactly what I was about to say but chose to let it hang in the air. "It's fine," he said. But it wasn't fine. Nothing between us had ever been fine. Everything was too strong, too raw, too alive for words.

We stood there for what felt like forever, the rain starting to soak our clothes, the city buzzing quietly around us, and I realized that night what I had always known: we were brilliant together, fragile together, perfect in every way that counted.

I remember sitting across from him, watching the way his lips moved when he laughed, the way his eyes softened when he told a story about his childhood. There was a depth there, a vulnerability I wanted to protect and explore all at once.

We shared secrets, confessions, and regrets, the kind of conversations that leave your chest raw and your heart strangely full. And yet, there was always the invisible line. Something between us that neither of us dared to cross. Every smile, every tear, every fleeting touch was electric, bittersweet. By the time we parted, I was exhausted and exhilarated, loving him in a way I could never name and yet, we would never be ours to call.

CHAPTER 2 (Apollo)

There are people who leave you breathless and broken at the same time. She was both. I never knew a smile could feel like a promise and a threat all at once. Every conversation, every touch, every glance pulled me closer to something I wasn't allowed to claim. The intensity was intoxicating, the closeness addictive, always just out of reach. We could have been everything, but instead we stayed suspended in that fragile in-between, and it left me longing for her in ways words could never quite hold. They say some people come into your life as lessons and others as blessings. I could never put my finger on which one she was. Everything lined up for me. Everything felt right. I thought for sure Sky was the one. But life doesn't always follow the certainty you feel in your chest. Sometimes things fall apart without anyone asking for it to happen. I wasn't the one who chose this position, but here I was anyway trying to accept it, trying to move forward, even while knowing a part of me was still standing where we left off.

She was danger wrapped in laughter, and I couldn't stay away. Every time she smiled, I forgot caution, common sense, and every rule I swore I lived by. She drew me in with who she was, not who she pretended to be, and I followed being completely aware of the consequences, unable to resist them. Every argument, every secret shared, every intimate night felt like stepping closer to a line I could never cross. Wanting her while knowing I couldn't have her became a constant ache in my chest. We could have called it love, but we didn't. Maybe that was the point.

From the first moment I held her, I knew she was mine but not in the way ownership works. In the way recognition does. Still, she had to see it for herself. She had to want it as badly as I did. The more I pulled, the more she pushed. The more I reached, the farther she backed up. When I stopped reaching, she'd come close again but just enough to make me feel chosen, just enough to make me stay at least before running all over again. A cycle on repeat. I realized I could only be free when she decided to let me go. I never thought we needed to name what we were. Not because it didn't matter, but because she mattered too much. You don't rush what feels settled. I couldn't label something I was still learning how to hold. With her, everything

felt quiet. Not empty quiet, but the kind that exists when nothing is wrong. She fit into my days without effort. Conversations didn't need momentum; they simply happened. Time bent around us like it was willing to wait. If there were rules, no one told me. If there were expectations, we were already meeting them.

So, when she left, heartbreak wasn't what hit first. Confusion did. Because nothing was breaking. Nothing felt unfinished except the word she kept asking for, and I didn't think we needed yet. I didn't fall for her all at once. It happened in pieces. In repetition. The way she answered my calls even when she was tired. The way she stayed longer than she planned. The way her body softened when I touched her back, like she forgot she was supposed to be guarded. She didn't perform with me. She rested. And that's how I knew it was real. People don't relax where they don't feel safe.

She asked me once what would happen if things stopped being easy. I laughed but not because I didn't take her seriously, but because I couldn't imagine it. I told her we'd talk, we'd adjust, we'd figure it out. She looked at me like that answer scared her. So, I said, "You know I'm not going anywhere, right?" Her silence was louder than any argument we never had. I thought she was afraid of disappointment. I thought someone before me had let her down. I never realize she was afraid of staying. I believed love announced itself, that when the moment came, it would be obvious to both of us. I thought naming it too early could scare her away. I didn't understand that for her, the unnamed thing wasn't the problem.

It was the closeness! It was the fact that she had things within her that she hadn't discovered herself and only she can figure it out when she's ready to.

CHAPTER 3 (Sky)

I told myself it wasn't fear. I told myself it was intuition. I said I needed space. I said I wasn't ready. I said I didn't know what I wanted. But the truth was that I knew exactly what I had. And it scared me. He didn't disappear when I questioned him. He didn't punish me for hesitation. He didn't demand reassurance. He stayed. And that's when I started pulling away. Because nothing in my life had ever stayed without eventually asking for payment. He didn't grip. He didn't claim. He just held on tight. That almost made it worse. I remember the way he used to look at me with this look in his eyes and it made me feel so fragile. I asked

Sky: Why do you do that?

Apollo: Do what?

Sky: Look at me like that

Apollo: Like what?

Sky: Like I'm breakable.

Apollo: (Smiling) Maybe you are.

Sky: (Laughing out loud) I'm not.

He reached for my hand and my body stiffened before I could stop it. It was so quick almost like a flicker, but I felt it. The old electricity. The instinct that I had to pull away before someone decided they had a right to my skin. Fluorescent lights. A door that didn't open when she tried it. A voice that said, Relax. I was then brought back down to my normal state because for a moment I had drifted away to a place in my mind that only I could escape to where everything just feels alright.

Apollo: You, ok?

Sky: (Blinking back into the present.) Yeah. Why?

Apollo: You disappeared for a second.

Sky: I do that sometimes.!

Apollo: Where do you go when you zone out like that?

Sky: Uh... I just... Nowhere I just do it from time to time unexpectedly.

Truth, is I zone out like that all the time. He laced his fingers with mine. And again, he didn't grip. He didn't claim. He just held tight. That almost made it worse. Because there was no force in it. There was no control. There was no threat. Just warmth. I didn't trust warmth. To me warmth was temporary. Warmth turns cold without warning. Warmth tends to always pack its bags and leave you standing and staring at a doorway pretending you weren't waiting. I checked my phone while he was still talking. Knowing there was no new notifications. He hadn't gone anywhere. He was sitting right in front of me. Still, something in my chest tightened.

Apollo: Are you expecting someone or something?

Sky: No!

Few hours had eventually passed and he was still there. The urge to contain these emotions and keep from speaking because at this moment everything felt so right but in reality, was it?

Apollo: Sky?

Sky: Huh?

Apollo: You're doing it again. You're zoning out again where is your mind taking you?

Three hours. He hadn't texted earlier like he said he would. Three hours meant something had shifted. It always did. People didn't leave all at once. They rehearsed it first. Apollo got closer to me and put his hand on my knee because he knows me and he most definitely knew when I was present in the moment or when my body is present and my mind is gone. He may have played stupid to get me to open up but it never worked out in his favor but this time he was all in. Tonight, he was different. He leaned in to comfort me. Every time he leaned in, my chest tightened. Every time he softened, I hardened. I thought I was protecting myself. I didn't realize I was rehearsing an ending I learned long before him.

Apollo: You're quiet.

Sky: Just thinking.

About how this would end. About how they all end. He leaned back, studying me. Not suspicious. Just curious. Curiosity felt dangerous too.

Apollo: You know (He said softly.) You don't have to brace yourself with me.

I felt that sentence land in my stomach like a warning. Don't brace yourself. As if that had ever been optional. I smiled the version of me that survived everything smiled.

Sky: I'm not bracing.

He nodded like he believed me. That scared me more than if he hadn't. Sometimes I wondered what was going through his mind and if he really truly understands me and my feelings and the emotions that I tend to go through.

@Lolaakii

CHAPTER 4 (Apollo)

I told myself it was real. I told myself it was everything I've ever wanted. She said she needed space. I said I wasn't ready. She said she didn't know what I wanted. But I just hoped that she changed her mind. We can figure it out together. Things doesn't have to end this way. I could never disappear when Sky questioned me. I didn't punish her for the hesitation either. I wouldn't demand reassurance. I stayed. And that's when Sky started pulling away. I am not surprised because She told me one night while we were cuddling that nothing in her life had ever stayed without eventually asking for payment. It should never be that way. What she doesn't understand is that I want to love her and make her whole again. I wouldn't grip. I wouldn't claim. I could only just hold on tight to her. Although I knew that sometimes that almost made it worse. I didn't care because I would always keep providing her all of the reassurance that was needed so that she can stay present in the moment and not get too ahead of herself.

I liked the way she watched me when she thought I wasn't looking. Like she was measuring me.

Sky: Why do you do that?

Apollo: Do what?

Sky: Look at me like that

Apollo: Like what?

Sky: Like I'm breakable.

Apollo: (Smiling) Maybe you are.

Sky: (Laughing out loud) I'm not.

I couldn't tell if that was a good or bad thing though. When I reached for her hand, she just went still. She didn't pull away. She was just.... still. It was like she was bracing for impact with the quickness. At times I pretended not to notice. I didn't want her to feel studied. But I did notice the way she always checked her phone even when I was right there next to her. Like she expected something to disappear. I told her. She would just drift off mid conversation or while we were sitting together relaxing and I couldn't never understand where her mind wandered off to but I knew she was no longer present. Sometimes I would just let her go into her daze but this time when

she zoned out it was like I wasn't even there. Her body went into a relaxed state as if the place she drifted off to was her safe space but that can't be, can it? How could she be safer than where she is right here with me? I noticed that she would flinch while she was zoned out, and it seemed as if she were more triggered than anything and I would rather comfort her than let her remain in this state if I could help. I tried to talk her out of it just to see if she would respond.

Apollo: You ok?

Sky: (Blinking back into the present.) Yeah. Why?

Apollo: You disappeared for a second. Where did you go?

Sky: I do that sometimes.!

Apollo: Where do you go when you zone out like that? Are you ok?

Sky: Uh... I just... Nowhere I just do it from time to time unexpectedly.

She never answered the right questions but the answers she provided was just enough to try to shut me up. I knew when to stop questioning and live in the present with her. She told me that she drifts away like that all the time. I couldn't help but to lace my fingers with hers. And again, I didn't grip. I didn't claim. I just held on tight. The truth of the matter is it seems like that always almost made it worse. I am not going to force it. There was no control. There is no threat. I just wanna provide her the warmth. But Sky didn't trust the warmth and I could tell by how when it was provided to her and how she would react so uncomfortably as if she doesn't want to be touched or not that she didn't want to be touched because sometimes she would initiate the affection but then when I would react and reciprocate the efforts she would push me away without even knowing. It seems as if to Sky the warmth was temporary. Simply because she would only receive the warmth when she is the one supplying it. When I am giving the warmth, it turns cold without any hesitations. Its as if her affection never stayed long enough to unpack. Her love keeps a suitcase at the door and it's crazy because just maybe she thinks that is what will scare me away, but I am more locked in now more than I have ever been. She would check her phone while I was still talking. Knowing damn well there was no new notifications on that phone. I can't lie sometimes I second guessed if she was even present in the moment

but the I began to realize that she listens to every single word I say but she is avoiding the trauma. Does she realize what she is doing? I hadn't plan on going anywhere. I would sit right in front of her showing her that I'm here. Seems like something in her mind was racing just by how she would stare at times. She would go and stand by the door and just look out the window and it had me questioning what she was doing exactly.

Apollo: Are you expecting someone or something?

Sky: No!

Few hours had eventually passed, and I am still standing ten toes down. I watched her every movement and it was to watch her stand there fighting with her emotions and her trauma because the truth of the matter is that I can see her whether she can see it or not. I can see her. Without a word I can hear her. Without a touch I can feel her. Mentally I can understand the pushing and the pulling and to me it tells me that she is scared but I need for her to communicate but when she does, she will need a shoulder, and I will be here. When I touch her and she pulls away I can tell there is a bit of trauma and that is why I comfort her and show her that I without a doubt I will never hurt her. I touch her in the gentlest way possible so she can understand I am looking for confirmation, but this is me showing up and seeing what you've been through, and I am not your trauma. The way she tries to bottle up her emotions and stop herself from talking because just maybe to her at this moment everything feels so right but in reality, we have so much to work on. If only she could just understand I am here for her no questions even if she does have questions to ask.

Apollo: Sky?

Sky: Huh?

Apollo: You're doing it again. You're zoning out again where is your mind taking you?

I got closer to Sky and put my hand on my knee because I knew she needed to just relax and to be comforted even if her inner child is fighting me off. I 100% know when Sky is present in the moment or when her body is present and her mind is gone. I can play the role of a fool, but I am no fool. Tonight, Sky was different and I can feel it in my heart that she was fighting hard. I leaned in to comfort her. Every time I leaned in, she froze. Every time I softened, she hardened. I thought I was protecting her. I didn't realize she was rehearsing our ending and it was only a matter of time.

Apollo: You're quiet.

Sky: Just thinking.

I leaned back, studying her. I was curious but you know they say curiosity killed the cat, but I didn't care. I knew she was mine and that's just that. I would do anything for her and be all that she needed if she would stop sabotaging, she would see it. I just need for her to realize it.

Apollo: You know (I said softly.) You don't have to brace yourself with me.

She looked at me as if I called her out. She smiled. The smile she smiled wasn't a smile that was genuine. The smile she smiled was as if she were reassuring me but that only confirmed to me that she was mentally going through more than what she would tell me and she needed me just as I did her and she didn't even know it yet.

That smile was a cry for help but in silence. Maybe she wanted me to notice or maybe she just thought she was good at hiding her pain, but I see it all and that's what made her the most beautiful. Beauty has scars.

Sky: I'm not bracing.

I nodded at Sky because I now understand that although I am here, I can only do but so much until she decides to put in the work for herself. I can be here as long as she allows me to be but from that point on, I knew that time was ticking. That bothered me. Sometimes I wondered what was going through her mind and if she really truly understands me and my feelings and the emotions that I tend to go through... My saying she didn't have to brace herself with me was in the lightest way possible. She froze. I didn't know what that meant. I just knew that sometimes when I was close to her, I felt like I was standing outside a locked door. And she was inside. Every time she started to feel safe, she would start drifting again. She would touch me like she was memorizing something she couldn't keep. Loving her felt like renting a place she never planned to live in. I slowly learned that she loved me like she was practicing leaving. She never officially unpacks her feelings she just sat them down for a while. When I love I love with my whole heart and I know she is my person but does she?

We sat next to one another, and she closed her eyes and said...

Sky: Leave!

Apollo: What?

Sky: Go home!

Apollo: Sky?

Sky: I can't do this anymore this is too much for me. You give me love and I don't know if I'm receiving it. You stay and I feel overwhelmed with emotions, and I have to fight with myself over and over about how I feel about you and things I have been through and it's like I'm stringing you along. Sometimes I feel like we are perfect, but we can never be that. I'm too imperfect for you! You never want to leave even when I am hurting inside trying to fight myself to keep you here. I don't understand you. I don't think you really understand me. Just go!!!

Apollo: You're confusing me! Do you want me?

Sky: No!

Apollo: Skyyyyy? Just tell me something. If I told you that I love you right here right now and that no matter what you go through I'm standing ten toes down for you because what you're going through we will get through it together. How would you feel? If I told you I'm not running from you this is where I belong! How would you feel? Do you feel safe with me? Do you ever have to fight to be with me?

Sky: I feel.... (Sigh) Please Go!

Apollo: (Looks Sky in her eyes and lifts her head up) I love you with all of my heart. Damn it Sky I love you with my soul but if you can't see it for yourself, you're going to miss out on something so special, and it may not come back. I want to be here let me be here for you. I know I can't force you and sometimes we can just sit in silence until it's broken but that silence would be so loud that just by being together and showing up for you in the time that you need me to. It will do more good than harm! Baby I'm trying and I'm trying before you push me so far that I can no longer be reached. Do you love me?

It was hard for Sky to say those words even though she felt it. Her heart felt away but her mouth couldn't speak!

Sky: I think about you! All the time. I want you here but then I want you to go. When you touch me, I feel present in the moment but let's be real your touch is not mine. I

care about you and I want you in ways I can only imagine. I love my solitude and if you can't make me feel better than my solitude you're not it!

Apollo: Do you hear yourself? Make it make sense Sky! You're talking all over the place.

Sky: I'm confused. And I can't say what I mean because I'm not sure I even know!

Apollo: I think you do know but you're scared of my response. I think you're scared that I might leave. I don't want to leave but you're pushing me away. I'll stay as long as you have me and even then, I still want to stay but I can't force you. I love you! I love you in your pain, silence, happiness and even when you're pushing me away!

Sky: Why?

Apollo: Because when I needed you.... Baby you answered every call no matter what time it was. When I was hurting you came through for me. When I was hungry you fed me. When I was down bad you covered me and prayed with me! You make me smile and I can't live one day without you! You made me whole again little did you know. Just as I will do for you. I need you. I can't breathe without you.

Sky: (Makes eye contact) (Starts crying)

Apollo: You feel that?

Sky: Feel what?

Apollo: Whats on your mind?

Sky: I appreciate all that you've said but this is my fight Apollo.

Sky couldn't say what she wanted because she was too scared and feared the outcome.

Apollo: Ok I'll leave.!

Apollo got up and walked out the door and he didn't look back. He was hurt because no matter what he said she wouldn't fight herself for him.!

Sky: I don't want you to go! Please (Starts crying) I'm confused. I want you here.

Apollo: YOU CAN'T EVEN... NVM I'll just do you a favor and keep walking.

Sky: APOLLO turn around and look at me.

Apollo turns around and looks Sky in her eyes and every tear that filled her eyes made him wanted to break but he knew she had to feel before even understanding.

Apollo: WHAT SKY! YOU TOLD ME TO GO AND I LEAVE THEN YOU TELL ME TO STAY AND IM HERE SO WHAT NOW?

Sky: I feel safe with you more than I feel being alone. When you touch me that calms my soul. When you kiss me it feels like fireworks are all around us. With you I feel at home but...(Goes silent and lowers her head)

Apollo: But what?

Sky: I fight myself every single day for you! I always want to leave but I stay. When you leave, I can't breathe but I can't always depend on you! My heart hurts when you hurt and when you stay with me when I need you it's all the reassurance I need. When you talk to me and I don't talk back I know you know I'm listening even when I'm being stubborn. It makes me want you more because you know me like the back of my hand and that terrifies me.! I crave you even when you're not here.! I can hear you in my ears and you're nowhere near me. I can feel your touch and you're not next to me. Your voice and the way I feel it's vibration in my ear sends chills down my spine. When you grab me from behind, I just want to fall into you. The way you're so patient with me it makes me want to soak up all of your love. When you sleep so peacefully and I watch you be so comfortable and feel safe I feel myself being safe just because you're here. When you sleep, I just want to hold you and rub on your back but then I know it will make me feel things and then I'm gonna want to do things to you that even I can't explain. When you're sitting next me to your energy talks to me in ways I can't even say. I look you in your eyes then to your nose and then your lips and watch you inhale and exhale and I watch your body language, and it just does it for

me! You speak to me in languages I can't even respond to, but I try! I just can't This isn't love... is it?

Apollo: You tell me Sky?

Sky: I think about us more than anything and I would be so pissed if you were to go out and be happy with anybody else but me but I can't love you the way you need to be loved Apollo. I can tell you right here and now that I love you so much more than I love my safe space but fighting myself is hard because.....

Apollo: Because..... Say no more Sky I understand. If you aren't willing to fight, I'm not sure what we're even doing. I am here and always have been but you're too zoned out to even see the picture. You told me to leave and I should have listened. I'm listening now! (Gets in the car and drives away)

Sky: WAIT!!!!!!

Apollo turned around and gave Sky one last chance...

@Lolaki

CHAPTER 5 (Finale)

The last conversation between them did not sound like an ending. That was what haunted her most. There were no final words, no declarations meant to close a door forever. Just two people standing in the middle of something fragile, speaking different emotional languages while believing they were saying the same thing. Apollo stood in her living room, hands restless at his sides, trying to stay calm while his heart fought against his composure.

Apollo: I'm in love with you (Softly/Calmly)

The words filled the space between them, heavy and irreversible. Sky's chest tightened. She felt it. Sky felt the warmth, the pull, the terrifying assurance that she felt something just as deep. But alongside it came something louder: fear. Old fear. Familiar fear. The kind that whispered that love always came with loss. Her mind searched for escape before her heart could answer.

Sky: You don't know that. (She said quietly, shaking her head.)

Apollo: I do. I've known for a long time. (Apollo's face fell, not in anger but in disbelief.)

She paced, arms wrapped around herself, emotions rising faster than she could understand them. Vulnerability felt like standing too close to the edge of something she couldn't control.

Sky: What if you wake up one day and don't feel that way? What if you leave?

Apollo: I'm not leaving. I've never given you a reason to think I would. (He said immediately.)

But trauma doesn't listen to evidence. It listens to memory. Her heart was opening while her survival instincts screamed to shut it again. Everything inside her felt exposed and seen in ways she wasn't ready for.

Sky: I just... I can't do this right now, (she whispered.)

He stepped closer, softer now.

Apollo: You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to have it figured out. I'm here.

And that terrified her most. Because part of her believed him. And believing meant risking devastation.

Sky: Maybe you should go (she said suddenly.)

The words surprised even her. His expression shifted, confusion flickering into hurt.

Apollo: Wow you're pushing me away again? You want me to leave for real this time?

She hesitated — a split second where she could have stopped everything.

Sky: No! (Her heart said silently. But fear spoke first.) Yes! I think that's best.

The silence that followed felt irreversible. He nodded slowly, swallowing emotion she wasn't brave enough to face.

Apollo: Okay Fine! (He said quietly.)

He waited just for a moment as if expecting her to take it back just as she did before. She didn't. So, he turned and walked out. The door closed harder than either of them intended. And the sound echoed long after he was gone. The moment he left, regret arrived. Immediate. Sharp. Suffocating. Sky stood frozen, staring at the door, every instinct suddenly screaming to run after him. But pride, confusion, and fear rooted her in place.

Sky: He'll come back (she told herself.)

He always did. Except this time, he didn't.

Months passed in uncomfortable clarity. Without him, silence forced her inward. She began noticing patterns she had never questioned before — how closeness made her anxious, how safety felt unfamiliar, how she sabotaged peace because chaos was what she understood. She started recognizing her reactions not as personality, but as protection. Memories replayed differently now. His patience. His reassurance. The way he stayed when she expected him to leave. He hadn't been overwhelming her. He had been loving her. And she had mistaken love for danger. The realization broke something open inside her.

Sky: I loved him! (She admitted one night, tears falling freely now.)

Not past tense. Present. Alive. For the first time, she understood what he had been offering and why she pushed it away. Healing came slowly after that. Painfully. Honestly. And with healing came courage. She decided she would reach out to him

and after not receiving any answers or replies back she decided she would go to his house and tell him but after taking a trip to his side of time and knocking on his door someone else answered the door and told Sky whoever she was looking for didn't live there any longer and it's been a few months or so since they have newly moved in the place. Sky still didn't want to give up and wanted to find Apollo to tell him everything she hadn't understood before.

Sky saw him on an ordinary afternoon and honestly there was no surprise as to where she saw him because they both shared a love for cooking so the grocery store was their favorite place in the whole wide world. She finally saw him months after no communication and no laying eyes on once another. The world didn't pause or signal the moment. He was just there standing outside of their favorite grocery store, laughing softly at something she couldn't hear. Sky took a deep breath. Then she began thinking. He looked the same, yet different. Lighter somehow. At peace in a way she hadn't seen before. He looks amazing. Her heart raced as she walked toward him, then broke into a run.

Sky: Hey! (She called, voice trembling.) Hey!

Apollo turned around. Shock crossed his face instantly.

Apollo: Sky!?! (Her name left his lips like a memory he hadn't prepared to revisit.)

For a moment, neither of them spoke. Months of absence collapsed into seconds.

Sky: Hey!

They stood face to face after months of no communication. He tried to reach out to her freshly after the ending and she never answered and she did it was not what he

expected. When she reached out he never answered because she took too long to show up for him.

Apollo: Hi Sky, what's up?

Sky: I know I am the last person you would want to see but I am so happy that we ran into one another.

Apollo: Happy?

Sky: Please let me finish. I have been reaching out to you for awhile and I didn't receive an answer. I went to your house or what I thought was still your house and was informed that you weren't there because you moved awhile back and...

Apollo: Yes I moved about two weeks or so after we stopped talking and I ended up breaking my phone after trying to reach out to you but not getting any responses or when we finally talk still no answers. I changed my number as well and then I fou...

Sky: I've been wanting to talk to you! I didn't understand before, but I do now. I was scared and I pushed you away and I... (She rushed out, emotion spilling over.) I'm in love with you. I think I always was. I just didn't know how to see it yet. (She laughed nervously through tears.) I have taking so much time alone and away from you to do the proper healing and I suffered big time. I was hurt asking you to leave. Seeing you walk out of that door was the hardest thing for me to ask you to do and to see. I am so sorry for all that I have put you through but I am ready. I am ready to love you the way you loved me plus more. I am ready to give you all of me. I made a huge mistake letting you walk out that door and I couldn't forgive myself. I watched it replay over and over in my mind and I couldn't take it. I had to do the inner work so that I could be better for you. I love you Apollo! I loved you then but was too afraid to say it. I repeatedly got in my own way but I love you with my heart and my soul. Truth is you were offering me so much I didn't love myself so I couldn't see it. But I am so sorry Apollo. I am in love with you!

Apollo: Why now Sky? (He was relieved yet pissed because it wasn't the right time)

Sky: At that time, I only knew how to love people I was afraid would leave and, when you didn't... I didn't know what to do with that.

Apollo: I don't know what to say Sky! You needed someone who could stay when it stopped feeling like survival but you chose for both of us. I thought if I gave it time, you'd stop flinching.

Sky: I didn't know I was. (Tears filled her eyes)

Apollo: I did. I just didn't know what to call it. I comforted you over and over no matter how much it drained me. I needed you to come through for yourself but you chose to drown yourself in your trauma and your emotions. I can't figure it out for you baby... (Comes to realization) I meant Sky.... I loved you! Not as a plea and not as a question. I know it was hard for you hell dealing with it was hard for me and I still was willing but you knew better than I ever could and you told me to leave. That walk back to my car after you pushed me away and my wanting you to call me back soooo bad but realizing that after sitting there for 5 minutes you weren't coming. The whole few months of not hearing from you forced me to move on.

Sky felt it land. It wasn't not warm more so heavy.

Sky: I loved you too I just didn't know how to stay once I felt safe Apollo. Wait! Move on? What does that even mean Apollo?

Apollo: Listen Sky I...

The words finally felt right. Finally honest. Finally brave. Relief began to rise in her chest. Until someone stepped beside him. A woman. She slipped naturally into his space, her hand resting lightly on his arm. Comfortable. Familiar. His expression changed. It wasn't guilt, not regret just surprise, complicated and unfinished. The both of them stood there making intense eye contact.

Leah: Oh... (the woman said gently, sensing tension.) Hi!

The realization hit instantly. It was too late. She stepped back walking away trying to stop the tears looking at Apollo and then looking at Leah, heat rushing to her face, embarrassment swallowing her words whole.

Sky: I—I'm sorry, (she stuttered.) I didn't know.

Her chest tightened as she saw the way the woman looked at him. It was warm, secure, certain. The way she once could have. Her throat closed.

Sky: It's good to see you. (She said quickly, forcing a smile that shattered halfway through.)

Then she turned and walked away before either of them could stop her. As she got closer to her car she glanced at them again with hurt in her heart because she knows that this time she has messed up badly. This time then realized not fighting for Apollo a couple of months back when it was necessary was the biggest downfall of her life. He was so sure of her but she was too confused and selfish to realize. Sky sat inside of her car. The tears came uncontrollably. She gripped the steering wheel as memories flooded in and late night conversations, laughter that felt natural, the way he looked at her like she was already enough. He had stayed. Over and over again, he had stayed. He constantly chose Sky. And she had asked him to leave. The realization settled heavily. He didn't stop loving her because he wanted to. He stopped because he had to. She drove without direction, the road blurring beneath her as understanding unfolded fully for the first time. Love had been there. Patient. Steady. Real. And she had only recognized it once fear no longer controlled her. But healing had come on a different timeline than love. And timing mattered.

Back at the grocery store, Apollo stood frozen long after Sky disappeared. His heart pounded in confusion, emotion rising he thought he had finally learned to quiet the

hurt. He had loved her deeply. It took months to rebuild himself after she asked him to leave. Months to accept that loving someone didn't mean they were ready to love you back. And now she's back and she stood in front of him healed saying everything he once begged to hear.

Too late.

He looked down the street where she vanished, realization settling heavily in his chest. They had finally arrived at the same place emotionally. Just not at the same time.

That night, in separate places, they shared the same understanding. They had loved each other.

Deeply.

Honestly.

But fear delayed one heart while patience exhausted the other. And somewhere between almost and too late, they lost their chance to give it a name. What they had remained unfinished. Not because the love wasn't real, but because timing wasn't kind. And sometimes the greatest heartbreak isn't losing love... it's recognizing it only after it has learned to live without you.

That night, sleep refused both of them.

Sky sat on the floor beside her bed with her knees pulled tightly to her chest as if holding herself together physically might stop everything inside her from breaking apart. The drive had exhausted her body but not her mind. Every memory replayed with cruel clarity. His laughter echoing in quiet rooms, the warmth of his hand wrapped around her body, the way he used to look at her like she was something certain in an uncertain world. She cried until her breathing hurt. Not soft tears. The kind that came from somewhere deep in her chest, years of guarded emotion finally collapsing all at once. Every wall she built to protect herself now felt like a prison she had locked from the inside.

Sky: I didn't know! (She whispered into the empty room, voice breaking.) I didn't know how to love you yet.

The realization felt unbearable that the safest love she had ever known arrived before she knew how to receive it. She thought back to the night she asked him to leave, replaying every second like she could rewrite it if she looked hard enough. She remembered the hesitation in his eyes, the way he waited for her to stop him. Apollo had given her one last chance to choose them. And she hadn't taken it.

Her phone sat beside her, screen dark but heavy with possibility. She picked it up more times than she could count, typing messages to Apollo on his Social media account that she erased seconds later.

Sky: I'm sorry.

Sky: I understand now.

Sky: Please come back.

None of it felt big enough to undo what fear had already done. Across town, Apollo sat alone in his car long after dropping his girlfriend home. The silence inside the vehicle felt suffocating. He gripped the steering wheel, staring forward without seeing anything, Sky's voice replaying over and over in his mind as she said, "I'm in love with you." The words landed months too late, yet they struck him with the same force he once dreamed of hearing them. He closed his eyes, and emotion finally broke through the control he had spent months building. A sharp breath escaped him before tears followed. He hadn't cried when they ended. Not fully. Back then, he buried the pain under acceptance, convincing himself that loving someone sometimes meant letting them go peacefully. But seeing Sky again and seeing understanding finally reach her eyes had reopened everything he fought to heal.

Apollo: I waited! (He whispered hoarsely into the empty car.) I really waited!!!

He remembered every reassurance he gave her. Every time he promised he wasn't leaving. Every moment he chose patience over pride because he believed she would eventually meet him where he stood. And when she asked him to leave, he left not because he stopped loving her... but because staying where he wasn't chosen was slowly destroying him. He had spent months learning how to breathe without her. And now she was back . She was healed, open, ready just as he had finally begun moving forward. The timing felt almost cruel.

Days passed before either of them found the courage to cross the silence. It was Sky who reached out to him. What Apollo didn't realize was he left his phone number on his social media account. Her hands trembled as the phone rang, heart pounding so loudly she almost hung up before he answered.

Apollo: Hello?

His voice. Familiar. Careful. For a moment, neither spoke. Just shared breathing across distance.

Sky: I didn't understand before. (She said finally, tears already forming again.) I was scared of losing you before I ever let myself have you.

Apollo swallowed hard, closing his eyes.

Apollo: I know! (He said softly.) I always knew.

Sky: I see everything now. (She continued, voice cracking.) You loved me in ways I didn't know how to accept yet. And I hate that it took losing you to understand.

Silence stretched between them it was heavy and also fragile.

Apollo: I never stopped loving you! (He admitted quietly.)

Her breath caught. Hope flickered painfully.

Apollo: But... (He added, voice thick with emotion) I had to learn how to live without waiting for you to be ready.

Tears streamed freely down her face.

Sky: I am ready! (She whispered desperately) I fought through everything. I worked through the fear. I want us! I want you Apollo!

On the other end, Apollo's composure broke completely. He pressed his hand against his eyes, struggling against emotion pulling him backward toward something he still wanted.

Apollo: You don't understand how badly I wanted to hear that! (He said, voice shaking.) There were nights I prayed you'd say exactly this.

Sky: Then come back!!! (She pleaded softly.) Please, I'm sorry!

The words hung between them, fragile and impossible.

Apollo: I can't pretend the last few months didn't happen! (He said after a long pause.) I had to let you go to survive it. And now... there's someone who met me when I was finally learning to stop hurting.

The truth landed gently but devastatingly. Sky covered her mouth to quiet her sob. Neither of them spoke for several seconds, both crying silently, connected yet impossibly distant.

Apollo: I think... (He said carefully, voice breaking.) We were right for each other... just at the wrong time.

Her chest ached at the simplicity of it. No betrayal. No lack of love. Just misaligned healing.

Sky: I wish I had been brave sooner... (She whispered.)

Apollo: I wish you didn't have to be brave alone.

They stayed on the phone longer than necessary, neither wanting to be the one to end it. The conversation softened into shared memories, quiet laughter through tears, unspoken apologies woven between familiar rhythms. For a moment it felt like them again. And that was what made goodbye unbearable.

Apollo: I'm really proud of you! (He said finally.) For doing the work. For becoming who you needed to be.

Sky: I learned how to love because of you Apollo!

Another silence. One last moment where either of them could have changed everything.

Neither did.

Apollo: Goodbye, Sky! (He took a deep breath)

Sky: Goodbye, Apollo! (Her voice broke completely.)

The line went quiet. And with it, the last version of them that might have existed.

That night, both lay awake staring at their ceilings, tears drying slowly as acceptance settled in. Sometimes love doesn't end because feelings disappear. Sometimes it ends because two people finally become ready... Somewhere between fear and timing, they let go of the one thing that could have been forever. Just after life asks them to move forward separately. They didn't lose because they failed to love each other, but because they realized too late that they had spent all that time protecting themselves from the very thing they were too afraid to call it.

THE END