

Shallow Tears

Five dreadful minutes had passed and I still found myself sitting in front of my closed laptop waiting for something, anything, to happen. This anxious feeling I had like my insides were being tied up into a huge knot only seemed to get worse the longer I sat there doing nothing. Finally, I opened it. The coldness of the cool metal surface sent chills down my entire body. I witnessed months worth of dust particles fly off into thin air, disappearing as they floated away from the sunlight. I looked back at the screen and saw that Skype was still up. Elena_Ivanov was last active 3 months ago.

How did it come to this? All those sleepless nights and hours of nonstop conversation about anything and everything had suddenly changed overnight.

Does she still think of me? She was the only friend I had that understood me. I told her all of my deepest secrets and she told me all of hers.

Should I... call her? Three months ago I would've never in a million years ask myself if I should call her, I would've just done it in a heartbeat.

But that night, the night when the President declared war on Russia, changed everything. In a matter of seconds I knew that I had lost someone very important to me and there was nothing I could do about it.

I couldn't live my life like this anymore. There was too much going on in the world and I needed someone to talk to or I might have just gone crazy. My hands began trembling and that knot in my stomach got tighter. My chest felt heavier than usual and I started breathing heavily. How would she react? Would she answer? What if she said we couldn't talk anymore? What would I do?

As I closed my eyes and took deep breaths, I started to calm down. Dragging my finger across the mouse, the cursor went over the "call" button and I clicked it.

The video chat began ringing. I saw my face on the screen and saw how tired I looked. It had been so long since I had a warm meal or even just a glass of clean, fresh water. I looked horrible. I felt horrible. I had thoughts racing through my mind at 90 mph until she answered.

She answered!

"Hey Amy! How are you? How have you been?" Her russian accent had gotten thicker. I guess all those restless nights of us talking had improved her English. To my surprise, she looked

exactly the same. Why did she? Even after everything that's been going on? Was she not being affected by the water crisis?

I forced out a smile, "Hey Elena! I'm doing great! What about you?"

"I'm actually doing really great, thanks for asking!"

Something was off. The vibe wasn't the same anymore. I looked over to her side and saw a water bottle. Silence filled the air. She noticed and quickly moved the water bottle out of view. She has water bottles? But how? We both sat in silence for a couple of seconds. She finally spoke first.

"Amy... look, we can't keep ignoring what's going on."

My heart sank.

"The truth is that my country has one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world. That is why your country declared war with mine. I hate this as much as you do and I'm sorry I never called you back."

"It's okay Elena, don't apologize."

"No, Amy, listen."

Tears started streaming down her face.

"W-What's going to happen when this war is over? Hm? One of us is going to win. What will happen to the one who loses? Amy, this isn't safe anymore. I-I can't keep talking to you. It will only hurt us more. Reality is going to settle in sooner or later for the both of us and when that happens it will either be--"

She was suddenly cut off by her family shouting and screaming in the background. It looked like they were all sitting in the living room surrounding the TV. Elena turned around to see what had happened. Her family members began hugging each other and crying. They seemed to be crying tears of joy. I couldn't understand what any of them were saying, they were all speaking Russian.

"Elena? What's going on?"

I saw Elena look back at the camera with even more tears running down her face but now she was smiling. As soon as she locked eyes with mine her smile faded and her face filled with horror.

“What’s going on?” I repeated anxiously.

Silence.

“Elena?” I began to stammer in confusion. “Is everything okay? Why are you looking at me like that?”

More silence.

Her eyes were clouded. She looked back to see her family celebrating and then looked back at me. She opened her mouth as if she was trying to say something but nothing was coming out. Then two simple words slipped out:

“We... won.”

My body froze up. I knew. I knew what she was talking about. But I didn’t want to believe it.

“Y-You guys won what?”

Crying, she said one last time, “We won” and then ended the call.

I started panicking. I saw myself having a breakdown from the reflection of the screen. Slowly I pushed the chair back and attempted to stand up but almost instantly fell back down. I used my bed to help me stand and started walking towards the window. My whole body was now trembling.

Looking outside from my bedroom window, I saw people running in chaos, screaming, shouting, pushing, stealing. I jumped back from my window in fear when I heard someone open my door aggressively. It was my dad.

“Dad... what’s going on?”

“Pack what’s necessary. We have to leave. We have to leave now.”