

The Shadow Party

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“Are you sure we’re heading to the right place?”

They have been circling around the block for the past hour. Mya isn’t sure they’re heading towards Kate’s place, but their digital map says otherwise. Sandra pulls over on the shoulder of the road for a while and enquires Mya to re-navigate their GPS. Mya shots her a look.

“What?”

“It says ‘no service’ here.” Mya said.

Sandra furrows her eyebrows. “What do you mean no service? We’re still in the city.”

“Look.” Mya passes her phone to Sandra. She can see that there is no signal bar in the corner of Mya’s phone screen.

“Let’s use your phone.” Mya asked. Sandra pulls out her phone and lets out a sigh of relief. She flashes her phone screen to Mya. There are two bars of signals in her phone. Sandra quickly types Kate’s address and hits the search button quickly.

NO SERVICE AVAILABLE. PLEASE TRY AGAIN.

The bars of signals suddenly disappeared from Sandra’s phone. She exchanges looks with Mya and scratches her head in frustration.

“Is there an accident? Why can’t we use our phone service?” Mya sighs in desperation. “*Girl*, my makeup is already melting. It’s been an hour and we’re stranded here.”

“We wouldn’t have been late if you didn’t spend like three hours for dressing up.” Sandra rebukes. Her annoyance at Mya dissipates when she notices the surroundings around her. They’re still on the main road but somehow the place looks very quiet and different. Sandra often drives past this street every day to her school, but what she sees beyond her car window is very unfamiliar to her.

“Mya.” Sandra calls out.

“What?” Sandra is unable to say anything for a moment before Mya shakes her arm. “What is it? You’re scaring me!”

“We’re still on the main road, right? The one we always use to go to school?” Sandra asks, almost whispering. Mya glances at her surroundings. It’s still the same road, but she also doesn’t seem to recognize this place somehow.

“Huh? This is Burlington Street, right? Why is it so... different?” Mya can feel a lump forming at her throat.

Sandra doesn’t reply as her gaze is fixated on the large shadow figure at the corner of the road. The shadowy figure is standing below a dim streetlight near the intersection. Sandra can’t comprehend what’s that figure and she wants to tell Mya about it, but she suddenly feels powerless to form any word.

“Sandra. Sandra. Sandy!” Sandra can feel a jolt of power awaken her as Mya keeps shaking her shoulder.

“Oh my God.” Sandra can feel tense pain in her chest. “Mya! I feel like my lung is about to burst.”

“Why are you spacing out? You’re scaring me!” Mya’s face is very stern and starting to look pale. Her makeup is indeed melting from the sweat that is running down on her forehead. Sandra glances back at the place where the shadowy figure was and it was already gone. She can regain her breathing control again.

“Let’s just get out of here.” Sandra whimpers and takes a deep breath before she starts the engine of the car again.

They're back on the road and seem to be heading towards the right place. Their phone service is also back and now they can use the digital map for navigation. Sandra remains quiet throughout the trip and seems to lay her focus on driving. Mya can notice there is something going on based on her friend's expression. She wanted to ask what's going on but decided not to when she realized they're already arriving at the street where Kate resides.

Sandra is cruising the lane slowly as she tries to find Kate's house. Her house should have been noticeable since she's the one who is throwing a large house party. Strangely, every house in that street seems so empty. Almost like no one lived there.

?“Huh? Where is her house?” Mya switches her gaze from her phone to the street in a dash. “We're actually in the right place.”

“Call her. Call Kate now.” Sandra's voice rises. Mya quickly dials Kate's number and waits for the answer.

The number you are calling cannot be reached. Please try again later...

Mya wants to slam the phone as she redials the number over and over again to no avail. Sandra clenches her fist as she drives the car even further down the emptiness of the street. She realizes that it must have been the shadowy figure that she saw earlier on. It must be toying with them. And now they're being invited to its place. Sandra doesn't like to make silly assumptions, but it is the only possible explanation with whatever is going on right now. Before Sandra could even think of any plan to escape, the car suddenly stops in front of a house. Kate's house.

But both Sandra and Mya know that house is not the real one. In a flash, Sandra tries to revive the engine of the car. She keeps trampling on the gas, moving the keys, and tries to roll over the car with all her might while Mya is gradually breaking down to tears.

"What is happening?" Mya sobs in panic. Her smeared eyeliner is starting to resemble Batman's eyes. For a look that she prepared in three hours, she is now just a ball of crying mess. Sandra keeps on trying to get the car going, but her attempts are stopped when she sees what is in front of the car.

?Sandra and Mya become quiet. Mya is trying so hard not to scream but she closes her mouth tight with her hands. It's the shadowy figure. Multiplied. The figures are faceless and hollow. There seems to be dozens of them surrounding the car. Sandra feels like passing out, but she slowly turns to Mya with the last amount of strength in her system.

"Mya." Sandra whispers faintly. "You know the prayers. I don't."

Mya glares at Sandra with a harrowing stare. *Are you kidding me?* Mya mouthed.

"Please." Sandra pleads. Tears are forming in her eyes. "Just recite it when I said so."

"When?" Mya chides, her Batman eyes staring intensely at her friend.

"NOW!"

Sandra doesn't even think what's going to happen next. She keeps switching the car lamp back and forth and honks the car horn repeatedly. Mya begins to recite the prayers from the Bible non-stop like the world is about to end. Sandra closes her eyes one last time before she tramples the gas so hard and pushes the brakes forward. They both scream as the car begins to move and vanish into the light.

When they regain consciousness, Sandra and Mya find themselves still sitting inside the car. Sandra clutches her chest and finds her beating heart. The shadows have gone, and they both have arrived in front of the real Kate's house. Sandra can see her friends partying from the car window. She and Mya immediately exchanged a tearful hug.

"I hate parties." Mya whispers before they both erupted into laughter and tears of relief.