

Brokenly, he stumbled down the road while he looked down at the dirt underneath him. Never had he felt this empty in years, now that his old friends were married and settled down; he felt alone. The man felt trapped within an endless circle of loneliness that made him envy everyone's fulfilled life. He had decided to take a walk to the bridge that connected his end of the valley in the country to closest town. Isolated. He hated it. The bridge ran over a miniature cliff that was hugged by a meadow and a corn field and once held a rapid river that he fished at with his father. He gathered himself to walk onto the wooden bridge and look down to the bottom. He took a gasped his last breath and stepped out, and there he fell 3 stories down.

The man slowly opened his eyes. He felt the dirt and small rocks prickle his cheek. It hadn't worked. He got himself to his feet, disappointed at at himself for not being able to accomplish even the simplest of a task. The man began to walk back to his home. He made his way out of the gully through a sloped hill into the adjacent meadow, yet, something caught his eye. Near a lone apple tree, a hot air balloon awaited on the ground. It had beautiful embroidery and accented with gold adornments hugging the draping cloth. "Strange" the man thought, as he had never seen such sight out here. Someone rummaged in the balloon. The man looked on to watch a beautiful girl with long brown hair glide out of the basket to the tree, carrying fruit. As the feeling of anxiousness over took him, the man slowly approached the woman. She looked a few years younger than him. She smiled warmly as he walked towards. Conversations led to more conversations, and they both talked and laughed all night. Never had the man felt this happy.

Jolted awake by the sound of rushing hot air, the man found the woman preparing her basket. Confused, the man asked if she was leaving. She replied "I must". Crushed the man watched as she packed her apples from the tree in her burlap sacks and boarded her basket. Another gush of hot flames hoisted the balloon upwards, and she began to float. They locked eyes as she slowly drifted away. The man felt his heart sink to his feet. She waved to him as he reached out to her, running. He felt a connection in the distance between their palms, but it was useless, he stopped and watched her drift out of sight; her long hair tailing in the wind.

The man awoke crying. He laid in a bed with the sound of incremented beeps matching his sobbing heart. He was in the hospital. Devastated the man began to whimper. His leg in a cast and bandages on his head, he fought the urge to scream in frustration at his predicament. The door opened, and a nurse stepped into the room; baffled, the man froze. It was the same woman who he had seen in his dream. She smiled at him and helped to hoist him up. "It's wonderful that you're awake, or for this matter, even alive. That was quite a nasty fall you had. Lucky, a passing car had found you or you would have been gone." He still couldn't believe his luck at seeing the same beautiful woman in front of him again. He mustered up the courage to respond back. And with that, the man and woman talked for hours.