

New story series: "From Shadows to Sunrise"

Posted by davidt - 07 Aug 2025 02:14

The hotel room was dark, the glow from the shattered phone screen flickering like a dying flame on the floor.

His hands were trembling. Not from cold from truth.

She didn't scream. She just looked at him. Her eyes, which once sparkled with simplicity and loyalty, now shimmered with disbelief and pain.

"I don't care about the scam," she whispered. "Just tell me it's not true... Tell me the rest isn't true..."

He couldn't.

And for the first time since he was eleven years old when he first learned how to delete browser history he felt something inside him truly break.

Chapter 1: *The Perfect Bochor*

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To the outside world, Shaya was the dream.

A *masmid*, a *baal kishron*, *mevakeish emes*. In yeshiva, people said he was the next rosh yeshiva. Even the mashgiach once said at a *mussar shmues*, "If you want to see what it means to live with yiras shamayim, look at Shaya."

He smiled. He nodded. He kept his head down.

But he also knew how to work filters. How to erase data. How to cry on Yom Kippur... and fall the next night.

No one ever guessed. Not his rebbeim. Not his friends. Not his chaver chavrusah of six years who sat inches from him every morning at 7:00 a.m.

Only Hashem knew the truth. And it haunted him.

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Re: New story series: "From Shadows to Sunrise"

Posted by davidt - Today 15:13

Chapter 14: The Plan

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Shaya arrived early at HHM's house, gripping the steering wheel like it might keep him from falling apart. He hadn't slept. The cold morning air bit at his face as he walked up the path. HHM opened the door before he even knocked.

Inside, the table was already set with two steaming mugs of tea. HHM sat down, no notebook this time, just steady eyes.

"Tell me everything," he said.

Shaya did. The threats, the photo of his car, the knot in his stomach so tight he could barely breathe.

HHM listened without interrupting, then leaned back. "This is bigger than you can handle alone. We need a plan two plans, actually. One for these men. One for your own fight."

First, the outside threat.

"You need legal help," HHM said firmly. "Someone who knows what's real and what's just intimidation. I know a lawyer who's discreet and honest. You're going to call him today. No waiting, no excuses."

Shaya swallowed hard. Just the thought of explaining everything to a stranger made him feel sick, but he nodded.

Second, the inside battle.

HHM spoke carefully. "These late-night habits aren't just a side issue. They make you weaker. You're foggy, anxious, hiding, so you make worse decisions. We need stronger guardrails."

He laid them out clearly: Shaya would add a second layer of filters, share his check-ins earlier in the day, and start meeting HHM in person every week, not just on the phone.

Finally, Leah.

HHM's tone softened. "You don't have to tell her everything right now. But she knows something's wrong. If you keep shutting her out, you'll break her trust and you need that trust more than ever. Start small. Tell her you're under pressure with some bad business deals and you're getting guidance. Let her feel you're not alone."

Shaya felt his stomach twist. "And if she asks questions?"

"Then you answer what you can without lying. Hiding has been your enemy. Honesty is your ally now."

They ended with a short tefillah, HHM's voice steady, almost fatherly. As Shaya walked to his car, the threats were still real, the fear still sharp. But there was a map now and someone walking with him.

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