

Akemi, Bright and Beautiful

“Shut UP, Akemi! You’re the ugliest, dullest thing with no one who loves you!” Her foster mom screamed. Akemi sobbed as she retreated out of the door into the rain. She decided to run away, she’s was worthless anyway. She cried out in pain. The rain poured harder as if the world was crying too.

Akemi Harushi rested under the roof of a church while it violently rained. She had no family, friends, nor a place to stay.

“Well, look who we have here! Harushi-chan, why are you soaking wet? Get in!” Father Koko, a priest of the small church ushered Akemi inside.

“Harushi-chan, are you running away again? Your mother will be worried.” Father Koko brought a towel. Akemi was silent. Her pale white face bordered by her long black hair illuminated in the candle light as thunder boomed and lightning crashed.

Akemi embraced the towel as the candle light flickered, threatening to blow out. Then she hid herself under the warm towel, ready to face the worst in the morning.

Akemi never knew much about her family. She was alone for as long as she could remember, and she knew her foster mother tried her very best to make Akemi miserable. She relaxed on the park bench and checked the time on her phone.

November 5, Tuesday, 10:32 AM

Suddenly, a small ripped paper fluttered on her lap. She read:
You are bright and beautiful -Akem

It was Akemi’s handwriting, including her signature! She didn’t recognize the note. The paper was white, ripped in half with wet stains on the edges. Akemi’s name wasn’t written completely; it was missing the last letter. She stood to search where the mysterious paper came from.

The world turned pink, green, then red. Akemi’s knees lost its total strength and gave in, collapsing to the ground.

“Honey, let’s name her....Akemi.” A woman’s voice chimed. Akemi found herself in a hospital room, with a woman with similar long black hair holding a baby in a bed. A tall man with light skin sat eagerly next to the bed.

“Yes! Akemi means "bright and beautiful" in Japanese, the perfect name for our daughter.” He agreed. Then the world went spinning until Akemi again lost her footing and slammed herself against the wall.

Akemi was transported into a baby’s bedroom where there were light yellow walls and toys scattered everywhere. Startled, she rushed to the door when the couple she saw in the hospital suddenly opened the door. They entered through her as if she wasn’t there. Akemi felt like a ghost.

“Happy birthday, Akemi-chan!” They sang to the toddler who appeared

under the covers of her bed, grinning. The little girl had the exact features as Akemi. The she realized that she was seeing images of her unknown past! Her view changed again as the world shook.

Akemi was now in a living room with a towering Christmas tree in the center. Akemi's family sang a Christmas carol as the tree lit and the toddler giggled happily.

"Akemi, know that we love you. Everyone has a reason to live. You will always be our daughter, even in the darkest times. In a difficult time, just say, you are bright and beautiful." Akemi's mother proudly said and embraced her.

"Yes, Mama." And again, her world transformed into a different time again.

"We are here standing live in front of the scene. It seems that a family of three has experienced a major car accident." A lady reported in front of the camera crew. Behind her was a car, smashed into bits by another, surrounded by police and ambulances. "The only survivor left of the accident was the family's four-year-old girl, Akemi Hiroshi, who is suffering severe injuries. It is confirmed that this child's parents are dead."

Akemi's heart seemed like it was stabbed a hundred times, beating fast. Her face was flushed with tears as she watched several people pull a small girl on a stretcher. She could hear her younger self choke the words, "Mama, Daddy, where are you?"

She wiped her tears away, as the scene slowly passed. A blank paper blew onto her face. Akemi snatched it off just as the ground shook once again.

This time, she was pulled into a dark dimension of nothing but black. Then a small girl, curled up as she hugged her knees, appeared alone as she placed her head down. Akemi and her younger self, alone in the darkness. The older Akemi finally spoke.

"Akemi, you are bright and beautiful."

The young girl stood and looked around. She cried out hoarsely, "Where are you, Mom?" The older Akemi remained silent as she watched her younger self cry in the dark dimension. Akemi pulled out the paper and a pen she had and wrote the words:

You are bright and beautiful

The ground vibrated for the last time, filling the dark room with light. Akemi began to scribble her name at the edge of the paper when she fell onto the park bench, where she first sat. She suddenly saw her present self strolling towards her.

Panicking, she hid behind a tree, still gripping the incomplete paper in her hand. The paper suddenly caught in the bush behind her, causing the paper to rip in half at the edges. The dew from the morning showered her from the upper branches as her view showed a

rainbow of colors. Her knees collapsed once again as the paper flew out into the closing hole to her past. The last thing she saw was when Akemi discovered the mysterious paper on the bench.

Akemi was on the park bench again. She checked the time on her phone: November 5, Tuesday, 10: 33 AM. The paper she wrote was in her hand. The sun was shining after the storm from the previous night, as if it were smiling too. Then Akemi finally exclaimed,
“Everyone has a reason to live. Just say, you are bright and beautiful!”