



*the light  
of  
darkness*

**SHIRIN AZAD**

In gratitude, the author will make a  
voluntary donation for each book she sells herself  
to the Alzheimer's Society.



Shirin Azad is an ex-headhunter, investor and philanthropist from London, where she resides with her family.

In the middle of her career, she relocated to Hamburg, Germany to be with her newly-wedded husband. Shirin immersed herself in German life, experimenting with many different passion projects, from property design to an unfinished career in counselling. However, following the traumatic premature birth of her son, Shirin and her family decided to move back to the city she grew up in, London.

Shirin's lifelong pursuit has been to become an author. She penned many romance dramas throughout university as a hobby, but felt the early nineties to be ill-prepared for an ethnic minority female author. She laid her writing dream dormant and decided to enter the corporate world. Shirin loosely revisited writing again in her mid-twenties, during a spontaneous move to Rome to work in fashion. However, again, she put it on the back burner to focus on her career.

Over the last few years, Shirin has rediscovered her love for literature, particularly in romance, tragedy and drama. She has finally picked up her pen once more and embarked on her true passion: writing.

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Sample

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First published in Great Britain in 2021  
by Book Brilliance Publishing  
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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available at the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-913770-32-7

Typeset in Adobe Caslon Pro.  
Printed by 4edge Ltd.

Front cover artwork by Tammy Clark of Art by T Clark

This is a work of fiction.

Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

I dedicate my first novel, *The Light of Darkness*, to all those who are struggling with mental insecurities, loneliness and confusion.

*The Light of Darkness* was written to raise awareness, provide light and hope for all those with Alzheimer's and their carers.

# 1

The wind swept his floppy blond hair to the side of his face, smacking it violently against his cheek. The ferocity of the storm would easily push him off the cliff if he didn't jump himself, which he thought would solve his misery. Trembling with fear, Harry looked down, his heart pounding. It would be certain death if he jumped. No recovery. Chilled to the bone in just his blue pyjamas, he froze on the edge of the cliff. The waves beneath him hollered as they crashed against the rocks. Pitch dark, with nothing but the moon as his light, and the white of the breaking waves like tiny crystals of snow, Laura's face, full of concern, flashed before him.

In the far distance, the boys' voices faintly echoed in and out of his ears.

'Daddy!' screamed Charlie. 'Don't do it! Don't do it, Daddy! I love you!' Tears streamed down Harry's cold, purple face. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes and leapt off the cliff.

In a frenzied scream, he forced himself to wake up. Dripping in sweat and panting for breath, Harry broke away from his brutal nightmare. Relieved Laura was away, he lay in bed, still and silent. Three o'clock in the morning. How could he continue like this? The last few months had

become a real challenge. Sharing a bed with his darling wife, the most natural thing in the world, had begun to be a constant, dreaded anxiety. How had Laura not noticed?

How had it managed to escape her attention for so long? His insomnia, the disturbing dreams, the sudden frequency of his bizarre sleep travels around the house. How had Laura just accepted his vague, 'I am very stressed at work' explanation? Laura, being a deep sleeper, and Harry's recent and relentless excuse of snoring, meant he was able to sleep in the guest room without too much suspicion. What other choice did he have? With his tossing and turning, and his often-violent nocturnal movements, Laura was grateful to have the bed to herself, but she would soon cotton on that all was not well. He could, of course, start his medication as he had been advised, or, better still, open up and confess to his wife and share his unpleasant secret. Or he could continue to hide behind her long hours and increased workload, which fortunately seemed to be working to Harry's advantage. However, living with a colossal burden and hiding it from his wife was nothing short of impossible. How long could he maintain this exhausting pretence that all was well?

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Harry picked up his phone and read his messages again.

*Okay, darling, yes the kids are fine. Have a great time. Don't worry about anything. I love you. See you when you get back.*

Laura was away in Athens with her girlfriends for a girls' weekend. Harry had all the freedom in the world to stress and worry, without having to explain anything to anyone.



Diverting his thoughts away from his extraordinary dreams, he thought about the red dress he had bought for his wife; it was beautiful. He smiled dryly, and felt a tiny bit pleased: he was going to surprise her with it for their tenth wedding anniversary dinner.

Harry sat up on the bed looking around the room. It was dark and silent. He temporarily forgot about the enormity of his nightmare; after all, it was nothing new. If anything, it was fast becoming the new norm. He remembered he had to do something. What was it? He played with the phone as he began to reconstruct his previous movements before he fell asleep. *So where was I in my thoughts?* he pondered. *The phone call. The red dress. The anniversary dinner. Aha!* He suddenly remembered, tapping his calendar app on his iPhone, and reading out loud. 'Twentieth July – Anniversary dinner for two booked at Boy on the Moon at eight o'clock. Give Laura the dress!' Harry checked the dates on his busy calendar, full to the brim with notes and reminders. *It seems to be getting worse*, he thought; he could hardly remember anything. *I'm only forty-seven years old. It's far too early for all of this.* He stared at his phone. A curious feeling ran through his body, almost paralysing him with fear. The lack of sleep rendered him tired and grumpy.

He went to check on the boys again; they were his only source of comfort at the moment. Bursting with love, Harry stared at them, fast asleep on their bunk beds. Their faces shone bright in the dim sidelight that was always left on in their room. Gently, he kissed their blond heads and slowly crept out of their room. It was the middle of the night; he couldn't sleep, so he might as well work. He strolled downstairs and fired up his laptop: sixty-eight new emails. *Nothing important that can't wait till Monday morning*, he

assured himself, scanning the messages quickly. He cross-checked his calendar again, this time on the laptop to make sure it was synced with his phone.

He could hardly afford to make any more mistakes; imagine how ridiculous that would look. He was still reeling from last week. How could he have allowed such a thing to happen? He shook his head in regret. How could he have forgotten? After arranging a board meeting for the senior partners, then forgetting all about it and failing to show up. What a disaster! All the senior partners gathered around the large table, patiently waiting for the host to chair the meeting, and he doesn't show! He had to make sure this didn't happen again; do whatever he could not to arouse any suspicion; he must not slip up; no one should get even the slightest hint that something was wrong.

Harry printed off his calendar for the entire month. Every day was busy. He took his printout and his phone back to the bedroom. He opened his bedside drawer, took out a green highlighter and a thick notepad, and began to read through his appointments for Monday morning. He re-read them a second time. Nothing too overwhelming, thank God. A normal day's work, all good. Slowly, he returned the highlighter and the notepad back to its original place, hidden away underneath a large book, and thoughtfully closed the drawer again.

He lay back in bed, trying to rest his mind. Faint, rhythmic beats steadily rose in the air from a distance, disappearing into clouds of nothingness. He imagined little puffs of smoke rising and disappearing as his mind played tricks on him. He closed his eyes, hoping to shut down his brain. His eyes opened automatically. Again, he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. It was no good. Helplessly, Harry

looked up at the ceiling and took a deep breath, unable to find any peace in his troubled mind.

*Have I forgotten something? Did I check on the boys? Did I switch off the cooker? Did I lock the back door? Did I close the front door? Did I close the fridge? Yes. Yes, I did. The answer to all of his questions was a resounding, Yes. It's okay! I did everything I was supposed to do.*

*Mum is coming tomorrow to take the kids to her place. Dad will take them the weekend after. Laura's parents will take them the weekend after that. Laura, mmm... I wonder what Laura is doing? I hope she is having fun; she really deserves some time out.*

Harry and Laura, the envy of their friends, were still as much in love today as they were back when they first married which was very unusual for their social circle. Harry turned his head wistfully, gazing at the empty space where Laura would usually be lying. He could occasionally smell traces of her perfume that lingered on the duvet. How unnatural it felt to sleep alone in this giant-sized bed.

He tried not to need her. How easy life was before this numbness struck his life. Confined to his vague state of consciousness that evoked a profound sensation of vulnerability, where static screams tore through his mind, suddenly her absence rendered him lifeless, making matters even worse. Preoccupied in his thoughts, he sank down deep in his bed, as though it was swallowing him up whole. With a yank, he pulled the duvet over his head, trying to force himself to sleep. He must not think any more. He was exhausted. He thought about the sleeping pills. Should he take them? He could just slip one in his mouth without any effort, and all would be well. No, he wouldn't risk it. He closed his eyes, begging for nature to do its magic and let him sleep.

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6.30 - *Beep beep...* the blaring alarm pierced through his ears, practically deafening him. Had he become unusually sensitive to loud noises, he wondered? With a heavy yawn, Harry dragged himself out of bed. Despite the disturbance, he felt reasonably calm and rested. He had somehow managed a few hours of sleep. A positive curiosity piqued his mind, eclipsing the negative thoughts of the night before. After all, it was a new day. With the push of a button, the dusky cream velvet curtains opened, revealing a glorious clear blue sky outside. A smile illuminated Harry's face as he imagined a world of possibilities awaiting him on this bright sunny day. Even the birds shared his positive sentiments as they sang melodiously. It felt as though the heavens had opened up, sending these tiny winged creatures to support his laid-back mood. *It's going to be a good day*, he assured himself. *The boys will be so happy*. No rain predicted. It was a perfect day for them to enjoy a barbecue at Grandma's.

Downing a shot of espresso, Harry sprinted to the attic where he had built himself a fully functioning gym; a decent-sized room, boasting a state-of-the-art treadmill, cross-trainer, weights, and a brand new power plate machine. *Let's aim for seven kilometres and see how I get on*, he challenged himself. As he began to run on the treadmill, Harry's thoughts once again started to take shape in the form of his daily to-do-list. *What do I have to do today? Where do I have to be? Laura is away, I have the boys; what have I planned to do with them? What was plan B, in case plan A failed? What's the alternative plan if it pours with rain? What are they having for breakfast?* The faster he ran, the more his grey T-shirt began to get soaked. Certain he had diligently planned his day, he felt confident all was well, and that he had answers to his questions. What were those plans again?