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Lesson 7

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Exercise: Write a two- to three-page storyline. Tell the story of your chosen character (person, group, community, etc.) and her / their journey from start to finish.

Mara is a lonely college student, longing to have friends and be noticed. She is socially awkward and is insecure about many things in her life. She is a nobody. She comes from a poor, dysfunctional family. She is resourceful and talented, but is seldom noticed. She is desperate for a break.

Mara is a talented writer—a poet—but does not seem to get far with her writing especially in a world governed by popularity and marketability. “You are talented, but you will not sell because you are not popular enough...you do not have a big following on social media” is what she often hears when rejected by publishers. So much in this world seems to be hitched on being popular.

Mara hates her life. She longs to be more like the popular girls in school, like Claire and her friends. She feels that she has so much to give, to show the world. There is nothing more she wants in this world than to belong, to matter, to be seen.

She finds a form of escape through social media, where she has carefully created an ideal life. In that world, her life is perfect. She is someone. There, she has everything she wants and is everything she longs to be. But still, no one sees her there—only one person, her best friend Jen.

In this fantasy world, she projects a different persona. She lives an exciting, happy life, far from the real one, which she is determined to hide and escape from.

She regards this little digital escape of hers as something personal, harmless. She constantly thinks of scenarios to showcase how great a person she is, online. She strives to have more followers, but no matter how hard she tries, no one really notices her social media presence. That is, until that one day she pretends to save a stranger from jumping off of the bridge, which she broadcasts live on social media. It goes viral.

Mara becomes an overnight sensation. A hero, a role model. Suddenly, everyone wants a piece of her, from people at school to the local news. She gains more social media followers. She finally gets the attention she has been craving for. Finally, she is a somebody.

She rides this wave of popularity and milks every moment of it, creating even more lies to sustain the adulation. In a short span of time, Mara goes from being an insignificant part of society to a celebrated personality. Publishers are now after her. She is now able to use this platform to attain her ambition, to show the world what a special person she is, to be accepted. Her social media posts now get thousands of likes and reactions.

However, this world she has carefully built soon comes crashing down.

The stranger she pretended to save finds out that he was simply used and exposes Mara for the imposter that she is.

Soon, Mara’s secret comes to light and all her lies are exposed, her plans unravelled. She is spit out by the same society that embraced her. Her life is in ruins, even worse than where she started. She loses all her followers.

In one desperate act, Mara decides to end it all by jumping off the bridge but is saved by Jen, who happens to be broadcasting the whole thing live, too.