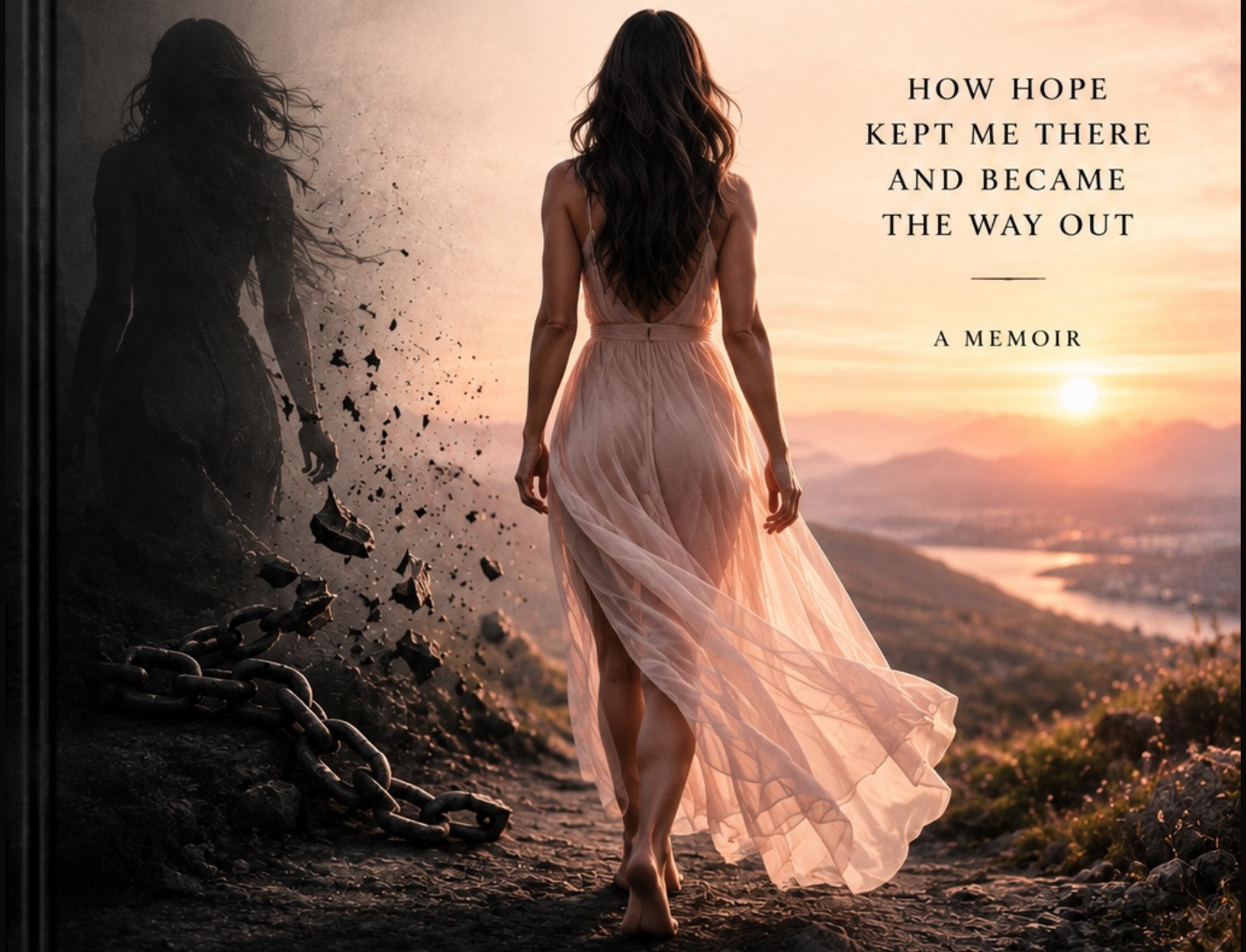
HOPE WAS MY ADDICTION

Just a Little Longer



HOW HOPE KEPT ME THERE AND BECAME THE WAY OUT

A MEMOIR

ANA KRPAN

HOPE WAS MY ADDICTION

A Memoir

People tell you to never give up hope.

They tell you hope is what gets you through the impossible. That as long as you can imagine something better, there is a reason to keep going.

No one tells you that hope can also become the reason you stay.

I didn't stay because I was weak.

I stayed because I believed.

I believed in apologies.
I believed in second chances.
I believed in the man he could be when he wanted to be.
I believed that if I loved hard enough, forgave enough, understood enough, and waited just a little longer, eventually we would become the people I kept imagining we could be.

There was always another reason to wait.

Another promise.

Another fresh start.

Another dream to build.

And every time reality threatened to destroy the story I had built around us, hope helped me rewrite it.

Until eventually, I couldn't tell the difference between hope and denial.

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When I met him in 2017, I wasn't looking for someone to save me.

I had already learned how to save myself.

Long before him, I had learned how to survive things children shouldn’t have to understand. My father died when I was little, leaving a grief I wouldn’t fully understand for decades. I grew up quickly. Responsibility came early. Taking care of other people became almost instinctive.

So when I loved someone, I didn’t love halfway.

I built.

I fixed.

I carried.

I believed.

And when a man kept coming back into my life, I mistook persistence for permanence.

What followed wasn’t a story that became terrible overnight.

That’s rarely how these stories happen.

There were ordinary days.

Coffee.

Dinner.

Movies.

Children laughing in the house.

Bedrooms decorated with care.

Plans made across kitchen tables.

A garage full of tools.

A future discussed as though saying it out loud often enough could make it inevitable.

There were moments when I looked around and thought:

This is it.

This is the home I was looking for.

And that's what made everything that came later so difficult to understand.

Because the person who hurts you isn't always hurting you.

Sometimes he's making you coffee.

Sometimes he's planning a future with you.

Sometimes he's telling you you're the only person who truly understands him.

Sometimes he's promising that this time will be different.

And sometimes, you believe him.

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Our life became a cycle of destruction followed by rebuilding.

Something would happen.

Something would break.

I would reach the point where I thought I couldn't take anymore.

And then there would be a promise.

A gesture.

A conversation late at night.

A glimpse of the person I had fallen in love with.

The finish line moved over and over again.

Once we get through this.

Once the money is better.

Once the house is settled.

Once the stress dies down.

Once he understands.

Once I explain it differently.

Once he realizes what he could lose.

Just a little longer.

Those four words can steal years from a life.

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There were things I explained away because the alternative was admitting that the future I had sacrificed for might never exist.

There were stories I accepted because I wanted them to be true.

There were messages I was never meant to see.

Phone bills that told stories people wouldn't.

An email account.

Thousands of pictures.

Another woman.

And eventually, the devastating realization that some of the people around me had known pieces of the truth while I was still desperately trying to make sense of the lies.

Even the children knew things I didn't.

By then, the question was no longer whether the relationship was broken.

The question was how much of myself I was willing to lose trying to save it.

And still—

I hoped.

That is the part people don't always understand about abusive relationships.

They ask:

Why didn't you leave?

But leaving isn't one decision.

Sometimes you leave emotionally before you leave physically.

Sometimes you make an exit plan and abandon it.

Sometimes you pack and unpack.

Sometimes you know exactly what is happening and still aren't ready to accept what knowing it will cost you.

Sometimes the person you're trying to leave becomes the person you turn to for relief from the pain they caused.

And sometimes hope becomes the strongest chain in the room.

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Eventually, the glass shattered.

Not literally.

The story did.

There comes a moment when the explanations stop working.

When the version of reality you've been holding together becomes too heavy to carry.

For years, I had been collecting fragments.

A strange conversation.

A contradiction.

A phone bill.

A photograph.

An email.

A feeling in my stomach I had learned to silence.

Individually, I could explain almost anything.

Together, they told a story I could no longer rewrite.

And once I saw it, I couldn't unsee it.

So I began planning.

Quietly.

Carefully.

An exit.

Leaving wasn’t cinematic.

There wasn’t one triumphant moment where I walked through a door and instantly became free.

There was fear.

There were police.

There were belongings.

There was grief.

There was the unbearable realization that I wasn’t only leaving a man.

I was leaving the future I had spent years building in my head.

That future had never existed.

But I had loved it as though it had.

And you can grieve something that was never real.

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Then there was Romeo.

The dog who had already survived his own version of cruelty before finding his way into my life.

He had scars I could see.

Mine were harder to find.

Somewhere along the way, we became two creatures learning what safety felt like together.

He didn’t care what I had lost.

He didn’t care what mistakes I had made.

He didn’t need an explanation for why I stayed so long.

He just stayed beside me.

And sometimes healing begins that simply.

Not with some profound revelation.

But with a dog sleeping close enough that you finally feel safe enough to close your eyes.

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I headed west.

I thought I was rebuilding a life.

I didn’t realize I was also walking backward through it.

Because healing has a strange way of bringing you back to the places inside yourself that you thought you’d already survived.

The relationship had opened wounds much older than him.

It brought me back to the little girl who lost her father before she was old enough to understand what death meant.

The girl who learned responsibility before childhood was finished.

The girl who became useful because being needed felt safer than needing someone else.

For most of my life, I thought strength meant carrying everything.

Then I began to wonder whether my greatest strength might be learning to put things down.

And decades after losing my father, something extraordinary happened.

Family I had never truly known began finding its way back together.

An older brother I had never met.

Stories about the father we shared.

Photographs.

Similarities.

Pieces of a man who had been frozen in childhood memory suddenly becoming human again.

And in one of life's stranger turns, I discovered that my father's story had once passed through Calgary too—the city I had chosen while rebuilding mine.

For the first time, healing wasn't only about what I was leaving behind.

It was about discovering what had always belonged to me.

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Hope Was My Addiction is not a story about a woman who didn't know she deserved better.

It is about how complicated it can be to leave something you once believed was going to be your forever.

It is about betrayal, emotional abuse, grief, family, survival, and the dangerous beauty of hope.

Because hope was never the enemy.

I had simply been pointing it in the wrong direction.

For years, I hoped **he** would change.

I hoped **our relationship** would change.

I hoped the next promise would finally become the truth.

Eventually, I stopped hoping for him.

And started hoping for me.

That was when everything changed.

The same hope that had kept me there became the thing that carried me out.

I didn’t need to stop believing in second chances.

I needed to understand that the second chance was mine.

And this time—

I chose me.