

Mara worked the night shift at the small city radio station, talking to a thin scatter of drivers, bakers, and insomniacs. One cold autumn night, a trucker named Leo called to request a song he had not heard since high school. She searched the shelves, found a dusty disc, and let the track roll while the transmitter hummed. After the chorus faded, Leo stayed on the line and described quiet exits where the sky was wide and safe to stop. He said a meteor shower would peak at three. Mara had never seen one, so when the ads played, she stepped outside with a thermos and the station key. The street was empty; the tower blinked a steady red. Leo kept talking through the phone speaker, guiding her eyes with simple marks, as if the sky were a chalkboard they shared. First came one streak, faint as a pencil line. Then another, bright and fast. She laughed, and the sound carried into the night air, thin but real. Between songs she read short notes from listeners, people who pulled over to watch, people who turned off their engines to keep the night quiet. Someone left a paper cup of cocoa at the door with a thank you scribble. When the shower eased, Leo said he would take the next exit and nap. Mara locked the door, warmed her hands, and returned to the booth. She queued a calm piano track and spoke to the city about small lights crossing great distance, each one brief and certain, easy to miss unless someone reminded you to look. At sunrise she drove home on quiet streets, feeling as if she had borrowed a larger clock for a night, one that measured patience, and decided to keep it beside the board for every shift.