

The Forgotten

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I pushed myself into a sitting position feeling the dry grass and dead leaves beneath my fingers. I blinked open my eyes and felt a permanent chill take place in my chest as I took in my surroundings. A full moon cast a soft glow across head stones and tragic statues that stretched out from all around me. Thick tree trunks rose from the ground. Their branches covered in only a few vibrant orange and red leaves still clinging to the branches as the wind whistled through them. Brick roads branched off from the circle of grass where I sat in front of a large white marble statue twice my size. It was an angel. Her head was thrown back, as if she were crying. Her arms reaching toward the sky and her wings pushed down at an awkward angle as if she would never take flight again. For some odd reason I felt this need to help her grow inside of me. I shook my head. *It's just a statue Violet. Get a hold of yourself.* I turned my gaze away from her, overcome with grief that something so beautiful could look so broken.

In front of me sat a huge iron gate that formed an arch over the road that wound its way down from an ancient looking mansion in the distance. On either side of the gate way an iron fence ran its way around the perimeter of the cemetery. The gate itself was a design of two metal trees, each tree forming a single door. Their trunks met at the bottom with long iron limbs stretching to entwine and shape the arch at the top. The limbs twisted in the middle to form the words *Adrienne's Cemetery*. Recognition hit me hard as everything clicked into place. This was *my* cemetery. I come here frequently throughout the school year to read, do homework, and just enjoy the quiet beauty of nature. I knew every headstone and every story. I had been living here since I was two, so it was easy to spend my summer days learning the stories behind every tombstone. And yet I hadn't recognized it at all. How could I possibly forget the only place I had called home for fifteen years?

I turned back towards the mansion and the memories came rushing back, filling every corner of my mind. StoneWall Academy was more than a mansion. It was a miniature castle, but to me, it was just home. The old house was made of a weathered gray stone and a large set of dark wooded double doors. StoneWall was named after its original owner, Henry G. StoneWall, back in the sixteen hundreds. StoneWall had four large turrets that housed boys and girls from ten to twenty five year old. It was also home to numerous secret passageways that my friends and I would spend hours exploring. The head mistress always said they were off limits, but we had a pact: what happens in the night stays in the night. We also weren't ones for following the rules, so when someone said no we *had to* say yes. Maybe that's why the prank war between the guys and girls broke out in our group. I always felt sort of bad since we had one more team member than them, but you get over it. Especially after they raid your room and scatter your delicacies through the boy's wing. I'm not bitter at all...

It was unusual for a school to act as a college too, but they had been doing it for hundreds of years. Garret and I had been living here since we were two. Our parents are good friends with Headmistress Astraea, and she had agreed to raise us at StoneWall while our parents traveled the world. Mom and Dad still cared, but their sense of

adventure just always got the best of them. Not like I could blame them, I traveled every summer with Garret and our three best friends: Ashley, Adam, and Lily. My parents paid the way so I wasn't going to object, they just weren't very happy when they'd get a call from London saying we had crashed a party we weren't invited to. Like it was such a big deal! The Queen should have been honored by our presence. Or when we accidentally let one of the elephants out of the Zoo in New York, but that one was *so* not my fault. We all became fast friends when Ashley, Lily, and Adam arrived. It was almost as if our little group was destined to be together. When our group first met Garret and I were ten years old, it would be our first year of attending classes and moving into the dorms. Garret and I have always been close, so not sharing a room anymore was terrifying, but also exciting. I had walked into my room to find Ashley, her hands on her hips, glaring at a small petite blonde sitting cross-legged on one of the beds. At that time Lily's bleach blond hair was down to her waist, but this past year she cut it to shoulder length. I remember thinking how strange she looked next to the white sheets; she was so pale that if she lay on the beach she would have blended right into the sand. Lily had been surrounded by piles of books, spread across her bed, spilling from unpacked suitcases, towers of them in the corners, and she sat at the center blue eyes scanning each page in the book propped open in her lap in a matter of seconds. The spine read *City Of Ashes*, that's when I knew we'd be fast friends. Ashley's eyes are a brown so dark that if you didn't look closely you would say they were pitch black, but that day when they fell on me standing in the doorway all I could do was take a step back. Her brown hair was falling in waves down her back and her bangs brushed across her right eye. It was later that I would learn she gets the dark eyes and tan skin from her Cherokee background.

"She's on my bed." She had snapped at me.

"What?"

"My bed. Are you deaf?" she said tapping her foot impatiently. Lily had simply smiled smugly at her book and looked up to give me an innocent look.

"I'm Lily," she had said as if the scary girl in front of us wasn't about to kill us both.

"Um...I don't think that we were assigned beds." I took a cautious step into the room and set down my suitcase.

"We weren't, but I want that one."

"Well who was here first?"

"Me." Lily replied.

"Well then its hers." I said flinching slightly as Ash had taken a step forward. Then a small smile broke out on her face.

"You two have guts. I like it. I'm Ashley, but you can call me Ash." She turned, plopped down on one of the two remaining beds, and looked my way again. She sized me up and I felt as if I had just passed some kind of test. Then she opened her mouth.

“Your dress is horrendous.” My mouth dropped open, but before I could say anything a loud knock came from the door. I turned to the door as Garret flung it open and stepped inside with a tall scrawny boy with two shocking green eyes and dark black hair that I would soon learn would always fall into his eyes. His name was Adam and now a days he was anything but scrawny. Now he’s built to say the least. Him and Garret do hit the gym twice a day, and he may be like a brother to me, and Ashley totally called dibs...but I’m a girl! I’m going to notice these things. It gets exhausting over the years trying to keep a guy when Garret and Adam tag team him at the door. Adam became like a second big brother to me over the years. I remember how he had stalked in and plopped down right next to Ash, and didn’t even flinch at the death glare thrown his way. That took guts.

“I’m Adam, Garrets roommate.”

After that we all fell into synch. I learned Ash isn’t as scary as she makes herself out to be, she just says it like it is and I needed that in a friend. I learned that Lily was a fellow book nerd and writer, and Adam always knew how to make me laugh. We all complemented each other and that was something that was hard to find. Yet it had happened to us in a matter of seconds. It was fate.

I pulled myself from my memories that were so long ago and looked down to see my key still hanging safely around my neck. My mother had given Garret and I each a small intricately detailed old-fashion copper key when we turned two and moved to StoneWall. Garret’s was hooked onto a thick black leather band that he always wore around his wrist. His key had a detailed set of gears that worked their way up and down both sides. Mine was a little different though, it had two bronze colored wings with traces of gold and silver that shimmered within the feathers when the sun hit it just right. I always asked my mother where she had gotten them, but she wouldn’t say more than they were a gift from my great Aunt Alice who I had only met once as a small child when I moved into StoneWall. She had been there to send me off and had hugged me fiercely whispering that my key would always lead me back to Garret. I was only two so I don’t even know how or why I remembered it. It could have been my imagination for all I know and yet I knew in my gut it was a real memory, but we never took them off. After that I never saw her again. Mom and Dad still refuse to tell us why. My key always hangs on a braided leather chord made up of black and bronze leather. I instinctively reached down and grabbed it in my hand. Doing that always made me feel better, like I wasn’t so alone.

I glanced up at StoneWall, my friends were probably worried sick, but at least I knew where I was now. I needed to go up to Stonewall to figure out what happened. As I pushed myself to my feet I realized I was wearing a soft white night gown that flowed down around my ankles, my feet bare. That’s odd I didn’t remember ever owning anything like this in my lifetime, and why hell wasn’t I wearing shoes? Or a jacket? Before I could think anything more of it the gates to the cemetery swung open allowing a funeral procession to roll silently through. The last car caught my eye and my heart plummeted as I recognized our black Honda, with WALTERS written on the license plate. There was no way that could be anybody else’s car it would just be way too weird of a coincidence. Mom and Dad were supposed to be in Brazil, and they never cut a trip

short unless something dire happened. I felt ice-cold fear wrap its way around my heart as my mother stepped from the car and my worst nightmare started to unfold before my eyes. My mother's eyes were rimmed red and tears were flowing freely, sobs shaking her small frame. Garret had his arm wrapped around her shoulders and my father held her hand a tight-pained look etched on his face.

"Garret! Mom! Dad!" I called out each of their names but they walked on as if I hadn't said a word. Only my brother's eyes flickered with recognition for a moment before he shook his head and led my mother to a headstone with an open casket beside it. The casket was tucked inside my favorite crook of maple trees in the cemetery where I always sit and read. Without thinking I took off, my feet pounded on the cold ground as I ran to catch them and get their attention, but when I reached for my mother's shoulder... my hand fell right through her.

I stopped dead in my tracks, stunned, my hand falling limply to my side. I pinched myself hard trying to wake myself from this nightmare, but nothing happened except for the fact that I had left a nasty red welt on my arm. I looked up to see they had all stopped in front of a horrendous pink coffin. I forced myself to put one foot in front of the other as I slowly approached the coffin. My world stopped.

My heart seemed to still and crash against my rib cage simultaneously in a matter of seconds as the truth came barreling into me at top speed. I was standing on the tracks unable to move as my new reality came at me, a runaway train heading straight for what used to be my old life, and all I could do was stand there and wait for it to hit me, because no matter what I did it would be too late to avoid the disaster already set in motion. Denial rang through my heart as my thoughts spun out of control. *Get it together. You're fine. This is not real. It's just a horrible nightmare.* But my eyes could not lie. The body that lay in the ghastly pink coffin was... mine. My body was drained of all color, my hair straightened and resting softly on a frilly white pillow. As if the pink coffin wasn't bad enough. My eyes flashed around the group and landed on my brother. I screamed his name in desperation this time needing fiercely for someone to say it was all a sick joke! That Garret was just getting back at me for embarrassing him in front of the whole school last year. That my friends would pop out from behind the headstones and scream April fools. But it wasn't April and this was a trick too cruel to play.

"Garret!" Nothing... I screamed again, the sound ripping its way up my throat leaving me hoarse,

"Garret Walters!" But again he shook his head as if he was only hearing things. My hands flew to my mouth trying to hold back a sob, "I'm right here..." I choked out now standing in front of him, but he continued on to the casket passing right through my body. I froze as it finally began to sink in. I held up my palms and to my horror I could see right through them. A whimper left my throat. This had to be some terrible nightmare. The only problem was if this was a nightmare, then why did it feel so real. I pinched myself hard again and a sharp pain flared through my arm, but I remained where I was. I wasn't waking up and this wasn't a dream, something was terribly wrong. My body was in a casket and people were walking right through me. I had no choice but to admit to myself that...

“I’m dead.” I whispered.

My vision started to grow fuzzy around the edges as I stared at my lifeless body lying in that stupid pink coffin. Shooting pain racked my head as I felt my body numbing. My head and heart screaming in protest as the world started to tilt. I may not be able to touch anyone else, but I think I should have felt hitting the ground. I faintly felt two arms grab me from behind, before my body could hit the cold October ground. The last thing I saw was a pair of strikingly blue eyes staring down at me before I passed out a final pleading thought lingering as I succumbed to the darkness. Please let this be a dream.