

This was the only place he could feel.

Todd put the bottle to his lips once again and drank greedily, the liquid going down like acid, burning his throat. But it made his head sing and it dulled the depressed beating of his heart to a barely audible thud. With his body numbed his mind had a chance to take over. He sat down in the wet grass and crossed his legs, settling the bottle in between them. This was his meditation. He hardly felt the drizzling rain that was soaking his clothes as he sat there, the alcohol having successfully obliterated his physical senses. Todd blinked the moisture out of his eyes and stared out in front of him, his watery gaze settling on the tombstone ahead, his eyes running back over and over the name that had been inscribed upon it. Catherine Oregon.

His love for her had always been a blessing to him, something that had saved him once. Now it was a curse, a constant reminder of what they had had together, an ache that lived in his heart that each day pained him more as the memories lost their sheen and her face lost its distinction in his mind. One day, he was sure he wouldn't be able to remember her face at all, that it would just be a blur of half forgotten features. But his love for her would never dull, it would always be there within him, gently eating away at his soul.

He had lost count of the amount of times he had been out here, at least once a day or rather once a night, since the funeral. That had been when he had realised she was lost to him, the day she was buried in the dirt, covered in a thick layer of soil that placed her out of his life forever. He had longed since that day, to be under there with her, to dig deep down into the earth, open her coffin and crawl in next to her, to die in her cold arms and be enveloped by her decay. He owed it to no one to stay alive, to stay away from her. But he had never been able to do it, never been able to gather the strength and the courage to join her.

Todd lifted the bottle again and drank the remaining dregs. He didn't usually come out here drunk, but today had been long and difficult and the pain had been more intense than usual. Over three weeks had passed, it would soon be a month, but this had been one of the hardest yet. He dropped the bottle to the ground, where it thudded against the soft grass. He swayed gently, the effects of the alcohol taking hold. He brushed his wet hair from out of his eyes and wiped a grimy hand down his face, unable to tell if he was wiping away tears or rain. He looked up to the sky and saw the pale moon looking back down at him and all at once he felt like laughing. He was so ridiculous, sitting here, mourning, crying, and lamenting his great loss, when in reality it didn't mean a thing. He was small and insignificant when compared to all the other billions of people that the same moon was looking down upon at this very moment. Who else really cared about his sorrow? It wasn't going to change the course of history; it wasn't going to affect the world. It was only his miniature world that this affected; it was only his life that had been destroyed.

He let his head fall into his waiting hands and sobbed. He couldn't take this kind of pain. How much longer could this go on for, how much longer must he suffer, knowing that there was nothing he could do except try to forget, try to adapt to this new way of life that

had been maliciously forced onto him. He spent all day looking at her photographs, staring at her face, trying to see into her eyes. He opened her wardrobe and held her clothes to his face, trying to recapture her smell, trying to trick his mind into believing that she was still here with him. He could see her again, smell her again, but he would never be able to touch her. He lay in bed and it was cold, it was empty, devoid of the source of warmth that used to lie next to him. There was no body to roll over and touch him, there was no skin to caress, no lips to kiss, no wet, warmth to lose himself inside. He missed making love to her; he missed smelling her sweat and perfume cocktail. He would never feel her touch again.

Todd pulled his head from his hands and closed his eyes, picturing her. He could see her now, lying naked in their bed. The light was off but the streetlight that came in through the window illuminated the curves of her breasts, the muscles of her stomach. It shone on the ridges of her groin, giving her sparse pubic hair a silver glint. She looked up and smiled at him, her hair cascading down over her shoulders as she sat up and reached out to him. He moved into her arms and could feel her hands slip around him and gently stroke his back. He laid his face on her shoulder and softly nuzzled her neck. He could hear her breathing deepen as she became aroused. She held onto him tighter and he moved his mouth down her neck and onto her breasts, rolling his tongue around her nipples. Her breath drew short and he felt her hands move from his back to explore him further.

He was inside her now; he could feel her warmth around him. How he had longed for this, to be this close to her again.

He opened his eyes to find himself back at her grave, soaked from the continuous rain. He looked down to see that he had unzipped his fly during the fantasy and was absently stroking himself. He started in horror at what he was doing; appalled that he had let himself get so carried away. He stopped and went to dress himself again but the memory of the fantasy nagged at him, as did his unsatisfied erection. He tried to fight the temptation but it had all felt so real. He needed this; he needed to feel her again, just one last time. Slowly he closed his eyes again and his mind immediately snapped back to his bedroom.

Catherine sat astride him now, grinding into him, her face etched in pleasure, her breasts falling into his face. He moved his mouth up hungrily to meet them. He could taste her sweat and the sensation filled his mouth. Sex with her had never been this good before, but now he was no longer taking it for granted as a normal function of their relationship. Now he knew that this was probably their last time together and he wanted to remember all of it, every detail. Todd could feel his orgasm rising and tried to push it away; he didn't want this to end just yet. But Catherine seemed to sense the growing tension in him and quickened her pace, hungry for him to come. He gripped her hips to try and slow her down but quickly got lost in the feeling of pleasure that was about to erupt from him. She moved faster, grinding harder until he felt himself coming inside her, draining his whole body as if she were taking the very life from him.

He woke from his trance to find himself transported from the warm comfort of Catherine, to the cold wetness of the graveyard. He looked down to see himself dribbling onto the grass and quickly put himself away in disgust. The alcohol and grief had overcome him but that was no excuse for what he had just done. He had defiled her grave with his own sick, selfish need for pleasure and comfort. He collapsed back onto the ground, the cold grass not registering any different from the overall dampness that he felt anyway. He lay and looked up at the stars, the watchful eyes of the sky and he felt dirty.

He had tarnished her burial site, offending the very memory of her and remorse swept through him. He begged her forgiveness, calling her name with his mind, telling her how sorry he was and that he had not meant to use his grief in this way. A voice suddenly invaded his head. His cries for forgiveness ceased as he stopped to listen. It was faint but it was there, a woman's voice, Catherine's voice. She was trying to say something to him but he couldn't make out the words. He sat up from off the ground and closed his eyes, trying to focus on the sound. She was calling out to him; he could hear her cries for help. She was down there alone in the darkness and she needed him.

Todd's eyes shot open and he flung himself down onto the grave, his hands tearing up mounds of grass, dirt grinding into his fingernails. He had to get her out, bring her back. He snatched at the earth, clawing his way deeper into the soil. Time evaded him and the moon slowly traced across the sky as he worked, digging deeper. Then, just as suddenly as he had started, his frantic digging stopped. His fingers had found wood.

He blinked and looked down at the hole in the ground that his hands had made. The voice had disappeared and all that was left was a pathetic man caught under the spotlight of the full moon; digging up his own wife's grave.

Todd scrambled out of the hole and collapsed backward onto the wet grass, staring at the open grave. The rain pit pattered around him, accompanied by his own heavy breathing. Then he heard her again, except this time the sound was no longer in his head, it was coming out of the hole. Slowly he started crawling backwards, his eyes fixed on the ground as he watched as the ground erupted upwards in a shower of black dirt. Todd swallowed hard as he stared at the spectacle, his eyes transfixed on the frightening miracle that was unfolding. His empty balls tightened as he watched a white, slender hand emerge from out of the hole. Todd's eyes widened until he thought they would fall from the sockets and a collection of bile automatically surged up his throat and threatened to spew forth from his mouth.

The fingers of the hand twisted as if feeling the very air itself, then lay flat on the ground, using the earth as leverage to push forth more of the arm that was now coming up from out of the hole. Todd tried to move, to crawl even further backwards, but his legs were shaking too much to have any strength in them. He could only watch as another hand sprouted from the hole. Soon both arms were free, waving aimlessly around in the air, as if groping for their freedom. Suddenly, both arms stopped moving and the hands lay flat on the ground. Todd watched the tendons and muscles in the arms tighten as they fought the resistance of the ground. The dirt around the hole started to move now, only slightly

at first but then with more ferocity. It grew into a pile, which then broke to reveal a mass of dirty hair and a pale face that made the bile that had been teetering in the back of Todd's mouth, lunge forth as he bent forward to retch onto the grass. Catherine smiled as her eyes rested on the face of her beloved husband.

The smile was sickening. It was the same sweet smile that he remembered Catherine having before, except this time it belonged to a face that was a mirror image of his wife's except that it no longer held any beauty. Her once plump lips were now thin and drawn and her eyes had dulled from a sparkling blue, to a powdery colour that was almost indistinguishable from the white surrounding her pupils. All of which was surrounded by a mass of tangled dirty, dark hair, that somehow appeared wild, even threatening. Her burial gown hung loosely from her body, almost ethereal in the pale light.

She stared at him, her eyes boring into his, her lips drawn in the same caricature of Catherine's old smile. He wanted to scream but he couldn't seem to fill his lungs with enough air to even breathe, let alone make any kind of audible noise. Her eyes shifted from his and focused down at the ground underneath her. The same strained tension returned to her arms as she pushed down on the ground again, squeezing more of her body from out of the earth.

Todd knew that he couldn't stay here. The thing that he was confronted with looked like Catherine and it was coming out of her grave, but there was no way it could be. Catherine was dead and death was the end of any kind of physical life, he knew that. The thing had to be something else, a demon version of his beloved. He had to get away, he had to somehow get to his feet and run, run far from here and keep on running until he only ever remembered this night in his worst nightmares. But of course, he couldn't move. All the strength had evaporated from his body the moment he had vomited but it was more than that. Even though he knew that what was coming out of the ground in front of him could not be Catherine, it must be something related to her. He had to at least stay long enough to see what this thing was. There was the small possibility that this could somehow even be Catherine back from the dead, brought back by his own misery, solidified in the sperm that had fell from his body. Perhaps he had revived her. Perhaps she had come back to him.

She had freed all of her torso from her grave now and was concentrating on freeing her legs from her earthly prison. Todd just watched her, his face incredulous. He wasn't sure what to do, only waiting to see what it was that she would do next. He was ready to run at any moment if he needed to, but he had to see if he needed to first.

As the last inch of her foot emerged from the dirt, Catherine's focus snapped back to Todd, her eyes searching for his once again. The smile returned to her face and she started to slowly crawl to where Todd was sat in the wet grass. As soon as she started moving, Todd began to edge backwards, he couldn't help it, it was an instinctive reaction. As Catherine realised that she was getting no closer to her husband, the smile dropped from her face and was replaced by a heart wrenching look of sadness. Her pale eyes grew big and her mouth slumped downwards. She tried to open her mouth to speak but only

managed to produce a strangled choke. She coughed and dirt fell from her mouth, causing Todd to grimace. She tried to speak again but to no avail. The look of sadness on her face deepened and Todd felt his heart twist in his chest. He had seen that look before and it had always had the same effect on him. He stopped edging away and instead began to slowly edge a little closer, his heart overtaking his head. Catherine's smile returned as quickly as it had disappeared and she started moving towards him again until they were only a foot or so from one another.

Catherine stopped and lifted up her arms from off the ground and held them out in front of her, a look of longing now covering her face. Todd hesitated. Part of him wanted nothing more than to reach out and take her in his arms, like he had been dreaming of doing only minutes before. But the doubt had also returned to his mind. He had no idea what this thing was and he knew, his brain just knew that it couldn't be Catherine, not the real Catherine, not the way she had been. The thing hadn't even been able to speak. But that look, that awful look of sadness that had filled its face when it thought that he was rejecting it. That look was Catherine's and he wasn't sure if he could bear to see that look return.

Slowly he moved forward again, conscious of the distance between them dramatically shortening. The smile stayed on her face and her arms still hung outstretched, waiting for him to find them. As he neared her, he lifted up his own arms and in what felt like tedious slow motion, he felt his arms wrap around her narrow waist and shivered as her cold skin made contact with his own, as his arms reached around the back of his neck.

She smelt awful, a true rotting stench hung from her body that threatened to bring back the bile again. He swallowed hard and tried to hold his breath the best he could. This wasn't like it had been in his fantasy. There was no sweet smell and comforting warmth, only the very real reminders of death, in her stench and coldness. She rested her head on his shoulder and nestled her face into his neck. The image of her resting on him made his head swim. He closed his eyes and tried to push it from his mind, replacing it with the image he had held there earlier, of the old Catherine wrapped up in his arms, their bodies intertwined.

For a moment he relaxed, the image of the old Catherine held in place, he could almost smell her sweet scent again and his body threatened to lose itself in hers. But the awful stench returned to assault his nostrils, the coldness of her skin made his body shudder and the realisation that he was sitting in a graveyard, holding a dead body, was suddenly upon him. He opened his eyes and found himself in the lonely darkness again, the cold thing hugging him closely. This was wrong. His fantasy had been just that, it could never come true. He wanted Catherine back so badly, but not like this. She had been dead, and somehow he had ripped her from the afterlife and returned her to earth in this deformed state. It just wasn't right.

He tried to free himself from her vice like grip, but she only tightened her hold as he tried to struggle away from her. Panic started to set in, along with a numbing sense of fear. She squeezed him even tighter and he felt a pressure on his chest as her body began to crush

his. He cried out, emitting nothing more than a soft moan as he struggled to breathe. He tried to push her away with his hands, but she had his arms pinned down with her own with a surprising amount of strength. He squirmed and struggled but her grip was too tight, too encompassing. She let out a guttural groan and he felt a jolt in his chest as if a great magnetic force was trying to pull him inside out, like he was being stretched, his insides pushing up against his skin threatening to break free.

Fear and panic kicked in completely and with all his strength, he pushed away at her, desperate to get her off him. She finally relented and with one final push, he sent her falling backwards onto the grass. He panted heavily, trying to get back the breath that had been taken out of him. As he looked back over at the grave, he saw Catherine sitting up, smiling at him. She looked cold, dead, a ghostly reflection of the woman he once knew.

Todd scrambled to his feet, his head swaying with the sudden exertion. Catherine's smile disappeared and she stood up along with him, her eyes fixed on his. Todd stumbled clumsily backward, his legs struggling to keep him balanced. It was worse than he thought. He hadn't just brought back a thing; he had brought back a monster.

Catherine started walking towards him, her footsteps light on the soft ground, her gaze deadly. Todd kept moving backwards, unable to turn away from the monster that was coming towards him. He had never meant for this to happen. He had wished her back but not like this, not as some kind of beast, he had wanted his Catherine back not this thing that inhabited her body. Catherine's pace quickened and as Todd tried to run, his feet twisted and gave out from under him. He felt himself falling, his head turning so that his eyes could see the headstone that lay beneath him. He had no time to panic before his neck connected with the heavy stone and he heard a sickening thud as his collarbone snapped.

As he lay stunned, he saw Catherine hovering above him, her eyes shining in the moonlight, as if small spirits were trapped within the sockets. He moaned and all of his pain and fear ejected from out him in a long wail that echoed around the empty graveyard. Todd could do nothing as he felt himself sliding forward across the grass, Catherine's hands gripping his ankles, pulling him back towards her grave.

All of this seemed so surreal, but the pain that was on fire in his body informed him otherwise. As they reached the grave once more, Catherine released her grip and turned to lower herself back into the hole. In his delirium, Todd actually considered that she might be leaving him, going back to whatever hell he had pulled this creature from.

But any slight, desperate hope disappeared as he felt himself moving forward again, Catherine's hands back around his ankles, his feet disappearing into the hole. His whole body was too stunned to move, to try and resist as Catherine pulled him down into her grave to be devoured by the darkness beneath.