

A Night's Stroll

It was quite late. She knew she should be ~~dead~~ asleep, but she wasn't. Instead, she walked around her town. The streets were empty and the lights were out. That didn't matter. She was familiar with the area, and the stars were enough company. She didn't look at them, though. It took too much effort to tilt her head up. Her neck was no longer as flexible as it once was. In the faint moonlight, her pale skin was almost translucent.

She kept walking. Although she kept her movements slow, her thoughts still struggled to keep up. Must be the lack of blood flow. Most of the trees were bare, so winter must be approaching. She wouldn't be able to take her nightly walks with snow covering ~~her~~ covering the ground. The last twelve winters had been tedious; waiting for the ground to thaw is quite dull, especially when one has nothing to do but stare into ~~the frozen soil~~ darkness. But she didn't mind. Only one more winter to endure. By the time spring comes, the thirteen years since ~~her death~~ she decided to leave would have passed. When that came, she could begin a new life, in a new place. Deciding that it was getting too cold, she started to head home. No one wanted stiff muscles.

She walked by her old home, where her parents slept. She drifted past an old yard, where she and her best friend used to always meet. In a small pond, the lotuses they had planted together at thirteen were wilted. They would bloom again in the spring. She wouldn't get to see them, then.

She passed by the cliff where she and her best friend last saw each other ~~alive~~. He too wandered out late at night, but only some nights. He said that this place was worse than the other places they had lived—small, boring, mostly crumbling buildings. That was, after all, the reason they had decided to leave early. If he went out, it was only to keep her company. Tonight it was just her. It would be the last night.

She went past the beach where ~~their bodies were found~~ they were last seen. The dog was waiting there like he was every night. He had been a good companion when she ~~was alive~~ used to come out during the day. She petted him gently. She waved a final goodbye and continued her walk home.

Finally, she reached the graveyard, where a bed of soil would keep her warm. Next to her was a pile of dirt and a long hole. Next to that hole was her best friend. Of course, she couldn't see him. He was under a layer of neatly-patted soil. She raised her hand to her chest and thumped

it gently. *Ba-bump. Ba-bump.* It had been almost thirteen years since her heart had truly beaten, but she could pretend.

After this heart went silent for the last time, she stepped into the hole. It took some adjusting of her stiff limbs, but she was soon back in the ground. She carefully covered the grave—not *her* grave, this was only a temporary resting place—with dirt, just as she had every night that the ground wasn't frozen. She closed her eyes.

Twelve years and nine months earlier.

Two seventeen year old students, Helen White and Kieran Park, fell into the ocean from Mountbatten Cliff. Each wrote the words "bury us together, please. farewell." on their windows, suggesting suicide. According to the families, they were close friends and spent most of their time together. Their bodies were found about a day after death, on February 6th, by a man who heard a stray dog barking at something in the water as it attempted to pull the two bodies out of the water.

Helen and Kieran's bodies were found with nearly all bones broken, leading local authorities to believe that they had jumped off Fernall Cliff. They had also visited the cliff in life. They had matching tattoos of a lotus flower on Helen's right and Kieran's left inner arm. When they were found, their hands were linked.

She opened her eyes. Thirteen years of memories flooded her mind. A quick glance at her right arm confirmed that her lotus still remained. It was the only thing that did, aside from Kieran. Her appearance, her family, her name, were all impermanent things. That reminded her, he was no longer called Kieran. She'd have to go find him soon. Being dead was boring, but living came with other duties. Soul-collecting was tiring, especially when they had taken thirteen years off work. The built-up deaths would take forever to deal with. But that could wait. After all, it was her thirteenth birthday. Her new mother had mentioned a cake.