Deliver Us From Mary

By : AemmaBella

On the day Mr and Mrs Forester plan to have a family lunch with their daughter, Kitty, and meet at a diner near his firm. Plans go array when little Kitty's excitement gets the better of her, leading her to snatch her hand from her mommy she then runs across a busy intersection in the hopes of reaching her father. Meanwhile Mrs. Forester is forced to run after her except, unlike her daughter, she was unsuccessful in reaching her husband.

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Deliver Us From Mary

This day is cloudy-overcast with dismal gray blankets, disabling the sun of its warm luminous rays. Days suchlike this one tended to have a formidable effect on me; like a warning telling me to stay at home; close the curtains; protect your child from the wanton ways of this foreboding day. But, I feel, it was nearly impossible to avoid. This was the week my husband started working longer hours at the law firm, where he was basically consumed with several cases at a time for no discernible reason besides the fact that there were fewer lawyers available since the massive cuts they had to make in the past month. I hardly every saw Keith, I missed him so much and so did Kitty, my daughter, she is two years old and claims my world in the most miraculous of ways.

My husband and I made it a rule to have lunch together, as a family, every Wednesday in this little cafe/diner near is firm. The time of day would be five, my most hated time of day; too much traffic and drivers never have the sense to slow down. They keep moving-never stopping the pursuit that dominates their life cycles.

â Mommy, are we going to daddy?â my little Kitty asked me. I hold her soft hand in mine as we walk along the sidewalks surround by screaming horns and screeching tires.

â Yes, darling.â

The biggest smile lights up her face and I know she is happy. She hasn't seen her father in four days because of the late hours and the early morning departures. Her happiness is palpable and I feel myself feeding off of it-letting it enter me through our intertwined fingers.

I see my husband before Kitty does and I wave at him and he waves back with his tired smile and handsome eyes. He is a fairly tall man so he was not hard to miss in the after work bustle. His body was wide with the muscles of a surprisingly fit man and thick luxurious chestnut hair smoothed back into a wave. I thought it made him look maturely boyish, adorable.

Kitty sees him now and she does something that shocks me out of my mini musings. She yanks her hand out of mine and darts into the street daring the passing cars with her naÃ¯ve challenge.

â Kitty!â I hear Keith scream. He shakes me out of my shock and I run after her. Cars are screaming and swerving, hitting each other with the slightest maneuvers because of the narrow lanes. I try not to scream her name for the worry of her stopping in the middle of the street. So I run, as fast as I can for what seems like forever to catch her even though it may have been no more than three seconds. I hear Keith scream her name again and he has already run into the street after her while Kitty continues to run towards him flailing her arms ignorant to the fact that her life was in danger.

Keith reaches her before I do and scoops her up. I slow my pace a bit to let my heart slow down its painful pounding.

I hear the loudest blare of a horn I have ever heard.

And I am knocked off of my feet into a darkness so bleak. I cannot breath and I feel the worst pain in my neck and thick liquid is everywhere from what I can feel.

There is light, everywhere there is light.

Screaming.

Horns blaring and screaming with indignation.

I feel nothing. I see only light. I smell burnt skin and old pennies.

â Oh dear... she was such a lovely woman. Pity....â said a light voice, male. Elderly? â Such a shame... so pitiful.â

I open my eyes and I am standing on the sidewalk where I was before I ran. Everything is bright in contrast and soft around the edges. The passing bodies of passersby leave speed trails behind them, like a fastly passing car you can still see the car's body trailing behind it despite the fact the it passed by that spot only a nanosecond ago. It is like the world is going too fast yet I am seeing it in slow motion.

â It is amazing isn't it?â said the light voice. I look to my left and see a short elderly man in baby blue robes observing what looks like an accident in the middle of the street.

I do not answer the old man, I only stare at the spectacle before me. There is a large rig with a tanker on the back-maybe a petroleum tanker. And there are spectators everywhere- all looking in the same direction; not looking at the truck but below it. I move-or rather glide, as it seems, closer to the scene and I...I see body, wrangled and bloodied- her neck is twisted in the most grotesque way. But I feel nothing and it is only when I recognize the woman when I see lying on the unsubtle concrete stage.

It is me. My body. Ruined and dead and horrifying!

I felt a little pull in my stomach that suggest nausea but it goes away almost instantly and I glide closer. My eyes are still open-nobody had the decency to close them, protect my spirit.

I kneel down and reach out towards my face- wet now from the rain that must have started falling while I was in the dark- but my hand went through my face, touching the concrete instead.

A hand touches my shoulder and I look over it to see the old man staring down at me, sympathy-pity in his eyes, the palpable fix is obvious to me and I shrug his hand away.

â It is ordered of me to send you away from here.â he said.

â Why...â I said bitterly, non questioningly. I am angry-yet I am scared now because a thought just trickled into my mind.

Kitty.

I saw Keith scope her up but I did not see them in the messy blur of the people.

The hand touches my shoulder again, this time pulling me up, back, away from the scene.

I let him.

He told me to be calm, be still. I am okay, he says, I am but a spirit in purgatory.

â Purgatory?â I asked.

â You have not passed on...unfinished business.â he said.

He never told me his name only that I was to call him the Elder and that he was my chaperone until I figured out what it was that kept me from passing.

I stayed in this white box for some time listening to his preachings- knowledge of the deceased. The purity of natural demise.

It felt as if I were in school again as a child, listening to my teachers go on and on about a particular subject that would never be useful to me in the real world. I felt just like that now. I felt like I was receiving useless information, I felt restrained. I wanted to know what happened to Keith, and my little Kitty. He would never tell me, he only said that I was not ready to see them. He told me the power that I have as a ghost were to tempting to leave me with alone, even as an observer of the living world. I barely understood his protest but I made myself content with it. Hardly.

He was teaching me the rules of moving solid objects when I felt my patience for pedantic lessons in special ed ghost living reach its peak.

I snapped.

â I have to see my daughter!â I screamed at him.

He hardly flinched and merely smiled as I continued on with my outburst.

â I need my baby! I want my husband! I need- do you hear me?!- need my family! I don't care if I can't touch them or speak to them! I just want to see my family, Elder!â

He nodded his head once and clapped a slow rhythm as if he was proud I finally stood up to him.

â What!â I demanded.

â You are angry.â he laughed.

If I weren't dead my face would have turned a heinous scarlet.

â Elder...â I said exasperated by his nonchalance.

He holds his hand up to stop my demands.

â You are ready.â he said. â But I must warn you: several years have passed- no no, listen- several years have passed and things are not like what they used to be. They may even frighten you. Their light is gone and their world is now in a dark place.â

â What happened?â

â I will let you see for yourself. But let me remind you now,â he said sternly, â you are not to play guardian angel or interfere with their lives in any way, you will be stripped completely of your ghostly inheritance and sent to a place very close to another where, trust me, you would never want to be.

I nodded.

â Please take me down.â

â You will be tempted...â

â I promise, I won't interfere.â I said quietly.

He waves his hand the white box falls away to a dark starless night. No luminescent moon to shine light upon the dreary world, not a wishful start blemishing the face.

Elder and I are in front of a one story house with a weed infested lawn that begged to be cut and trimmed and treated to with flower bushes here and there and a small apple tree. The shingles were old and rusty on the roof and the spots that lacked a shingle now lay in the overgrown lawn lost to the world as they passed it by.

There were lights on in the house even though it had to be close to midnight. The air was cold and trees lacked leaves. It has to be winter.

â Go on.â said Elder. â I will follow.â

I walk-glide unsure up the badly paved driveway and through the old paint chipped walls.

The TV is blaring gun shots from some action movie and since the TV is on I go to that room first. I enter a small living room and it wreaks of old food, mold, and sweat. There is a Lazyboy recliner in front of the TV and a loveseat against the wall diagonal to it. The coffee table is littered with plastic cups and pizza boxes and- and a....a box, opened, inside are several syringes.

In the recliner sits Keith, he is no longer the handsome man I had fallen in love with and died with his image in my mind. His stomach overlapped his waistband by several inches and he now had a full beard and his beautiful chestnut hair is now streaked with a little gray and is disheveled. His brown eyes are glassy and dreamy and I wondered if he was dead for a moment before I noticed that his chest rose and fell still.

â Keith...â

â He lost his job two months after you died.â Elder explained. â He couldn't focus and he-he had a nervous break down, nearly went to an asylum diagnosed with insanity. His mother got him out though, Mrs. Forester, a lovely woman.â

I nodded.

â Yes, she was a wonderful woman, I miss her dearly. I should see how she is when I am finished here.â

Elder holds his head down.

â She died two years after you, stroke.â

I squeeze my eyes closed knowing still that I would never cry again. Kitty...without a mother figure for who knows how many years and her father.... a j-j- oh I can't even think it. I never would have thought this would happen to him. Not my Keith, not that man.

â How long has it been, Elder?â

â Fourteen years...â

â Fourteen!â I shouted and I could have sworn I saw Keith flinch, his eyes became more aware and he tried to mumble something.

He jumped out of his recliner and turned violently around in circles.

â Mary?â

My breath caught, though I haven't had a breath in years.

â Mary!â

He said my name that night, called me in the night. Begged me to come to him and hold him, rock him to peace again.

I wanted so badly to cry that night but times frozen for me and it is impossible. I glided towards him and reached out to him. Elder took my wrist before I could touch Keith and pulled me away.

â Keith...â was all that could escape my lungs before Elder had us back in the box again.

â I told you.â

â I don't want to hear that... I want to go back.â

He shakes his head. â You need to calm yourself first.â he said, â He heard you. That!- was not supposed to happen! They are not supposed to hear you.â

I smirk.

â Since when were there rules about what is supposed to happen or not?â

He glared at me and turned away, his robe turning with him in an elegant swirl of blue.

â I want to go back.â

â No! I need to speak to Him first. You stay and calm yourself before you get us both in trouble.â he snapped, he was shaking so badly and his forehead was surprisingly dotted with beads of perspiration.

He left me in the box alone. And it seemed like the light went with him. I was alone and my heart ached the faintest ache I had ever felt in a long time.

It was some time before Elder let me out again.

He made me swear not to speak above a whisper and to keep my hands to myself lest forcing him to bind them behind my back, he would have been happy to do that, what with all the trouble I had cost him the last time.

â How long?â

â Not long, only five months.â

I nodded and went through the wall.

The day was a bright and cloudless afternoon and the house felt empty.

â Where is he?â

â They are sleeping.â

â Doesn't Kitty have school? How old is she now?â

â She dropped out last year. And she is sixteen now. She works at DC Burgers part time. But Mary-â

There was a crash behind a closed door, like something falling onto tile, glass.

Elder and I glided over to the sound's destination and a door swung open on the right before I passed it and a young girl stomped out and down the hall to another closed door. I stop moving and just watch her. She bangs her fist on the door.

â Keith!â she shouted, she bangs on it again.â Keith, get your fat ass out of the bathroom! Are you messing with my stuff again!â She bangs on it again only this time she shoves open the door herself and Keith is on his hands and knees, blood on his hands, picking up the broken glass.

The girl scoffs and shoves Keith out of the bathroom and slams the door behind her.

Keith's hands are cut with deep gashes from the glass and I can see his veins under his pale hairy skin.

I glide over to him as he lay still on the floor. I want so badly to touch him but I can feel Elder's gaze burning into my head threatening me with images of tightly bound wrist in chains.

I restrain myself.

Keith coughs and brings himself slowly to his feet and starts towards the kitchen. I let him go and instead stare at the closed door of the room he was just evicted from.

Kitty is in there.

My baby.

She has grown so much- looks so different. Her hair is a dark-dark red and she is so pale and thin. I hear the toilet flush and Kitty comes out of the bathroom wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. That is when I get to see her face. I glided through the walls into her room and see Kitty for the first time in fourteen years. She looks just like her grandmama: little mouth, big green eyes, high cheek bones. My beautiful baby girl.

But she is sickeningly skinny now that I see her. She starts to change and I start to turn away to give her privacy but then I see a cut on her waist, and her arms and her chest. I glided over to her so fast I disturbed the air and a paper fell. She turned around and faced me head on with me only a foot away. I see the cuts more clearly now as she stares through me at the fallen paper, knowing there is no breeze in the stuffy room.

Some of the cuts are self-self inflicted. Others are-they look like battle scars.

Kitty...what have you been doing, baby.

She turns away and so do I and face Elder with a questioning look.

He shakes his head sadly and turns away as well and glides out of the room. I follow him but he has gone. He left me here alone or only made himself scarce to me.

I turn back to Kitty's room but decided against going in. I don't want to see those scars again.

I, instead, go into the kitchen and see Keith with a band around his arm and a needle in his hand. I stop suddenly and watch him. He stabs his arm with the vile concoction and I try- I really do try- to hold in my shriek, but I can't, and I let it go.

Keith drops his needle and Kitty runs out of her room half dressed.

â What the hell?â she said.

â Mary?â said he.

â She's dead, you idiot!â she yelled at him, only making me want to scream again.

â Shut up! Just shut up!â Keith yelled back, covering his ears with his hands and rocking back and fourth.

â You crazy old bastard!â she screamed.

I flinch at her language and I can feel the shriek building inside me. Kitty slams her door again and Keith sinks to fetal position and rocks back and fourth still covering his ears.

Kitty yanks her door open again and stomps down the hall into the kitchen, Kieth is blocking the refrigerator and she kicks him out of the way. And he lets her, only to roll into a ball on the floor.

It is still building, I can feel it, I know it's coming.

â Bye, Keith,â Kitty quietly said.

Before she was out the door Keith yelled after her, â It's all your fault!â

I'm in the box screaming until the need to scream finally ceased and all the while Elder watched me, arms folded, and leaned against the wall with a weary expression and a hint of annoyance.

â I think you underestimated the situation, Elder.â

He shrugged and continued to stare.

â What happened to their guardians?â

â She was vanquished when their world was consumed.â

â By what!â I demanded.

â By free will, darkness, bad choices. She couldn't survive there, Mary.â he said quietly.

â Kitty...â

â Kitty is...disturbed. Keith is hopeless, He lost his mind years ago,â he said, â a broken heart will do that to a man in love...â

â He wasn't suppose to-â

â Fate is odd sometimes, what happened has happened and you are only a spectator of these current events. You seem to forget that when you are around them.â

â What do you expect! They are my family, Elder!â

He glares at me, forcing it, I know he never wishes to threaten me unless it is truly necessary.

â They were your family, not anymore,â he said harshly, his voice cracked and I knew he wanted to hold me, heal the pain he had just inflicted upon me.

That was the first time I felt a tear stain my face.

â I want to go back.â

He sighs and waves his hand.

â I think it is time you come to the realization that they are doomed. Beautiful humans consumed by dark fate. There is nothing I can allow you to do and you are not to help them. They are not your family anymore.â

â I know that!â I hissed at him,â I just want to see them...â

He nodded his head and the walls fell away.

We stood alone in the kitchen, the house was dark and quiet, the smell was not as pungent as it had been the first night I arrived and I wondered if that was because they cleaned or I am just immune.

I glided down the hall, taking my time to ingest my surroundings. The house was still a wreak and there was a dried puddle of blood left behind in the kitchen from where Keith had lain in fetal desperation. And Kitty just left him there. I hoped fiercely that he hadn't lost a fatal amount of blood.

I continued on to the back of the house towards the bedrooms and spotted a closed door. I went through.

The room was painted black and the walls were covered with photos; drawings tacked up; armature paintings hung.

Photographs framed.

I saw a drawing tacked and I knew immediately who the artist was. It was a drawing of Kitty and her daddy holding hands in what looked like a little garden. And there was another next to it of a dark haired woman lying in a box with red smudges on her face. My stomach knotted and I turned away it.

A photograph caught my eye and I see myself, and Keith and Kitty all squeezed together so Keith could take the picture with his free hand, the other being around my waist pulling me closer while squishing Kitty to the point where she squealed her sweet little laugh. I could hear her laugh echo in the silence of the night.

I looked away and started to leave before I saw the picture hanging across from me. It was Keith and I...our wedding-smiling happily with bright love in our eyes. I could literally see the sparkle in his eyes from where I stood and I moved closer to it. His smile was so beautiful, boyish and handsome like the last time I saw him with my living eye. And myself-with my arms wrapped around him- I have never seen myself so happy.

â Pity..â said Elder as he gazed at the photo over my shoulder.

I can't do this.

I can't forget my family and leave them here like this. Leave Kitty here with those marks. Leave Keith here with his pain.

I went out of the black room and into Kitty's, she lies asleep in her full sagging mattress. Her sheets are filthy and the odor is nearly impossible to ignore. Her lamp was still on and a book was laid out over her belly. I looked more closely and found that it was her journal. I inconspicuously glanced over my should to find Elder but he was nowhere to be seen. I lifted the book, without touching it, off of her belly and flipped it over so I could scan her recent entry.

I needed to know what was going on and how this happened.

I can never forget. I will never forget. No matter what Elder said.

Dear Diary

Today is Wednesday and I can remember everything- everything from that day so many years ago. I Hate Wednesday! Why does this day have to exist. I just want to forget, but God won't let me. Keith won't let me. He still screams at me that it was all my fault; that I was so stupid, that I was so stupid, that I was so stupid!

Why won't you let me forget! Or kill me yourself! I have tried so many times but I just can't do it. The blade wont go as deep as I need it to. I need to just suck it up and do it. Keith wont miss me. He will be glad I'm dead, one less thing for him to deal with. Not that he deals with anything anymore, the crazy bastard. I want to kill him sometimes, make him feel the pain he causes me. Let him join up with Mary in hell where he belongs. They both can go to hell! Oh! It well never be Keith's fault... it was always mine. Why did I run? Why was I so stupid! Why did you make me do that! I just want my mommy; I want my mommy; I want my mommy.

I'm sorry mommy.

I'm so sorry.

I looked up- away from the contents of the journal and into Kitty's eyes as she sits up in her bed staring, frightened, at the floating book.

She can't see me.

But she can see the book in the air. She watched it move as I moved to her nightstand, take her pen. She continues to stare as I write in her journal:

IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT, DARLING...

â Mary!â screamed Elder. Kitty jumped and I drop the book in her lap before I whirl around to see him facing me, a look of disgust and indignation plastered on his face. â What have you done...â

I hold my chin up.

I owe you nothing.

â Answer me!â

I hear Kitty squeal... she is trying so hard not to scream.

My brave baby.

I turn to her and reach out my hand. She does not see it, instead she turns her journal over and sees my message.

Elder clutches my wrist but I yank it out and push him away somewhere through the wall. I turn towards Kitty again and I touch her cheek gently with my hand.

Kitty looks up, her eyes widen, she touches my hand.

â Mommy...â

She sees me. A tear streams down her cheek.

â Kitty.â

She chokes on her tears which are now pouring and she tries to clutch my hand tighter but it only falls through and touches her own cheek.

â Mommy!â She squeaks. Her voice is still sweeter than sugar, easily broken by broken love. I'm sorry, baby.

Elder yanks me away from her draggingme back into his white prison.

â You have gone too far!â he bellowed

â I haven't gone far enough!â I screamed at him, â Let me back down!â

â No, you're done.â he glared at me. This old man I have never seen so full of hared and disgust. He looked neither hurt nor sympathetic.

â I had to do it, Elder.â

â That was not your job! You upset their fate!â

â I. Had. To.â

â And you knew your consequences...â

â She needed to know!â

â She was meant to suffer!â

My heart ached more painfully than I had ever felt, even when I was alive.

â She is a baby, Elder.â

â Babies need to suffer too.â

The ache came again.

â You... are so wrong.â

â I'm not the one going to Hell, Mary.â he looks me up and down and turns around shimmering away.

The ache in my heart is unbearable and I fall, face first, and roll onto my back clutching my chest. I hear his voice, so far away, from the day I died and so many others.

â Pity...â

â Sad...â

â Poor lady...â

â Oh my God!â

â Somebody help!â

â Mary!â Oh! Keith.

â Stand back!â

â Mommy?â Oh!

â Mary!â

â They are no longer your family, they are doomed. I think it is time you face this realization...â

â You... are so wrong.â

â I am not the one going to Hell...â

I rolled onto my side and I see Elder with the man in Red come to me take into his dread, never leaving an ounce to shed for he does not care for what is said...

â I'm already there.â

The night Mary Forester revealed herself to her daughter was the night the fate of the remaining Forester's lives would change, for the better.

Kitty never told her father what happened that night but the weight of the blame was lifted miraculously from her shoulders enabling her to change her perspective on life and her future. The dark overcast of shame and

regret simultaneously shimmered away as the bright light of love and expectations filled her cylinder.

Kitty Forester continued to work at DC Burgers but only to raise money to help her father cleanse himself, and with that cleanse her father's mind seemed to slowly rotate back to natural reality. He no longer shouted his wife's name nor did he scream at his daughter.

A chain reaction had been set by the brave risk Mary Forester took.

She healed her family as much as she was able to and even then the healing that she procured made a dramatic change in her husband's life.

He changed himself, for his daughter as well as for his own well being. He was able to work into getting a degree in psychology so that he could become a mental health doctor for widows dealing with the deceased lovers.

By the time Kitty turned twenty-five she had her first child, a little girl named Mary, and a job she cherished being a social worker; working most cases involving troubled teens who lost their parents to drugs. She was married to a doctor Mathew Jade; she met him in her third year of college and couldn't stop herself from falling in love with him.

Although Keith was clean and working again he still occasionally fell into reveries his wife and himself had made together over the years. He would hold her picture in his hand and cry tears of joy or sadness depending on the reverie that overtook his thoughts. He praised Kitty's marriage to Mathew and was overjoyed when he was named Godfather for little Mary Jade. He loved Mary more than anything, as if she were his own baby girl. Mary seemed to be the only living being that could make Keith so happy and sedate.

Mary Forester never got to see her family after that night. She was condemned for eternity for her disobedience. But she felt the elation in her family's lives. She knew she did what was right, and would do again without hesitation.

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