The Soldier's Ex-Lover

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After sharing a summer romance, a girl and boy lead their lives in different directions - she plans to go to University while he joins the Army. However, both of their lives are put on hold after a fateful phonecall.

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He was due home in three days. She knew because sheâ d heard it from her grandmother.

â The Barkersâ son is home on the Saturday,â sheâ d told her. â Heâ s back until the Monday, and then heâ s got to go out to Afghanistan again.â

She wondered if sheâ d see him again before he went back to Afghanistan. She wanted to, badly, even if they just passed in the street and swapped a smile.

She was over him now. It had been three years since their childish romance. They were just kids; barely over fifteen. It had lasted the whole summer, and what a wonderful summer it had been, but it was over now. Heâ d joined the army and had his fair share of military girlfriends, while sheâ d gone on to focus on her education. She was just finishing college and was planning to go to University.

Heâ d been in Afghanistan for nearly three months now. Sheâ d heard nothing from him â after all, why should she? Their seven-week romance, as blissful as it was, hardly compared to a relationship. It had been more like a movie romance. Theyâ d held hands as they walked along the riverbank. Theyâ d lain on the grass in the farmerâ s field, and ran like hell when the farmer came out, yelling about the youth of today. And theyâ d kissed sweetly under the gentle glow of the streetlamp at midnight.

Theyâ d never uttered the â Lâ word. Sheâ d wanted to, a thousand times. But it always seemed too much, too soon.

Sheâ d adored him silently from a distance. Theyâ d been in the same Year 10 lessons. Sheâ d been the quiet, studious girl, while heâ d been the class clown. She hadnâ t even dreamt that he could return her feelings, but he did.

â I like you,â heâ d said, on the last day before the summer holidays. Sheâ d been stood at her locker and she met his words with a smile which stretched from ear to ear.

He asked for her address and she gave him it. The very next day he called at her house on his bike. Theyâ d ridden out into the town, her sat on the handlebars, her summer dress blowing in the wind, her hair flying out like a waterfall behind her. Sheâ d shrieked as they sped along. Every so often his hand would creep along the handlebar, stroking her waist affectionately.

And so they spent the next seven weeks together. When they werenâ t together, they were texting or calling one another into the early hours of the morning, until her grandmother would sharply tap on the door and command her to be quiet, and sheâ d hang up in a state of panic. On the other end, he would chuckle to himself, guessing what had happened.

They were so young, just fifteen, and their love was so beautiful. But it was a childish romance all the same, and by the time they were back at school they no longer acknowledged eachother.

Theyâ d pass in the corridor and throw eachother a shy, secret smile, but apart from that their contact was very, very limited. They were no longer in the same lessons. They hardly ever spoke. He no longer rode by her grandparentâ s house on his red bike, and she, in turn, no longer looked out of the window waiting for him.

Still, when sheâ d heard that he was joining the army, sheâ d been shocked and shaken. Didnâ t he know the dangers? He could get killed, or seriously injured. He was so full of life. It didnâ t seem right for him to join the army.

She went off to college but eagerly awaited casual updates from her grandparents about his circumstances. Sometimes theyâ d be positive.

â Oh, I spoke to Joyce Barker in the supermarket today. She says her sonâ s getting along fine. Apparently itâ s not too bad over there.â

Other times it wouldnâ t be as good.

â Itâ s getting dangerous, Joyce says. Sheâ s worried sick about him. He only gets to write once a month now, if that, Joyce says. She fears for his life, bless her.â

She worried too, though of course sheâ d never admit it. Her grandparents never knew about their brief romance, and as far as she herself was concerned, it was dead and buried.

Now, she lay on her bed, thinking about him. Just because she was *thinking* about him didnâ t mean she was *feeling* anything for him, she told herself. She was simply remembering the times theyâ d shared.

Then she text her best friend, and played the guitar for a while. She flicked through the TV channels half-heartedly and sorted out her nail varnishes in order of colour. Wednesday afternoons were always boring because she had two free periods and so didnâ t need to be at college.

The telephone rang and she considered answering it, but before she could do so her grandmother reached it first. She listened nonchalantly, not really interested but having nothing else to do. The beginning of the conversation was boring and uninteresting, but the ending startled her as her grandmotherâ s tone changed considerably.

â Oh, no. Oh, dear, dear, dear. Thatâ s awful, absolutely awful. Poor Joyce and Robert. Ohâ ¦I just donâ t know what to say. Oh, the poor boy.â

She froze. Time froze. Her body froze. She knew what sheâ d heard but she couldnâ t believe her ears. It couldnâ t be true. Sheâ d wait until her grandmother mentioned it; if she didnâ t, then sheâ d misheard, made it up, got it wrong.

She trudged downstairs carefully, as if in a dream. Her grandmother was shaking her head slowly, her face white.

â Oh, darling. Your friend from school, Joyceâ s sonâ ¦â She nearly choked on the words. â He died this morning.â

She could not believe it, even now, when the words had been slapped in her face. She stumbled backwards, shaking her head.

â No,â she said.

They had kissed on the field three years ago and it felt like forever at the time. She wished theyâ d promised forever now. That way she might have meant something more. Whose was the last face heâ d seen in his mind? It had probably been his mother or fatherâ s, or younger brother and sistersâ , or maybe one of his

many army girlfriends. Anyoneâ s but hers.

She looked her grandmother up and down. *Liar*. â No!â she said again, louder this time.

Then, for reasons her grandmother did not understand, she burst into tears. She now understood the phrase *bursting into tears*. Her stomach trembled and quaked with the effort of the sudden intense tears. They were too much to bear as they rolled endlessly down her face. Her brain burst too, spouting out memories like a fountain, playing them over and over like a movie in her head.

She ran upstairs and wouldnâ t listen to her grandmotherâ s desperate calls. She threw herself onto the bed, sobbing into her pillow.

Her feelings werenâ t gone. It wasnâ t over, it never had been and it never would be. She loved him, she loved him, with all of her heart and every ounce of her being she loved and desired him.

And somewhere, as he felt her love instilling into his lifeless heart, the dust from his burnt and blackened body blew in the wind and smiled.

A/N: This probably isn't my best work, but it's something I simply had to write, for personal reasons. The ending is a little strange, I know. But I hope you enjoyed it anyway:)

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