

SHATTERED COFFIN

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Adapted from The Glass Coffin

Sam watched the ambulance take away the girl, Katrina, just a girl in his class. He didn't know much about her, only that she kept to herself and everyone else pretty much ignored her. Even now, the class resumed and they all act like a fellow student didn't just collapse in the room.

Sam shook his head and sat back down at his desk, he zoned out, looking out the window when the teacher came by with his paper. He took it from her and tried not to rip up the piece of paper, the F glaring back at him. He turned the paper over so he wouldn't see it, feeling hot in his face; he looked out the window once more. His teacher droning on in the background, but he kept thinking about the girl that had been taken away.

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Two weeks later and the girl still hadn't come back to school. Sam sat at his dining room table, lost in thought. The sounds of his family talking around him just floated in one ear and out the other. After a few minutes he thought he heard someone saying his name. He raised his head to see his father, Dale, staring at him expectantly.

"Did you hear what I said?" his father asked.

"No, sorry ..." Sam said, uncertain.

"I was talking about that F you got in English. You know your brother here, he has straight A's in all of his classes." He said, the pride obvious in his tone.

Sam just frowned, looking at his brother, Luke. Sam said nothing as he grabbed his half-finished dinner plate and stomped into the kitchen. He tossed the plate into the sink, almost breaking it. From the other room, he could hear his mother yelling at him.

“You better not break my dishes, young man!” His mother’s voice was stern.

Sam just ignored her and retreated to his bedroom, locking the door behind him. He sucked at school, and he hated it there. But that wasn’t even what he had been thinking about. He just couldn’t stop wondering what had happened to the girl from two weeks ago. The following afternoon, instead of getting off at his usual bus stop, Sam hopped off a few miles early.

He remembered vividly where she lived, because of how ugly he thought her house was. Bright yellow paint covers a two-story house, with a wraparound porch and giant thorn bushes that block all of the ground level windows. It gave him the creeps, but his curiosity got the better of him and he found himself wandering up the cracked pathway. Up three wide stone steps, onto the porch and finally reaching a large solid wood door.

Sam raised his hand, in a loose fist, to knock on the door. But it opened before he could. Standing in the door way was a woman, who had to be Katrina’s mother. She looked like an older version of her, with long brown hair, a pale complexion and a very lithe body type. While her overall appearance wasn’t a warm one, most mothers creeped him out, there was a softness in her blue eyes and the way she looked at him.

“Can I help you?” She asked softly, her hand remaining on the door as if she were prepared to close it at any time.

Sam cleared his throat a few times before finding his voice, and courage to speak.

“I’m Sam, I am in the same English class as Katrina.” Sam said, his voice uncertain.

She merely blinked at him, not saying anything in response. Sam shifted uncomfortably where he stood.

“I uhh... I was there when the ambulance came. And I ... I was just wondering if ... she was okay?” Sam continued.

The softness in her eyes disappeared, immediately replaced with a cold feeling that sent a shiver down Sam’s spine.

“I do not have a daughter, not anymore. She died five years ago. And I’m sick and tired of you kids tormenting me!” She shouted, then slammed the door.

Sam stumbled down the steps, his face white. His heart racing in his chest as he backed away from the yellow house. Dead, she was dead... five years ago? That made no sense... Katrina had just started attending school... and then she was taken to the hospital... Sam shook his head, getting more confused by the second. He had all but put the house out of his sight when something black fluttered in the corner of his eye.

He looked up, seeing that one of the second-floor windows on the side of the house was cracked open. What looked like a black curtain had escaped through the crack and was dancing in the breeze. He squinted, focusing on the maybe 3 inch crack and he could have sworn that there had been a face looking at him. Katrina’s face. But the moment he thought he saw it, then it disappeared.

He all but ran home, his heart racing in his chest as fear clutched at his throat. He couldn’t make heads or tails of what was going on. Had he imagined a girl come to his school? Had he been hallucinating this whole time? He didn’t stop running until he was upstairs and safely nestled in his bedroom. He dropped his bag and slid to the floor right in front of his bedroom door.

He finally caught his breath before the rapid tapping on his door prompted him to stand up and open it. His brother, Luke, was standing there with a smirk on his stupid face. He was a senior in high school and pretty much the bane of Sam's existence. In fact, he didn't really like anyone in his family and with good reason, he was never good enough for any of them.

"Sup bro? You look like you saw a ghost. Eh, I don't care what your problems are." Luke pushed by Sam and into his room. "Mom and dad put me in charge, they'll be gone for a few days. And I am throwing a party. One that you ain't invited to." He said, dabbing Sam in the chest to make his point.

Sam smacked his hand away from his chest, and glared at his brother.

"If you throw a party I'll tell them, and you'll get in trouble."

"Hah, yea, like they'll believe you over me. And you're gonna clean up when it's over, or else. But in the meantime, you gotta get. I don't need your loserness around the house."

"You're kicking me out? Where am I supposed to go?!" Sam asked.

Luke just shrugged, he snatched up Sam's bag and proceeds to toss it out of his bedroom window. "Don't know, don't care."

Sam trembled with rage, he stomped out of his room, down the stairs and out of the house. Slamming the door behind him. He picked up the things that had fallen out of his bag, then slung it over his shoulder and started walking. He didn't know why he stayed here, none of them cared about him. Would they even notice if he disappeared? He walked for a long time, until it was dark and he had turned himself around.

In attempt to return home, he figured he would be able to sneak into the house while Luke was distracted. He accidentally found himself back at the bright yellow house, even more apparent at night. The side window was closed, the curtains were still. But Sam still found himself staring at it, as if he expected it to open.

He began to walk by the house, trying not to let it creep him out. But once again, he saw movement. This time it wasn't a crack in the window, it was the window being flung open. A string of thick sheets was tossed out of the window, dangling alongside the house. Following soon after that, was a girl, Katrina, making her way out the window and down to the ground. She landed in the grass softly, a small knapsack on her back. She turned and started heading towards where Sam was.

But she stopped in her tracks when she saw him standing there, watching her. She was much prettier than her mother, or maybe it was just because she wasn't yelling at him. Her brown hair was soft, wavy and framed her young face. She wore simple jeans, black sneakers, and an oversized hoody. She continued to stare at him for what seemed like forever, before she took off running, away from him and her house.

"Hey! Wait please!" Sam called after her, he had to get answers. He had to know he wasn't crazy. He chased after her, panting hard as he ran. Dang, she could really run for a 13-year-old girl. They both ran for about 2 miles before she turned and disappeared into a dense area of woods at the outskirts of a park.

He hesitated, staring at the dark trees uncertainly. Maybe this wasn't worth it, maybe he could just put this behind him and go on with his life. Yea, some life, living in the shadow of his

jerk brother. Dealing with his parents who never listened to him. He swallowed his fear, took out his smartphone and turned on the flash light. Cautiously, he ventured on into the woods.

He had no idea where he was going, and the further he delved into the forest the quieter it seemed to become. There should be noises, sounds of bugs and other forest creatures even at night. But there was nothing. All he could hear was the sound of his own labored breathing. Suddenly, he felt something grab his wrist, making him scream like a little girl and drop his phone which happened to land with the flashlight facing down, pitching him in darkness.

“What do you want?” A female voice asked, close by.

Sam knelt, his hands searching the dirt until he found his phone and aimed it towards the girl. She looked at him with a quizzical expression on her face, but otherwise she appeared totally relaxed being out here in the middle of the woods.

“I ... I want to know what happened to you.” Sam stated bluntly, he didn’t have time to beat around the bush. And the longer he was out here in the woods, the more creeped out he became.

“Nothing happened, now leave me alone.” She said, then turned away from him and started walking. Sam quickly caught up to her, grabbing her hand this time and stopping her.

“Please! I feel like I’m losing my mind! I know you went to my school, I know you went to the hospital and now your mother is saying you’re dead!”

“Shhh! Jeez do you have to be so loud all the time?”

“Sorry...”

“You won’t leave me alone, will you?” She asked, almost defeated.

“Not until you explain, something, anything.” He all but pleaded, forgetting he still had her hand in his own. He quickly let go of her, his face turning pink but luckily it wasn’t visible in the minimum light they had.

She sighed. “Fine, come with me.” She started walking off again, but Sam kept close to her. He didn’t say anything until they reached a small clearing in the woods, for some reason it wasn’t dark, it was well lit, as if the moon were shining down on this specific area. But the sky was cloudy and dark, same as everywhere else.

Sam stopped at the edge of the clearing, watching her go into the center where there was a pile of rocks conveniently placed like something to sit on which she did. She pulled her knees up to her chest, and looked at him.

“You wouldn’t understand, even if I told you everything. You would just... you would think I was crazy.” She said, her hands clasped around her calves.

Sam slowly approached her, then sat down on one of the smaller rocks, expecting it to be uncomfortable, but it was better than some of chairs he had at home.

“I won’t. I swear.”

She just looked at him, her eyes searching. Finally, she tore her gaze from him and stared at the dark sky. “I’ve been like this all my life. Its... a curse... a family curse that we’ve had for many, many generations. You know... sleeping beauty? Well...” Katrina paused, as if needing to find the courage to finish her words.

“She is my ancestor.”

“I don’t... understand.”

“She was the original one to be cursed.”

“But that’s just…”

“Just a fairytale? No – it was real. It happened. It still happens.”

Sam just looked at her, growing more and more confused.

“Aurora, my ancestor, was able to have one child before she fell into an eternal slumber. She remained that way until an enemy killed her where she lay. And the curse... was passed down, through generation. Appearing in weird ways. And only in women.”

Katrina began to tremble, discussing this was more upsetting to her than she thought. Sam didn’t know what to say, so he just held her hand. This seemed to be enough to get her to finish.

“It begins happening after a girl in our family turns 8. That is when she first falls into the slumber, it doesn’t last long. But it is enough for anyone to think you’re dead. And it keeps happening... until the girl turns 16. That’s when it becomes irreversible. That is until some ‘prince’ comes along and brings her back. But only long enough for her to bear a child. Then... she’ll fall back into the slumber... and stay that way. I can’t go to school, not with this... curse... but I wanted to... so I forged my mother’s signatures... and I enrolled. But then I collapsed and she became furious with me so she locked me back up in my room.”

She went silent, her eyes had closed, her body was shaking. Sam just stared at her, for what seemed like forever. He didn’t know why, but he believed her. He felt it, something about this girl, he just knew she was telling the truth.

“So... don’t stay, leave. Let’s... go together.” Sam said, a sureness in his tone that he had never had before.

“W-what? What are you talking about? We can’t...”

“You were already planning on running away, weren’t you?” He asked, looking at her bag.

“I am... yes.”

“I hate my life here. And no one would miss me.” He squeezed her hand tightly. “Let’s run away together. I’ll help you find a way to break this curse. You’ll never be alone again.” He looked at her so sure.

“You don’t even know me! How could you leave everything behind, just for me?” She asked, her voice quivering.

He doesn’t let go of her hand, he holds her gaze.

“My name is Sam. It’s nice to meet you.” He said, making her laugh just a little bit. She shook her head in disbelief.

“You really sure about this, Sam?” She asked.

“Katrina, I’ve never been surer about anything in my entire life.” He said.

“O-okay. Let’s go.” She said.

They both stand up, and wander off into the darkness, hand in hand.