

Marlee Parkinson

*Their Love Meets at Midnight*

She waltzed down the long narrow hall, a bouquet of dim, dingy, and blue flowers in her hands that dropped so low they could almost touch the floor. The long, extensive train of her gloomy, green dress dragged the ground. It almost sounded like a body, one being dragged on a floor, that is. Her face, long with sadness, drooped down. Though her face sagged, her cheekbones remained high. Her jawline and exposed collar-bones looked skeleton-like. Her hair was long and sleek, reaching almost waist length. Though her expressions appeared sorrowful, her face was olamic. Untouched and unscathed by aging and time.

As the night waned into a new day, her hand, cold and rigid, grasped the bronze, metallic doorknob. She turned and the door creaked open. Its groan sounded like a wounded animal in immense pain. She walked down the gray, stone steps, her heels clicking with each passing step. The long walkway, lined with white rose bushes nearing their demise, grew smaller and tighter with each stride. She encountered a rusted, towering gate. She pushed it with a single index finger and it granted her access to its contents. Her heartbeat grew louder and louder with every pace. Her heart grieved and yearned for the comfort of familiarity.

On the remainder of the walk to their rendezvous point, she stopped *dead* in her tracks. She had been startled by the distant, bone-chilling howl of a wolf pack. Her icy hands tightened their grip on the perishing bouquet. Her stomach was queasy with a timorous feeling. She reluctantly laid down the dying flowers on the grave that read her lover's name. Someone behind her quietly said, "It's been a long time without you by my side." She snapped up out of disturbance. She stared at her deceased lover as he stared back at her. His eyes pierced into her soul. Though she felt as though she should be rejoicing, she couldn't help but ask "How are you alive?"

They walked to the fortress they once shared, now unfamiliar to her. They sat and conversed in the parlor farthest from the door, as her lover had insisted that was his favorite place to spend time with her. The wallpaper was peeling and lusterless, losing its familiar vibrant orange. She

Marlee Parkinson

said little and studied him for what felt like an eternity. The crinkles of his face resting perfectly on his green eyes. She ran her seeking eyes over his face again and again. She broke eye contact and let out “ This must be a dream.” She scanned over his face with her eyes one more final time and realized the freckle on his left eyebrow had shifted over to his right eyebrow.

Her jaw dropped ever so slightly and her “lover” noticed. His smirk revealed something more sinister, something her lover would never have or show. He replied to her shock, “Took you long enough to figure out it isn’t me, darling.”