



**E**lliot had been wandering the old town cemetery for over a

century. He had long since accepted his fate as a ghost, cursed to linger in the land of the living. He watched seasons change, tombstones erode, and generations come and go. The town had evolved, but Elliot remained the same—a specter trapped in time.

One autumn evening, when the moon hung low and the air shimmered with the chill of approaching winter, a girl wandered into the cemetery. She was different from the others. Where most visitors arrived with mourning in their eyes, she carried curiosity. She wasn't afraid of the whispers of the dead or the shadows that danced between the gravestones. Instead, she seemed drawn to them, as if listening for something no one else could hear.

Her name was Clara.

Elliot watched her from a distance, fascinated by the way she traced her fingers along the names carved into the stones, whispering them as if calling their spirits to wake. He had seen many come and go, but never before had he felt such a longing—a longing to be seen, to be known.

One evening, Clara returned, carrying an old book with a cracked leather cover. She sat near Elliot's grave, completely unaware of his

presence, and began to read aloud. Her voice was warm, rich, and full of life—so much life that Elliot could almost feel it seeping into his ghostly form.

He found himself drawn to her words, lingering closer each night as she returned to read beneath the willow tree. With every story, every whispered name, he felt something shift within him. He was no longer just a wandering ghost—he was someone again. He was Elliot.

One night, as the wind howled through the trees, Clara shivered and pulled her coat tighter around her shoulders. Without thinking, Elliot reached out, his translucent fingers hovering just above her hand. To his astonishment, she gasped and looked around, as if sensing his presence.

“Hello?” she whispered.

Elliot’s form flickered. Could she feel him? Could she hear him?

Clara hesitated, then laughed softly to herself. “I must be imagining things,” she murmured.

Elliot wished he could tell her she wasn’t.

Determined to make her aware of him, Elliot began leaving signs—gently moving her book when she looked away, causing the wind to carry the sound of her name. At first, she thought it was coincidence, but soon, she began to believe. And one night, as she whispered to the stars, she spoke directly to him.

“I don’t know who you are,” she said, “but I know you’re here. And I think you’re listening.”

Elliot's spirit surged with warmth. She knew.

Over the following weeks, Clara returned each night, speaking into the quiet, asking questions only the wind could answer. Though Elliot couldn't speak, he found ways to communicate—rustling the leaves for yes, stillness for no. Their strange, silent conversations became the highlight of his existence, and with each passing night, he fell more in love with the girl who spoke to ghosts.

But love between the living and the dead is a cruel thing.

One night, Clara arrived with a sad smile. "I'm leaving soon," she said. "I got accepted into a university across the country. I won't be able to visit anymore."

Elliot's heart, though long since ceased, felt as if it shattered.

She hesitated, as if waiting for a sign. But Elliot couldn't move, couldn't will the wind to speak. The grief of his ghostly existence weighed too heavily upon him.

With a sigh, Clara placed a single rose on his grave. "Thank you... for whatever you are. For listening."

And then, she was gone.

Elliot remained by the willow tree for days, weeks, months. The wind no longer carried her voice. The cemetery felt emptier than it ever had before. He was alone again.

Until one night, many years later, a familiar voice broke through the silence.

"Hello?"

Elliot turned, and there she was—older, her hair streaked with silver, her face lined with the passage of time, but her eyes just as bright as he remembered.

Clara had returned.

Tears shimmered in her eyes as she knelt before his grave. “I don’t know if you’re still here,” she whispered, “but I never forgot you.”

Elliot reached out, his hand hovering above hers. And this time, for the first time, she felt him.

A ghost of a touch. A whisper of warmth.

She gasped, then smiled. “I knew it.”

Elliot didn’t know what had changed—if time had made their worlds thinner, if love had found a way to bridge the gap. But as Clara sat beside his grave once more, whispering his name, he knew one thing for certain.

He was no longer alone.