

RECOLLECTION OF REGRET

Written by

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INT. ELEVATOR - DUSK

NORA (20s), sits slumped over and unconscious in the corner of an all white elevator. Black, smokey haze covers the floor. Nora snaps awake. She looks around frantically, then looks down at her hands and body. Noticing the mist, she follows it up.

Standing by the doors is a shadowy figure. A bundle of smoke wrapped in a black cloak. THE REAPER turns to face her. White eyes glow as the figure observes Nora, almost like it's scanning her. She backs up even further to the wall. It has no mouth, yet it speaks in a human sounding voice.

REAPER

Are you whole?

NORA

What?

It pulls away as she stands.

REAPER

Many souls pass on with regrets.

NORA

What's going on? Where am I?

REAPER

I guide souls to the afterlife. You died at the age of 87 years. I am here to-

NORA

I died?!

Nora paces.

NORA (CONT'D)

No. No way! I can't be dead!

REAPER

All humans die. There is nothing you can do about this fact.

The elevator starts to move.

NORA

Where am I going? Heaven? Hell? Purgatory? Is this purgatory?

REAPER

None of those. You carry too much
regret. Your soul must be mended
before you pass on.

INT. NORA'S ROOM - MORNING

The elevator stops and dings softly. The doors slide open.

Nora walks out into her childhood bedroom. Sunshine pours through open windows. She looks around and sees a younger version of herself, a child no older than nine.

CHILD NORA is doodling with some crayons. On the paper is a drawing of a man in blue holding a gun pointed at a man in black holding a bag of money. Child Nora grabs a yellow crayon and draws lines between them. She makes the noises of bullets flying as she draws.

Pleased with her masterpiece, Child Nora sprints out the door unaware of her adult self.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GABRIEL (40s) sits on the couch watching TV. He mindlessly scrolls through channels. Child Nora bounces down the stairs with a big grin. Suddenly, she stops and her smile disappears. Gabriel is standing in front of the TV.

GABRIEL

Come on! Damn thing always does
this! Work you piece of shit!

Gabriel eventually gives up and sits back down. He steps carefully over shards of glass in the carpet.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Layla! Layla get me a beer!

Finally noticing Child Nora, he glares over at her.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

What do you want?

She says nothing, just holds out her drawing. Gabriel sighs and pats the couch. She smiles and jumps up next to him. Adult Nora and The Reaper follow down the stairs slowly.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Did you draw this?

CHILD NORA

Yep!

Gabriel squints at the drawing. He points to the man in blue.

GABRIEL

Who's this?

CHILD NORA

That's you and you shot the bad guy!

Gabriel sets the drawing down.

GABRIEL

Nora, I don't just shoot people left and right.

CHILD NORA

But the bad guys always get shot!

A key rattles in the door. LAYLA (40s) enters, carrying two massive bags of groceries that cover her upper body.

LAYLA

Can you grab one of these?

Child Nora briefly looks up at her father's cold face and runs over to her struggling mother.

INT. ELEVATOR - DUSK

Adult Nora reaches out to her mother, only to suddenly be back in the elevator.

NORA

What the hell was that?

REAPER

You carry too mu-

NORA

I have regrets, I get it! But why are we going back?

INT. SAINT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The elevator dings and the doors slide open.

Nora walks out and looks up. Rain pounds the roof of the same house. Lightning flashes, thunder rumbles.

Gabriel sits on the couch alone. He's hunched over a BEER BOTTLE. Next to him is a wooden crutch. Eyes glossed over. Mouth slightly open. Seven more sit on a table in front of him. A broken bottle rests on the carpet.

Layla sits awkwardly at the kitchen table. Next to her is an untouched glass of water. Her eyes dart around the room, frequently checking a clock on the wall. A familiar scene.

Suddenly Layla stands up and stares right at Nora.

LAYLA

Nora!

Nora stares back, then hears steps behind her. She looks back and sees herself as a teenager, about 15.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Where have you been all night?

TEEN NORA

I got it mom! I got the lead role!

LAYLA

Oh! Congratulations honey! I'm so proud of you!

They hug. Gabriel stands. The crutch wobbles. His grip on the bottle hasn't loosened at all.

GABRIEL

Nora! How many times do I have to fucking tell you?! You can't keep playing pretend your whole life!

He stumbles towards her. Layla steps between them.

LAYLA

Leave her alone! You're her father, act like it for once!

Gabriel stares, then starts to head back to rotting on the couch.

TEEN NORA

I'm not like you.

He stops. Thunder echoes.

GABRIEL

What?

TEEN NORA
You're broken! You see yourself
like some hero! You were just a cop
who got shot on the job!

Gabriel steps towards her. She stands her ground.

TEEN NORA (CONT'D)
Even if they didn't kick you out
for medical, you'd be too drunk to
shoot straight!

Lightning flashes. Glass breaks. Thunder claps. Teen Nora falls.

Blood streams from her forehead. Layla grabs her, unsure of what to do. Gabriel crashes to the hardwood floor.

INT. HOSPITAL (GABRIEL'S ROOM) - NIGHT

Gabriel lays in a cot. A machine softly beeps next to him.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A DOCTOR walks down the hallway of shiny tiles. He flips between papers, stopping when he sees Layla outside of a room. He glances between her and the papers.

DOCTOR
I just wanted to make sure you
fully understand what's happening
here.

Layla stares blankly at the floor.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Mrs. Saint?

LAYLA
Total liver and kidney failure.

Her strained eyes slowly look up.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Chances of him making it are next
to zero.

The doctor awkwardly shuffles with the papers.

INT. HOSPITAL (NORA'S ROOM)- CONTINUOUS

Nora looks out the window from her bed. A white patch covers her forehead.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
It's my understanding that your daughter is also here?

LAYLA (O.S.)
Yes, she's on the floor above. Why do you ask?

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Well, I'm not sure how much longer your husband has left. You might want to get her and say your goodbyes now...

The door creaks open. Layla steps in alone.

LAYLA
Nora, I need to talk to you...

She chokes back a sob.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Your father... he-

The room is empty. Layla looks around, then out the window.

EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Nora walks down the sidewalk. She swings a white jacket on and peels off the bandage.

INT. GABRIEL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gabriel's breathing slows down. For the first time in years, he looks truly calm. Gabriel Saint dies alone.

INT. ELEVATOR - DUSK

Nora, now with a scar on her forehead, stands next to The Reaper.

NORA
It was like karma finally caught up to him. Did you kill him?

REAPER

I assure you, I did no such thing.
Gabriel Saint died of organ
failure, a complication of his
alcoholism. There was no
intervention on his death.

Nora looks down, then a side-eye at The Reaper.

NORA

Did you do this with him?

The Reaper doesn't answer. Nora looks back down.

REAPER

Yes. His biggest regret was you.

Nora's eyes widen. She slowly looks around like she's
experiencing the elevator for the first time. The darkness in
her eyes fades, leaving a shine of empathy. The elevator
dings.

EXT. RED CARPET WALK - NIGHT

Cameras flash as the MOB OF PAPARAZZI swarm a sleek
limousine. The door swings open.

PAST NORA (30s) is the lead in this year's biggest movie. She
wears a bright red dress and heels, elegantly gliding down
the runway. REPORTERS nearly kill each other trying to talk
to her. Nora and The Reaper shuffle out of the backseat.

REPORTER #1

Nora! Nora! Over here!

REPORTER #2

Ms. Saint! Is it true that you met
Mr. Scheer in a school play?

PAST NORA

It's true, and I wouldn't take
direction from anyone else!

REPORTER #3

Do you know what happens tonight?

Time grinds to a halt. The shutters of cameras fade, replaced
by a quiet beep. The Reaper floats to her side. Cold sweat
slides down her face.

REAPER

Of course you remember. Such a
moment is not simply forgotten.

All noise disappears. The beep grows louder.

It floats further down the carpet, beyond both Noras, past the entrance. It circles around a grand trophy.

REAPER (CONT'D)

The best day of your life. The day
you got the recognition your talent
deserved.

The beeping hammers her ears.

Eyes water. There is no escape from the past.

REAPER (CONT'D)

Your greatest triumph.

INT. HOSPICE - NIGHT

Layla rests on a cot alone. The room is dark, her body faintly outlined by the soft light of beeping life support.

REAPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And your greatest loss.

INT. AWARD CEREMONY - NIGHT

Past Nora sits eagerly in the front row. This is her show and she knows it.

A man walks over to her and crouches down. He whispers something in her ear. Before he can finish, the booming voice of the announcer echoes.

ANNOUNCER

And the winner for best actress
is...

Past Nora dismisses him like she's swatting at a fly. Her eyes are hungry.

Insatiability. Validation. Make her proud. Prove him wrong.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Nora Saint!

The applause is deafening.

She proudly marches to the stage. The man tries once more to tell her something. He's scared, but not for himself. Practically shoving him to the ground, Nora keeps walking.

She is alone in her victory.

EXT. RED CARPET WALK - NIGHT

Celebrities exit the ceremony, some much happier than others. Looks of jealousy exchange between them.

As they head back to their rides, a lone pair of red heels lay abandoned.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Past Nora sprints down the street. Bare feet splash on the wet pavement.

She pushes past someone, his watch ticks. Jagged stones dig into her, leaving bloody footprints.

She glances around to make sure this is the right way. The hands of a clocktower swing too quickly.

She keeps moving forward, against the inevitability of fate.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Silence.

Doors smash open. Both Noras push through the lobby. They yell at the receptionist.

PAST NORA
Layla Saint!

NORA
Layla Saint!

The receptionist points down the hall. He starts to say something, but they're already gone.

Both Noras sprint down the hall. Past Nora trips. Leaving herself behind, Nora reaches for the door.

INT. HOSPICE - NIGHT

Darkness paints the room. Rain gently streams down the windows. Lightning flashes, thunder rumbles.

Nora stands in the doorway, outlined by the hallway light. The clock above the window ticks.

Out of time.

Nora slowly walks towards her mother. Her heavy steps beating like drums.

NORA

Mom?

Thunder answers. The Reaper floats in behind her.

REAPER

Layla Saint died two hours ago. She di-

NORA

I know that! I know what my own mother died of, alright?

NORA (CONT'D)

I was just hoping, that somehow, by some miracle, I would make it in time!

She falls to her knees beside Layla. Holding her mother's hand, she starts to cry. The Reaper watches from the doorway.

REAPER

Do you know why humans must die?

Nora glances back.

REAPER (CONT'D)

A story is not whole until it has ended.

It stands beside her.

REAPER (CONT'D)

What if you had listened to Gabriel? What if you had been here in time?

The two sit together as Nora cries. The Reaper looks at Nora, then at Layla.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAWN

Nora stands with slouched shoulders. Her eyes are red and her face is stained with tears. Rain drips from her clothes.

REAPER

"What if?" is the question humans often ask here. The answer is simple:

It turns to her.

REAPER (CONT'D)
It doesn't matter. Life is an
unstoppable and unpredictable
force.

Nora wipes her tears.

REAPER (CONT'D)
Layla would have been proud.

Nora looks up with a strained face and inhales sharply. She
shakes as she exhales and looks forward.

The elevator dings.

NORA
Even if you let me go back... even
if I tried harder...

NORA (CONT'D)
This is how it would end, isn't it?

The Reaper looks at her. The two share a moment of true
understanding.

REAPER
Nora Saint died at the age of 87
from natural causes.

Nora shivers. She clenches her fists and turns to The Reaper,
right in the eyes.

NORA
I'm not ready.

REAPER
No human can truly prepare for
death. But in this, I
wholeheartedly believe:

REAPER (CONT'D)
Your story was beautiful.

The Reaper is gone. Nora composes herself. There is no escape
from the past, but there is acceptance.

She is alone, she is whole.

The doors open.