

His Letter

For seven years, his letter lay nestled behind the mantelpiece, a silent witness to Rachel's lonely journey. She didn't know it was there; she couldn't possibly know. He'd left it propped up against an old snow globe without a word, trusting she would find it but unable to stay any longer and be sure. Then he'd left Rachel, out of necessity, all those years ago.

When his letter had first slid into its snug, unseen slot between the mantle and the wall, blown there by a fated gust of wind, it had remained optimistic. It had waited and waited, ever patient and hopeful. Rachel would find it. One day, she would see its white, crisp corner poking from between the drywall and stone; she had to see it.

But days became weeks and nothing changed. Except for Rachel. His letter heard her crying in lonely agony during the night. It ached to comfort her, as he would have done if he were still here. And it could bring her that comfort. His letter held all the answers-why he had left, where he would meet her again, how much he loved her. Rachel, knowing no explanation, needed to find it. Still, his letter could do nothing but listen.

As weeks became months, the spring breeze warmed to a sweltering heat, and still the letter waited. Eventually, Rachel's sobbing lessened. More time passed between her bouts of sadness, like slowing thunderclaps as a storm passes overhead. Laughter replaced bitter sobbing; new voices-sometimes male-echoed in her tiny home, reverberating off the walls and shaking his letter's wilting envelope.

In turn, his letter grew accustomed to its neglect and learned to appreciate its darkened surroundings. It befriended the graying cobwebs and dust bunnies, the pieces of cracked plaster that had fallen from the wall, and the long-lost buttons and threads doomed to this secret cranny of the house.

Over the years, one male voice became constant, laughing and talking with Rachel for long hours into the night. This man said the things that he would have said to her. His letter, still harboring those loving words she had never read, began to lose hope. It knew she might never find it now; her life was moving forward without him. The letter would lay here in wait until time destroyed it.

But the letter knew that his one wish was for Rachel to be happy. He might never know she hadn't read it; he might think she'd chosen to forget him. The letter knew that they would both live on in each other's hearts, but the path between them was forever lost.