

The Graveyard

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The graveyard was cold, dark and dreary. One weary oak tree leaned over the entrance gate and broken battered headstones were scattered all around. I could hear the sound of the howling wind and the creak and groan of branches as they swayed in the storm. The smell of fear and rotting leaves filled my nostrils and I swallowed deeply afraid I would get sick. As I walked towards my brother's grave, I heard another noise. It was slow heavy footsteps. I turned. A tall muscular man was walking towards me. His face was tough & covered in stubble to hide the scares which criss-crossed his jaw.

"I don't think this is such a good idea" I shouted over the wind.

"It's too late to change your mind," the man replied in a low threatening voice.

"Either we dig him up now or you spend the rest of your life wondering how he died and your family will be thinking how you did as well."

"Ok, ok," I mumbled, afraid to say anything more in case the lump in my throat would cause tears to run down my face.

I could still remember the day those two army officers arrived at my house to tell me my brother was dead. Their cold hard faces gave little away when I asked how he died.

"Killed in the course of duty," was all they would say.

Everything else was "classified". They handed me a letter from my brother, saluted, then turned and left, the click-clack of their shoes on the pavement slowly dying away. I stood frozen to the spot, dazed, confused and devastated. I finally opened the letter with trembling fingers but only one line stared back at me.

"I'll always be with you brother. Karl."

What did he mean? How could he be with me ever again? He was dead. Now I leaned heavily on the rusty shovel in my hands and started to dig, determined to uncover the truth. The scar-faced man beside me began to dig at the other end and soon my brother's coffin began to emerge from beneath the layers of sodden earth. Faced with this moment of truth, I began to panic. What if I was wrong? I knew Karl hated the army, I knew he wanted out. His girlfriend Sarah hadn't turned up at the funeral, hadn't contacted her family in the two months since his death. But maybe she just needed some space? I looked down at the coffin as my hired helper tugged at the lid with a crowbar. With a loud snap the lid flew back revealing the frozen corpse inside. My whole body filled with relief – there was a dead man in the coffin.

But it wasn't my brother.