

The Eternal Experience

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Her shovel slides smoothly into the soil. Out here, the ground is soft and sweet smelling. The canopy of trees is thick, muffling any noise, keeping secrets so old and rare it makes the forest feel magical.

She's been digging since dawn. The hole is six feet long but not nearly as deep. It's hard work digging a grave.

Next to the slowly emerging chasm is a body wrapped in tarp and draped in a thick rug.

He made her promise, as the cancer ate away at his insides, that she would bury him out here in the vastness of the forest. Trade in a casket and suit for dirt and his wedding ring. No clothes, no flowers, no sentimental speeches. Just him and the earth.

She continues to dig. She remembers laughing at him as they lay on their marital bed, when he first suggested that this is how he wanted to be buried in his old age. They both had a grand time that night, sipping Tzarina champagne on silk sheets and making plans for a future heavy with potential, ripe for two thirty-somethings ready to eat the world. They had money to blow, nowhere to be, and they were madly in love. What a life.

That was 20 years ago. Now she digs. Her manicure is ruined. Her cashmere sweater is cozy in the moss. She took it off earlier and tossed it behind her, not caring where it landed.

She digs some more. The hole is bigger, definitely ready to receive its precious gift. She stops a moment, admiring her work.

She had doubted herself. Looking at his body as it lay in the hospital bed, the machines turned off, the nurses and doctors gone, she had wondered how she would do it. If she had had sons, this would have been easier. Her own personal guard, digging as she watched from on high.

But there was no one else. Just her.

None of that matters now. She's done it on her own. In the end, his devastated body weighed next to nothing, and everyone avoided looking the new widow in the eye, so it was rather easy to become invisible. Made it easier for her to move him quietly and undetected.

She stakes the shovel into the ground. She walks over to the body, standing over it until her vision starts to blur. Then rather quickly, she rolls the mass into the grave. There's no pine box, but she finds her sweater and manages to cradle it underneath her husband's head.

Suddenly, she feels alone and doesn't want to be out in the woods another moment. She begins the process of replacing the soil. When that is done, she packs up her belongings and leaves. She refuses to look back, purposefully ignoring any markers that would help her find his grave should she want to visit him.

She never returns to his resting place.

She lets the forest keep him, swallow him in.