

1.

Raindrops kept hitting the ground one by one and in unison. Drop by drop, each the same as the other, they gave life to everything they met, then became something new and different. After the first raindrop, there was another and yet another in what seemed to be an eternity until the heavens decided to move on and give space for the sun to let its rays continue the work that the rain had started.

The stones had been put into the ground one by one, line by line, and made into a beautiful unity of sadness and memories. The cemetery was covered with grass that now looked even greener than it had an hour or a week before. The edges of the cemetery were lined with pine trees, and the needles on the branches gave them a glimmering vale as the sunrays hit them. A lawnmower and its master were working at the far end by those trees and gave life to what was otherwise a serene setting.

The young man stood by the entrance just outside the opening in the black iron fence hesitating to take the first step inside. He had been in this position for a while, and now he was wondering what the fence was for, to keep the dead inside or the alive outside? A gun was placed in the right pocket of his coat. In his mind it felt not cold, but warm and at the same time terrifying.

He needed courage to take the first step through the entrance and start walking toward his mother's grave where he would have a talk with her and ask for forgiveness for what he was about to do. She'd been very religious when she was alive. He had no idea what her philosophy was now, but he knew that there were certain things that you just didn't do. He would light a candle in front of her grave like he had done so many times before, but this time the candle was much bigger and would burn brighter and longer, he hoped.

Many thoughts went through his mind as he stood by the entrance. He thought about his wife who was about to divorce him because of his drinking. Or was it because he had lost his job and had distanced himself from her? He thought about his mother, who had worked so hard just to be able to put him in the right schools. She'd done it alone, never telling him who his father was. He remembered old girlfriends, his first car, graduating and getting his master's degree, and how he had tried to stop drinking. The only thing he couldn't remember was how the drinking started.

All these thoughts and many more went through his mind, but one was too severe and too painful to think of. Instead he stepped through the gate, left foot first, and started walking.

He was sitting by the grave of the person who gave him life. The grass was still wet under his feet, leaving stains on the tips of his brown leather shoes. He touched the grass with his hand just to feel how wet grass felt, and for an instant he almost remembered something

from when he was young and carefree. The memory was gone as quickly as it had appeared, but it left him with a smile and he touched the grass again.

“I hope I get to see you again someday”, he said. “Then I can explain and hopefully you’ll understand.”

He stood and looked around to make sure that no one was listening. The lawnmower had silenced, and the only thing that made any noise were some birds making a fuss in the trees nearest to the gate. Except for them he was alone.

“I know how you feel about religion, but things are never that easy. I have to do this. I don’t see another way, and if there was one, I would choose that.”

He took the candle out of his left pocket and put it inside the candle holder in front of the grave stone.

“Anyway, I’m sorry. Just so you know.”

The young man reached into his left pocket again, then realized that he had forgotten to bring a lighter.