

Broken by the Past

Richard walked sullenly down the street glancing at the faded posters on the wall that had been torn by the wind. It was a dark day in Vancouver and people seemed to have abandoned their outside posts and seek refuge in the comforting lull of the indoors. As he slowly put one foot in front of the other he noticed with a slight jolt the playground that he used to bring his kids to almost daily. So many memories had been made in that exact place but now here it was, alone and abandoned.

Taking a sudden right turn on the damp road, Richard finally caught sight of his house. Once a cheerful place full of family, friends, and laughter now you would barely notice it if you walked past it. The front door had no welcome mat and the windows were clouded over with a thin layer of dirt as if daring someone to look in. Ignoring all this, Richard took a deep breath and started up the driveway to the old, brown house.

A musty smell overwhelmed him as he opened the front door. It was as if the house hadn't had a proper wash for many years. Directly to his left stood a dusty picture that Richard had hung up of a tall, striking woman. Lanie.

Lanie had been his beloved wife for twenty-four years. Together they had bought a house, moved in, and had four beautiful children. They had each other and then even that was taken away from the pair. She had died at the age of fifty in a terrible car crash. Even though it had been many long years, Richard still couldn't bring himself to move on. His children and grandchildren had all moved away, leaving him alone in his big empty house. Richard enjoyed the solitude, not having anyone else to tell him what to do. But he would have traded all of that in a heartbeat if he could have his regular life back. Near the photograph of Lanie was part of the room that was sealed off behind glass. Richard allowed no one to open it, including himself. It was almost a shrine that he had dedicated to her. Inside was a vase of flowers, prayer cards, and Lanie's favourite book, *The Bible*. Almost unconsciously, he turned to look at it every time that he passed by. It was the one thing that he had to look forward to.

There were three sharp raps on the door that cut through the silence and made Richard jump. He got up from the chair he was sitting in and made his way to open the door. He knew who it was without even looking. It would be Ryan, his seventy-five year old neighbour who had only two obsessions in life; the game of cribbage and finding someone to play it with. Standing at 5'6, Ryan was stout and the first thing that you noticed about him was his wide, toothy grin and his unkempt appearance. Ryan was all words before the game but as soon as the first hand was dealt, he was oblivious to everything else except for cribbage. Other than the priest at the church he attended, Ryan was the only person that he talked to and confided in.

Richard had the shock of his life when he opened the door and saw a lady who must have been around his age. She had on a baby blue dress and a face that looked like she was a little lost.

“May I help you?” Richard asked in his deeply gruff voice.

“Yes, please. I was wondering if you knew where the local church was. You see, I’m new in this town and everything seems so much bigger.” She answered. There was a slight tremor in her voice.

Richard brightened up almost immediately.

“Of course! In fact, I was just about to walk up myself. Do you mind if I join you?”

As they were walking the three kilometres to church, Richard felt himself lighten up and laugh like he never had in years. He could feel his depression edging away just while he was talking to her. He found out that her name was Katherine and that she just moved here from the United States. Throughout the years, as they talked and confided stories to each other, Richard felt that he had finally found a new sense of purpose in his life. While he still wasn’t ready to forget about Lanie completely, he was ready to move on to new adventures.