

Fallen Guardians – The Lost (Sneak Peak)

Death is a crack in time. Death pushes your spirit into another pocket of space where time doesn't exist. Where your soul can dance freely and your mind is an endless expansion of understanding.

Death is eternal. Death is inevitable. Death is coming for me. I feel it deep in my bones. It aches. My time is now. I'm next...I hope I can see the light. I always see the dark angels. They are so beautiful. They're everywhere...

Jeremy's body washed up on the beach... cold and lifeless. His smooth, beautiful skin was pale and thin like an apparition. The thought of Him walking up to my door and throwing His arms around me was gone.

My thoughts ran wild and my mind sank in a chaotic pool of quick sand. I struggled to get out of bed to face another day of dark thoughts and lost dreams. I couldn't remember if this vivid death image was a nightmare or real.

"Megan, Megan!"

He was dead. He was no longer here.

"Megan! I'm leaving I'll see you tonight. Megan?"

Yep, He was gone. He was dead. Reality and my dreams collided and the truth was a blur.

"Megan, are you up?"

Yes, that was it. His time was up. Death was a funny thing. Death was how you get to go back home...yet death was feared and sad. Death would take me to my family...and Jeremy.

"Megan, may I come in?" Aunt Nia asked as she slowly opened my door. She walked to me and placed her warm hand on my shoulder.

"Yeah," I grumbled through a tearful voice.

"Megan, are you okay? You've been like this for too long."

"Well, this is what a girl looks like after seeing a dead body."

"Honey, you didn't see anything. There was no body, remember? The police found nothing. He still may be..."

"No, He's not. I saw it."

"Megan, we've talked about this. I think you need to talk with..."

"No. Don't say it. A head shrink can't see the dead. Their voodoo, psycho psychology won't help."

"Megan, please."

"I see His body every night. It's ghastly...not as I remember Him."

"Megan, they're bad dreams. It's not real. There was no body."

"Why does His dead body haunt me? He follows me. Jeremy follows me."

"Megan...I don't know. I'm going to stay home with you."

"No. It'll pass. It always does, doesn't it? Yes, I'll be fine." My voice didn't even convince me. It was methodical and rehearsed.

“I know. I know. Megan, I wish I could take away your pain. I wish I could stop your dreams. They’re not real. They’re not real,” Aunt Nia’s voice trailed off as the door closed behind her.

The floor boards made musical creeks and groans as I walked towards my bedroom window. I opened my faded, dusty shade and saw a condensed blanket of clouds obstructing the chance of sunlight escaping. I heard the faint beginning of a thunder storm rumbling in the distance.

I opened the window and the smell of the salty ocean breeze immediately filled my nostrils and burned my throat. I saw the ocean kick up angry waves that crashed on the white beach.

The burning in my throat disappeared after I took in a few breaths of the brisk ocean air. The burn was there every morning especially with my first breath. The first breath that let me know I was still here and they weren’t.

First my mother passed on, then my baby sister Laila slipped away. My father died not too long after. I could’ve lived alone until I completed high school, but Momia’s younger sister wouldn’t hear of it. She moved all the way from Maine to Hawaii to stay with me.

Aunt Nia arrived in Kaua’i one week after my father died...he was the last one to leave me. Well, besides Jeremy; but He wasn’t dead. He was lost...I needed to remind myself the dead body that haunted my thoughts wasn’t real. My aunt was my anchor to reality.

She was a nurse at Wilcox Memorial Hospital. She was in her late thirties or maybe forty. She wasn’t married and had no children of her own.

Aunt Nia was a petite woman with long dark hair, bright, green eyes and heart-shaped red lips. She had a peculiar scar on her left eyebrow. She was very beautiful...stunning really.

She was very energetic and liked to drag me out hiking on the other islands for “The Aunt Nia Adventure of the Day.” I think she felt she needed to keep me busy so I wouldn’t dwell on what I had lost. Really, who was gone.

My aunt felt getting back to nature could help heal a person, but my way of getting back to nature wasn’t showering or wearing make-up. Natural stench cured a broken heart and kept others out—at least that was how I felt! So far, however, that wasn’t working.

I went along with my aunt’s efforts because it made her happy to take me out on those crazy exploring adventures. However, it made the feeling of loss ache deeper. It was as if I was on an endless search for what was missing in my life. The long hikes lead to nowhere, except right back where you started.

I felt like a seeker...always looking for something...someone? I hoped I could find what I needed to live... or die if that was my destiny.

This was my reality as I remembered it: I told myself senior year would be different, a turning point. I would be more organized, join more activities and find a path to follow...just live. I had no idea what I wanted to do when I graduated which was supposed to happen in six weeks.

Finals were coming up. Latin and Physics may prove to be my demise; not that it mattered. I had art in the bag. My art teacher loved my “dark creativeness” as she put it.

What could I do when I graduated with “dark creativeness” as my best talent? Too bad dark creativeness couldn’t win you a presidency...well, I probably could be president. Anyway, my greatest asset of “dark creativeness” was clouded by a hovering dead body and a probable trip to the psycho ward!

As I looked into the mirror, I barley recognized the person that looked back at me. She ran her fingers through her long, dark brown hair and tried to make it appear less disheveled. The reflection in the mirror showed big brown eyes that were unrecognizable and camouflaged by dark circles. Her lips were full and almost the same color as her face. Her eyes didn’t sparkle anymore, they were dull and dark. Just like her life right now. Her skin seemed to have turned a pasty yellow; which in her younger days used to be a nice brown, olive color. Funny to say her “younger days” like she was an old maid at seventeen. The problem was this person in the mirror was me.

I splashed cool water onto her face... *my* face and got ready for school. I slid on a pair of boy cut jeans and an old black t-shirt. I brushed my teeth, swept a coat of pink gloss across my lips, so I appeared alive, and twisted my hair into a sloppy ponytail as I headed downstairs. I slid into a pair of old sneakers and went to the fridge to grab an apple. I looked down at the ring that wrapped around my middle finger. It was platinum with the engraving....

(Hoonnnnnnnkk!)

Julia’s customized horn on her new, red convertible BMW was incredibly obnoxious— compliments of her guilty father, Mr. Branton. After her parents’ divorce, about three years ago, it seemed the gifts were showered on her when her dad came to visit. Mr. Branton lived in town, but often disappeared on business trips and left Julia alone.

Julia was an only child and always got what she wanted, but now she began to realize she wouldn’t ever get what she needed. Her father was so wrapped up in his new “family” that he gave Julia objects hoping to fill the emotional holes he poked into her.

Mr. Branton’s new family consisted of two girlfriends. The two girls knew about each other, but apparently didn’t care. They were actually very attractive, young women in their twenties and weren’t much older than Julia.

I noticed the house was quiet, except for me scrambling around to gather my things. I stumbled outside with my arms filled with books when I practically ran into Julia.

“Megan, what were you doing in there? You’re never on time anymore. You really need to pull yourself together. What’s going on with you?” asked Julia obviously irritated.

Before I could answer Julia barked, “We have to get going, Mr. Pierce is first period and you know what he does if we’re late for his English class.”

I fumbled for my cell phone while Julia ranted; then I noticed my wallet was missing. I started to back track toward the front door.

“Megan, where are you going?”

“Julia, I have to get my wallet. I must have left it on the counter. I’ll just drive myself today. I’ll see you in English. I wouldn’t want you to be late and get the wrath of Mr. Pierce on my account. Besides I have somewhere I need to go after school,” I said hoping Julia wouldn’t ask where I was going.

Julia’s pink mini skirt flared out as she quickly turned and bounced to her car.

“Megan, I love you, but you’re a mess! Don’t be too late. I’ll just tell Mr. Pierce you’re fighting off cramps to buy you some time,” she laughed with a crooked smile.

“Gee, thanks. Julia you’re such a great friend. Oh yeah, and don’t forget to tell him about my raging case of crabs too!” I yelled over my shoulder.

Julia jumped into her shiny red car and waved with her crooked smile that grew into a full dazzling grin.

Julia had been my closest friend since we moved to Kaua’i. She knew most of my secrets, and I knew hers. Sometimes I was surprised we were still friends because she was the total opposite of me.

Julia dressed stylishly and was always punctual and organized. She was captain of the cheer team and her boyfriend, Seth, was the captain of the football team. Julia had long blond hair that flowed over her shoulders. Her cheeks were always rose colored and her lips were perfectly shaped and stained red. Julia’s eyes were a deep hazel color that complimented her features and made her very attractive to most, if not all, of the male population.

“Damn, where did my key fall!” I exclaimed out loud even though no one was there to hear me. I suddenly felt a wintry hand on my shoulder lightly pressing down until it made its way down to the middle of my back. I stood and slowly raised myself as a frigid feeling wrapped around me. I wasn’t afraid, but drawn to the touch caressing my back. I felt an overwhelming state of calm and clarity wash over me for the first time since...well in a long time.

I turned around to look over my shoulder but no one was there. I felt a cool, sweet presence surround me and I froze in a cloud of numbness. The fragrant smell of roses filled my nose. My arms and legs felt heavy. The rain began to fall, forming long streams that rolled down my cheeks. The cool rain awakened my body and the cold presence intensified. Large cool hands cupped my cheeks and at that moment I was present in Him.

The sky became a sudden dark mass of black and several large lighting bolts streaked through the sky. The loud crackling of thunder that followed startled me and I fell against the front door. I felt a lump under my foot and there were my keys.

I leaned against the door to take in the last bit of cool presence that faintly surrounded my body. I slowly lifted my heavy arms to touch my cheeks hoping to hold the hands that were there, but He was gone. I gently ran my hand down my sides and hugged the remainder of coolness into me.

The feeling of anxiety kicked in when I realized I’d been standing outside for twenty minutes. My cheeks suddenly flushed with blood and I became warm and sweaty. I was wet and late. When I bent down to pick up my keys, I felt a firm thud on my head. If I were better at physics, I would’ve calculated my descent better and avoided the stream of fresh warm, red fluid that ran down my face from the impact against the door frame. I placed my hand over the cut, which appeared pretty deep, as blood seeped through my fingers.

A swirl of cool air swept over me and a loud crushing noise struck the overhang of the door above my head. It was followed by a low, hissing noise. There weren’t a lot of cats around here so maybe it was lightning?

I frantically put the key in the door, turned the lock and flung the door open. I scooped up my wallet and snatched a towel on the way out to wipe off the blood.

“It’s a good thing I wore black today,” I laughed to myself.

I went outside and glanced up at the overhang just to see if it was on fire. Everything looked fine. There was a large indentation in the middle of the overhang as if a rock or something like footprints had landed on it. Weird. I needed more sleep. I was seeing footprints on the metal overhang and it was definitely too early for Santa and his reindeer.

I ran to my parked jeep, hopped inside and threw my bag across the passenger seat. I jammed my keys into the ignition and sped off down the wet slippery road.

The long, black road seemed empty and lonely. The thunder rumbled loudly and lightening flashed across the dark ominous sky and over the angry, dark ocean. The lightening lit the caps on the waves in quick flashes of white before they tumbled back into the deep, dark waters. I pushed down on the gas pedal.

The ocean looked like a dark blur as I sped down the winding road. As I entered into town, I passed through several green lights. Fate had aligned everything to make my journey quick and smooth.

I parked the jeep and sank into the seat, letting my wet body relax as it melted into the cushion. My body felt warm, but a cool tingle remained on the surface of my skin where His hands embraced my face.

I was sitting in the parking lot at Kaua’i High School staring out at the run down brick building that held all of my high school memories. I turned off my jeep and ran in the pouring rain to the front office and checked in.

Pass in hand, I trotted up to Mr. Pierce’s class with ten minutes left. When my foot crossed the threshold, I realized I should’ve skipped. I always felt there was a dark angel watching me, waiting...and today wasn’t different.

2

Mr. Pierce was a young, incredibly good looking man with dark wavy hair, icy blue eyes and dimples that accented the corners of his full lips. His lean, but muscular body had all the girls whispering and blushing. Even the female teachers enjoyed sneaking peaks as he passed in the hall. He had a flawless face, like an angel.

The one thing that I found most intriguing about Mr. Pierce was his piercing blue eyes, no pun intended. The color of his blue eyes was crisp and clear, but on some days it looked as if black shadows swirled in them—like he was hiding something. Mystery was always intriguing and an incredible alluring quality in a guy.

“Miss Arzal, nice of you to bless us with your presence,” Mr. Pierce said in a smooth, flawless tone while facing the chalkboard. It was as if he had eyes in the back of his head!

“Did your cramps clear up?” he asked with sarcasm in his chocolaty voice that was so addictive and desirable. As the class snickered, I glared at Julia who was showboating her ridiculous smirk and shrugging her shoulders.

Mr. Pierce turned his square broad shoulders to face me and pierced me with his intense blue eyes. I stood speechless as his eyes danced across my face searching for some kind of answer.

“Yes,” I said as I managed to squeeze out a small smile.

“I see. And what about the crabs... all clear?” Mr. Pierce plainly stated while his eyes focused on my mouth.

I shot a look at Julia and then turned my attention back to Mr. Pierce. “No crabs... all clear and ready to learn, Mr. Pierce.”

He stepped over to me, in a single gliding motion, and looked deeply at the cut on my forehead. “You can honor me by staying after school. I need help with the theatre posters in the auditorium for this summer’s Shakespearean play.”

I felt the class come to a sudden halt or maybe disappeared altogether. I only heard my breathing, which was slow and deep. My eyes met his and I nodded slowly. Mr. Pierce’s breath was cool and sweet against my face as he slightly parted his lips to smile. I couldn’t separate my eyes from his cold, blue gaze, nor did I want to.

Mr. Pierce’s hand slowly rose as he traced the contours of my face without touching my skin. His fingers briefly stopped over the cut on my forehead and then his hand continued on its path. I felt his cool energy wash over me. I was elated in his presence; unable to move or see anything in the room but him. His hand finally met my cheek and my body quivered under his touch. He continued to slowly trace his fingers around my parting lips and my body impulsively drew closer to his. His fingers continued to move down the length of my neck, over my collar bone and down to my chest where it stopped.

My heart beat furiously, creating heat under his cool hand. My heart felt like it wanted to jump out of my chest and into his hands as he massaged a new rhythm into my body. My heart was able to beat again as his touch brought my body to life for the first time in a long time.

The blood rushed to my cheeks and then in one quick hard beat blood rushed to the veins in my neck. The pounding of the pulse in my neck was furious and my head fell

back as I floated towards him. The fire grew and burned under his invigorating touch until I was inches from his mouth...

(Ring!!)

“Come on Megan, let’s go! It’s bad enough you have detention with Mr. Pierce. You don’t want to spend the remainder of your senior year there do you?” Julia said pointing to my desk. She looked at me with a puzzled expression on her face.

I scanned the empty classroom; everyone had left for their next class. Over Julia’s shoulder, I saw Mr. Pierce walking out the door to speak with Miss Lambour, our history teacher. Before Mr. Pierce passed the door frame, he glanced back and flashed me a quick smile that made his icy, blue eyes sparkle. Then he disappeared into the hallway.

“Megan...Megan!” shouted Julia. “Come on we have to go. Are you okay? What are you staring at?” Julia looked over her shoulder and shrugged, “You’re having one of those days, aren’t you?”

I managed to look up at Julia and forced out the words, “Yeah, I guess so.”

I felt weak and breathless yet so alive and invigorated. Julia just stared at me as I stumbled like a newborn fawn on my way to the door.

“Come on, Bambi, let’s get to our next class,” sighed Julia and accepted my crazy behavior as normal. Julia learned a while ago not to question my behavior because she seldom understood my answer. Rather than be frustrated, Julia chose to be oblivious, which was probably why we were still friends.

“I’m having one of those days,” I squeezed out for Julia’s sake.

“No kidding, Meggie! We need to take you shopping by the way,” Julia said as she scanned my plain clothing choices. We strolled into our physics lab. “When you went back to get your keys, did you actually touch up your make-up...because it looks fabulous! Maybe you can be reborn from the slump you’re in after all. There’s hope for you yet, Meggie!”

“Julia, I’ll be back in a minute.” I stepped out of the lab and headed down the hall towards the bathroom. I needed to see if the fury of fire I sensed on my face and neck had calmed down.

I mentally replayed what happened in Mr. Pierce’s class. At least...what I thought happened. Why didn’t anybody say anything? It had to be a dream... a really vivid, stimulating dream; an “I didn’t know how my underwear was dry” dream. I couldn’t believe I thought that.

1

I tried to clear my head and think of something else, but all I saw in my head was Mr. Pierce’s clear, blue eyes possessing and ravaging every cell of my body.

“Oh, sorry Sean!” I panted as I ran down the hall and bumped head first into his broad chest. “Are you okay, Megan? You...” Sean began say when I abruptly interrupted him.

“Uh, yeah. I just have to go and splash some cool water on my face. I feel a little hot or something,” I said as I scurried past Sean not giving him a chance to talk.

Sean was in my English class too...maybe he saw me and Mr. Pierce...no way. It really didn’t happen, right? I kept my head up this time and quickly navigated myself around the corner. Frantically, I shoved the girl’s bathroom door open. I walked up to the sink and splashed water on my face. I allowed the ice cold water to ripple down my

hot skin. I grabbed a paper towel, which smelled like an old newspaper, blotted the water off and looked into the mirror.

“What the hell is going on?” I exclaimed.

I touched my full lips that were deep red. The apples of my cheeks were flushed with a beautiful deep rose color and my eyelashes were thick, long and dark like the color of the night’s sky without a moon. The face looking back at me was stunning. This wasn’t the same face that looked back at me this morning.

I looked toward the ceiling and thought that the florescent lights were making me see things or casting a weird shadow. The lights weren’t on. I stumbled into the bathroom so fast I forgot to flip the switch. The natural light that trickled in from the window was all that surrounded my features.

I looked at the sunbeams as they penetrated the dirty glass of the small window above the old blue tiles on the bathroom walls. I followed the sun’s rays with my eyes to the mirror’s reflection in front of me.

The image in the mirror was beautiful and vibrant. I carefully ran my fingers down my right cheek to see if this image followed my movements. To my disbelief, she did. It was me! I looked amazing! I felt amazing! I felt alive and I could feel my heart beating steadily in my chest... again!

I glided through the rest of my classes with an unusual amount of ease. I seemed to get second looks from everyone -- male and female. Lunch was very interesting to say the least. I felt like I had fallen out of my body and into Julia’s with all the male attention I got today.

“Megan, we’re over here. Girl, we need to plan for this weekend,” Julia said all too merrily.

I meandered over to Julia’s table filled with several beautiful girls and the most desirable male athletes. Most of them were Jeremy’s friends, too. Jeremy had always been a part of this pack of football guys in the sense that he was a great athlete, but he also had the brains to go with it...unlike some of the others. Jeremy was amazingly intelligent, witty and fun.

The table was full of jokes and laughter like they had forgotten that they were missing one of their friends. Dumb jocks...dumb insensitive jocks. Life went on when you were oblivious and dumb. They got by on their physical talents in school rather than their mental abilities.

“Megan, hey are you going to the party this weekend?” Simon asked anxiously.

“Yeah. Megan you have got to go. By the way, darling, you’re looking fine today!” panted Sean.

“What the hell is wrong with all you guys? You’re acting like a pack of wolves that found a fresh piece of meat,” snarled Julia.

“Jules, chill out. You have me and I’m the leader of this pack of “wolves” as you call us. You know these clowns would be nothing without the mastermind quarterback. You shouldn’t care who the wolves hunt when you have me,” Seth said convincingly; pounding his chest like an alpha male before he engaged Julia into a passionate lip lock.

Everyone at the table hooted and rambled on about the weekend beach party after the game on Friday. The girls at the table were all cheerleaders except me. I really had no idea how I fell into this group except for the fact that I was best friends with the most popular and influential cheerleader, Julia. Oh yeah, that was how I got here.

As my head filled with useless thoughts of why's, my eyes wandered to the end of the table. I felt as if someone was watching me and my glance was met by Benjamin Pabael. He sat quietly at the opposite end of the table just observing me; reading me. Benjamin's mouth curled into a huge smile and looked down at his pear and took a large bite. I watched Benjamin as he slowly chewed the pear with purposeful movements of his jaw.