

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Hathrac, and for the story, Unremembered Loss.

Issue 39

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Happy November. Continuing the month we are exploring the town of Maple Grove. Last month we met two flamboyant shop owners. This month's story is about some of the people who pass by these shops.

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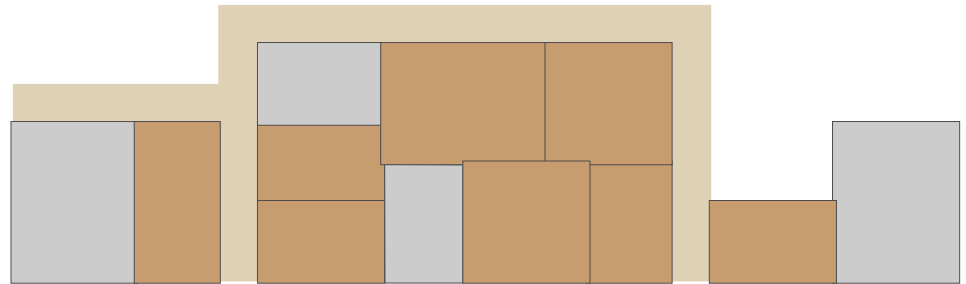
By a Tree

Sitting on the grass, across from The Stag's Leg on a hot summer afternoon, Brian lean against a tree and enjoyed the shade. He wished he could close his eyes and drift away, but he had to keep on eye on the lookout for the local boys.

Brian knew that he didn't belong here, not really. He was from the lower town where the "poor" people lived - the undesirables, the undeserving. But, Master Samuel had taken him out of that life and dropped him into this one.

Another honey drop disappeared into his mouth, its sharp crystals fading into a rush of flavor and sourness that made his mouth pucker. Brian looked into the bag and counted three more honey drops, then he looks across the street towards Hellene's Tea, Spices and Dried Goods with both gratitude and longing.

For two weeks he had saved up his copper pieces so he could buy this bag of sweets - now half gone. A smile crossed his face as he remembered the anticipation all last week, the haggling today, and the sweetness now in his mouth - twelve coppers well spent he decided.



"Look who's here!" came a voice from behind him.

Brian berated himself for letting down his guard.

Another voice answered the first, "Looks like the street rat bought us some sweets."

"Is that right?" the first voice asked Brian.

Brian turned his head slowly and saw the two bullies standing over him - grins on their faces.

"Hi guys," Brian said with a shaky voice, "beautiful day, isn't it?"

The two bullies just shook their heads and the taller one said, "Not for you, unless Jasper's right about what you have for us."

Brian rolled onto his hands and knees and tried to run, but quickly found that Jasper had his foot on the back of his cloak as he was jerked back by the shoulders and found himself laying on his back.

Bruce, the shorter and rounder boy who was wearing a tailored shirt made of silk, put his snake skin boot on Brian's chest and pressed down.

"That was a dumb thing to do, but then again you are lower town. If I break a few of your ribs would it teach you a lesson or are you to dense to learn?"

Brian looked up at them, tears starting to run down his cheeks. He knew he shouldn't cry, the tears just gave them more power over him.

Jasper reached down and took the paper back from Brian's hand. "So, what did you get us?" He opened the bag and smiled, but the smile was quickly replaced with one of shock as he flew into the air. Bruce likewise rose into the air.

Freed, Brian rolled away and looked to see Jasper and Bruce dangling from Brother Hector's two outstretched hands.

"Is there a problem here boys?" Hector asked in a deep and resonant voice, then he lowered the two boys so their feet were just touching the ground.

Brian looked at the faces of the two boys and then swallowed his piece of candy. "No Brother. We were just playing."

"Is that right?" Hector asked the two boys. They both nodded their heads yes, but continued to look at the ground. "I think there is a lesson here. Do you know what it is boys?"

Jasper replied, but his voice was quiet and scratchy. "That we should take pity on those who are less fortunate than us."

"No. How about you Bruce."

Bruce let out a little whine.

"Come now Bruce. Do you not listen at all in church."

"Do not steal. Do not covet."

Hector smiled. "That's not what I was thinking either. Is that what you were doing?"

A shutter went through Bruce's body.

Hector continued, "The lesson I was thinking about was the one that talks about honoring those who are over you less your days be short." Hector release the two boys. "Do you know why that lesson might apply here?"

The two boys looked at each other in confusions and then at Brian, who reflected their looks.

"Brian has more power than he knows and more than you could dare believe. Do you know who his master is?"

The boys didn't speak a word.

"Brian, who is your master?"

"Master Gees."

Horror filled the boys' eyes and as one they ran, leaving Hector and Brian to enjoy the shade.

Lovers

Hand in hand they stood by one of the huge maple trees, their pose mimicking the maple as one of its branches intertwined with the next maple down the road.

He glanced around, making sure that no one was looking, then pointed at the heart carved into the tree's bark.

She looked and saw his initials and below them hers. She looked back to him and found his eyes on hers.

"When?" she asked.

"Last night when the guard was changing."

"But why? You could have been caught."

"You don't know why?" he asked with a hurt sound in his voice.

"You love me. She smiled. "But if they caught you they would have fined you a gold piece. I'm not worth that much."

"To me you are." He pulled her into his arms and squeezed her tightly. "You are worth more than all the gold in a dragon's hoard."

The girl blushed and buried her face into the cloak around his shoulders. "You shouldn't say such things. When will you every have the gold of a dragon? When will you even save enough coppers to have a single gold?"

He pushed her back to arms length and waited for her to meet his eyes. "Did I not tell you that I have been saving for you. I have ninety-seven silver and almost as many coppers."

He dropped his hands to his sides and fingered the patches there. "Do you not believe that I saved this for you? Do you think I boast idly?"

She looked to the ground by her feet.

He dropped to his knees and looked up into her face. "Tomorrow I am hunting with Julie and Roger. All I need is three foxes or a bear and I will have enough to pay your father for your hand."

Once more her cheek burned red. "With that much you could have any girl in lower town."

"I don't want any girl in lower town. I want you." With that he returned to his feet and picked her up in his arms and spun her around like the leaves in the wind.

"If you truly want me, then I will be yours and thank God everyday for giving me a man like you."

They stood hand in hand, mirroring the eternal embrace of the trees, leaves mingled together. But unlike the trees, their embrace was for love.