



Charred Memories

Fleur ambles down the featureless drive way stained with the tyre marks of her father's Old crimson car. She misses him. That's not why you're here. She remembers the smell of it. Aged leather, musky and burnt, its seat covers peeling and sagging within the heat. How safe she felt within the seat's embrace. No. Fleur's matchstick legs burn with effort climbing upward towards the old house. Her sculpted figure and tapered waist, move swiftly and elegantly. Fleur's burnished complexion glistens within the soft glow of darkness and light-weight as a pair of dark, arched eyebrows look down on sweeping lashes. Fleur's sapphire eyes watch the encircling forest, entangled in green and towering wood. Her scarlet lips tremble in anguish as her body halts abruptly before the blackened stairs of the crumbling walls that own them. It's okay. A deep breath eases her mind as she runs her thin fingers through her long, brooding locks that plunge over her shoulders hiding her swan-like neck.

Against the dark sky, all Fleur sees are the skeletal ruins of her childhood home that are nothing over a ghostly silhouette of some previous existence. The wind whistles through the trees, bringing with it the laughter of the kids that after played and therefore the caring call of a mother letting Fleur and her siblings know that dinner was ready. It sweeps tendrils of curled hair to carefully caress the nape of her neck and skim her angled collarbones. Fleur forces herself to require a tread the remnants of what were once stairs. They moan in protest, gradually becoming more unstable. Another revolution means another step back to her past that she isn't completely convinced she will face.

Fleur stares at the charcoal door barely holding on by rusted hinges, deciding if she is prepared. After years, touching the thick beams of wood, blackened and charred from where the flames had licked them, they still felt warm. The timber seeps into Fleur's skin, as she traces the crusts of dirt ingrained inside the wood like thread. She holds the once gleaming handle and pushes. Screaming escapes the hinges to form Fleur wince. Grey ashes and cold embers replace the soft

warmth that cushioned her childhood. Memories of mouth-watering aromas permeate the air bringing with it the ache of home. Stop. You can't. You can't. Her face twists in agony, destroying her features. I'm sorry. Tears streak beneath her eyes and fall onto her tweed raincoat. It catches the droplet that slowly start to soak the thick fabric. She begins to wipe her cheeks of her guilt, an uncomfortable pull of rough effort on her porcelain face. Fleur releases the buckle of suede that hugs her waist and feels a delicate lift. Sliding her hand inside her pocket to withdraw a tattered telegram reveals her purpose to return to the town.

Final Communication. Miss F. Jones. We regret to tell you of the development of the railway line which can unfortunately traverse your family property. Please present yourself to our office before 30th July, 1946 to sign the mandatory documents allowing demolition. Regards, Abernathy and Cadwell, Attorneys at Law.

She walks over the cold embers, just like the soles of her feet kiss it lightly. She shuffles through the debris and ashes. You cannot provide it to them, you can't. Another tear falls beneath her, and pierces the lifeless ashes that were once a part of her home. But they will not stop, irrespective of how hard I try. Pain engulfs her into tormented desperation as she prays for a miracle which will never arrive. Be Strong. She runs out of the house distraught and into the forest. The moon turns the falling leaves into a flaming patchwork of colors. Fleur stops and gently catches one. She twirls the leaf daintily between her thin fingers and observes its imperfections. She notes the swirls of red, yellow and brown bleeding into one another. Another ombre leaf floats effortlessly into her hand and he or she grasps it. Fleur feels a soft mist of rain that follows on the wind. The breeze whirls the falling foliage round her as she lifts her head to the sky and releases the leaves thereto. a chilly droplet is released from the clouds and falls upon her cheek, it follows her sharp jawline down her face to her chin. The bedarkened sky embraces the incessant pillows of white as glittering drops of silver are carried on a light-weight, ruffling breeze, unlocking the raw fingers of the earth's hungry fist. She throws her arms into the wintry air flows through her fingers feeling like velvet. I cannot give this up to them. She walks back to the house kicking leaves into the air as if she were a bit girl again. Another groan escapes the steps as she climbs them and soot fills the air round her feet. Fleur walks towards the rear of her house but is interrupted.

Her piercing eyes dart to a crunch under her feet. Lifting her foot reveals shattered glass enclosed with an intricate blend of metal and seashell. It clutches the glossy photograph of sand clinging onto a family of blissful smiles with wondering eyes stretching far over the horizon encompassed in blue. They don't seem to be here anymore, they solely aren't. She bends down and holds the frame delicately to drag the colourless photo out of its protector. I love you, but i want to allow you to go. Fleur caresses the image gently like a faint plume. I should have been here when it happened. It's my fault. I'm sorry.