

**THE  
REAPPEARING**

A Novel  
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## CHAPTER ONE

### ENTERING THE NIGHTMARE

I want to tell you the truth. I need to explain when the story involving Tyler Danforth and me heaved up our lives and threw us away, flung us upward at first into long corridors of darkness and swiftly afterward into the nearly endless falling down and down again and again into the depths of a nightmare.

So I begin.

Once again, I see Tyler and me in his Ferrari, a GTC4 Lusso. Its gleaming metallic blue blends well with its sleek chassis and its luxury interior. It has a powerful V-12 engine, and it rides like a comet. I know. Tyler has allowed me to drive it on many occasions, because I am his girlfriend, Rachel Hayworth. I never drive the car at its top speed, which is two hundred fourteen miles an hour. But, whenever I take hold of the steering wheel of that Ferrari, I race with relentless fury across a local drag strip, an eight-mile track that is usually deserted at six o'clock on Saturday mornings.

On the evening that I want to tell you about, Tyler is driving his Ferrari. It is not the beginning of our time together, his and mine. That beginning occurred six months earlier. But this particular evening, the eighth of October, is

a beginning of a different sort. It pushes happiness out of our reach.

“This has been a tremendous night,” Tyler says as he drives me home after our high school’s autumn dance. “One of my best ever.”

His words, bonded with heartfelt emotions that surprise him, make his husky voice sound even huskier.

“It has been tremendous for me, too,” I tell him. “I’ll never forget this night.”

Light of heart and supremely happy, Tyler flashes a gleaming smile that makes this moment perfect. His dark hair, strong cheekbones, and long, tapering jawline allow him to look older than his sixteen years. He is more grownup than most of our peers, more mature and confident. Self-aware and self-possessed, Tyler is not embarrassed when I admit that I shall never forget this night. Nor is he intimidated by my wily attempts to gain possession of his will or of his soul and of all his plans for the future. Tyler knows how to navigate his freedom. Even in this early phase of his manhood, he easily accepts my remark that I shall never forget this night in which he escorted me to our school’s autumn dance. Tyler is a casual realist. He perceives the world around him with earthbound awareness and with incisive understanding of his friends and his rivals. My telling him that he has accompanied me through an extraordinary evening sounds to his ears like a

## THE REAPPEARING

natural thing. He knows that I have enjoyed this night, even without my saying so. But that I have said so pleases him.

“Good to hear,” he answers me. “I like to know when my charm is working.”

My fear that this night’s happiness will be merely fleeting prods me to say more. I need Tyler’s assurance that his elation is more than a momentary sensation. Uncertain of myself, though, I choose the wrong words because they reveal my distrust of the new happiness that he has brought into my life every day of these six months we have known each other. Through all of my troubled years, before Tyler came to lift me out of my darkness, I was searching for the unexpected visitor or the chance happiness that would rescue me. I was searching for more than a rescuing visitor or the influential blessing that he might bring with him. I was searching for a way to rescue myself.

Tyler has become my moral compass, my ethical guide. His choosing me to be the special girl in his life continues to astonish me. But his choice has not surprised most of our classmates. Good students though they are, with materialistic goals and familiar dreams of success in the workplace, they observe only the surface of things. They fail to explore the clouded meanings of an ambiguous remark or of an ambivalent action. When they became aware that Tyler had chosen me as his girlfriend, my classmates regarded our pairing as appropriate and even inevitable. They focused on my looks rather than on my character.

They agreed that my willowy figure, golden blonde hair, and light blue eyes made me an ideal partner for Tyler. They had never properly interpreted my disguised self-centeredness, my concealed indifference toward my classmates' problems, and my hidden contempt of every peer and adult who wanted to clip the wings of my freedom.

Nor do my classmates understand even now that Tyler has saved me from myself. In these six months of our romantic friendship, he has become the most essential person in my life. Yet, if I told him so, he would frown with disappointment.

"Don't be a copycat," I imagine him advising me. "Don't be a carbon copy of anybody and certainly not of me. Be yourself, as honest and authentic as you can be."

Tyler has never spoken those words to me. But his behavior has set the bar high for my reformation. His compassion for others and his many charitable deeds have provided the templates for my new, personal code of conduct. With him, I have worked as a volunteer in soup kitchens in the desolate and nearly forgotten sections of Blue Ridge City in Connecticut, far from the affluent, gated community where we live. With him, while visiting local hospitals, I have read stories to convalescing children, and I have tutored these same children in elementary school math and science. On many weekends, he and I have worked with senior citizens in nursing homes on art projects that

## THE REAPPEARING

challenge their creative use of clay, plaster, collage, drawing, and printmaking.

Always, Tyler has been the beacon guiding and accompanying me to these good deeds and to an honest caring about the wellbeing of other people.

Tyler is the most popular junior at Blue Ridge High School. He is a star athlete, having excelled as a goalie for our school's winning hockey team and as a pitcher for the school's top-ranked baseball team. He is also an honor roll student who plans on becoming a physician. He is, first of all, an altruist. He cares about his fellow human beings. His future studies include a major medical school and an internship at an equally major hospital. Eventually, he wants to serve as a physician for the needy and the aged.

I tell you all these things as a way of explaining my unease when Tyler declares that he will remember this special night. Despite his quiet mentoring of me, I believe that I am not good enough for him. I have more than a little acquaintance with the self-serving behavior and the prideful, rebellious nature that for so many years suppressed my potential goodness. It is only two months since Tyler gave me his hockey pin, the emblem telling everyone who notices I am wearing it that Tyler has chosen me to be his girlfriend. In these six, life-changing months since we first met, I have become an altogether different person. Or so I keep telling myself, disconcerted

nevertheless whenever I fall back to my old, self-centered habits.

Now I prod Tyler with another question, searching for the certainty that only a seer who has knowledge of the future could grant me.

I push my way forward. I put a lilt in my voice. I try to convince myself that my mood is as lighthearted as Tyler's.

"A year from now, will you remember this night?"

With his keen-sighted driver's eyes on the dark road ahead of us, Tyler answers without hesitation.

"Sure I will. It's been very special."

"What about two years? Will you still remember?"

For a moment, he ponders the question. Then, after offering me once more a gleaming smile and the bright blueness of his eyes that reveal his serious response, he answers me.

"Two years is a long time away. Maybe other nights will be even more memorable."

"Maybe," I say, disappointed because he has no way of knowing whether the far-flung future or even the next two years will keep us together.

"Of course they will," he says. "There will be plenty of other great nights for us. You and I are just starting our adventure. We're making our way in the dark."

Silence overtakes the both of us, though only for a moment.

## THE REAPPEARING

I change course. I navigate in a different direction. I try to be witty.

“People often get lost in the dark,” I tell him. “Sometimes, they never find their way back.”

As though my words rouse some evil spirit that has been observing us, jealous of our young and inexperienced love, the darkness rises suddenly over us—a gigantic ascension moon-tinged and alive, a dangerous, murky power rushing upon us.

Without any warning, as though they are a blaze of lightning, quick flashes are igniting this ascending power and the moonlit, October air. Blinding flares of headlights signal the immense danger that is leaping upon us. For one split second I glimpse the Maserati racing wildly upon us, just before it hits our Ferrari head-on and shudders with the heave and heft of its fury. Right then and suddenly, on this autumn night that has brought Tyler and me so much merriment and a joy that has left me awed and even astonished—right then and altogether suddenly, while we are driving away from our high school’s autumn dance, a crash is shaking the darkness with furious and metallic explosions. I catch sight of the Maserati catapulting into an eddying darkness that eludes the glow of the moon. For just an instant, as though some supernatural transaction is allowing me to see beyond ordinary vision, my startled glance shows me the screaming face, rugged body, and spattering blood of a red-haired man flung through the



sharp, ragged glass of the windshield. Out of control, the car zooms beyond my seeing at the same time that I hear the screech of its tires and explosive bursts like a bomb.

The impact of the Maserati hurls our Ferrari into a nearby farm field with out-of-control velocity. Our air bags have not deployed and have left us imperiled. Window glass is shattering outward and propelling its shards into moon-touched fields of corn and sweet potatoes. Already, Tyler is slumped over the wheel of his sleek car, his dark-haired, battered head bleeding and his blue-eyed gaze closed now to my seeing, lost as his whole body is to the quick-witted consciousness that makes him the special person he is to me. It is as though some black magic spell has been cast upon us. Over and over Tyler's Ferrari spins across the fiery darkness, gyrating and somersaulting inside the rising folds of the mild-seeming night that is so quickly betraying us. Everything spirals away from us, swiveling into a confusion of scattering objects that include my blue, sequined purse, Tyler's Apple iPhone, and the white corsage that a few hours earlier he had pinned to my ocean-blue, knee-length party dress that paired so well with the navy-blueness of his suit.

In the swirl and sweep of rapid motion, I feel my body springing free of my seat belt and being lifted toward the soft leather of the roof. I feel Tyler's big-boned muscularity thrown against me—pitched more than thrown, heaved up more than pitched—in lopsided trajectory. I hear the

## THE REAPPEARING

windows smashing apart. The front passenger door and the rear door behind my seat shoot out of their hinges and fly away. The horn is blaring, and sparks are rising from the hood of the car. The Ferrari flips and flips once again, barreling and somersaulting and burrowing into the thick darkness of the cornfields. Oil and gasoline fumes overtake the air. More sparks flare up, followed quickly by ricocheting explosions.

Then, as though a circus cannon were firing aerialists high into the air, some force or fury within those fumes lift up our bodies, Tyler's and mine, and with echoing blasts of power throw us out of the Ferrari. Our heaving figures shoot through the open space where the passenger door had been. Blind Chance grants us this escape hatch, this unexpected portal or gate through which our bodies rush past the exploding Ferrari and land with thudding roughness upon the furrowed path near moon-touched ears of corn and in the midst of hazy human figures racing toward us.

Blood is spilling from my forehead and dripping out of my left ear. I try to rise, but the sharp pain piercing my right shoulder and the sharper pain throbbing from my dangling, left leg halt even my smallest movement. In the distance, about twenty feet away, I sight Tyler's blood-smeared, pale face and his lanky, athletic body. No longer does he possess an unblemished physique. The whole, commanding form of him lies twisted and inert, like that of an infantryman

grievously wounded on a battlefield. I try to call out his name, but the sound dies in my throat. I begin crawling toward him, fearful that the crash has killed him. The pain that has overtaken my body is unbearable and pushes me into the blackout of nothingness.

How long the blackness holds me its prisoner, I cannot tell. Nor can I count the number of minutes that pass before the voices of a man and a woman call me out of the blackness. The voice of the man is as deep as it is raspy. It is a voice like my Uncle Trevor's that speaks only necessary words. The woman's voice is soft like my Aunt Deborah's, steel-true and self-controlled. I try to lift my head toward these tall, shadowy figures kneeling before me in a field of autumn corn and covering my pain-racked body with the warmth of a thick blanket. But the blood that is dripping from my forehead and hurrying across my half-closed, blue eyes blinds my sight of them.

I try to speak, but my swollen lips and the voice that is suddenly lost to me cannot speak or even cry out my fear and my pain.

Now, while the Ferrari goes on exploding and the rising, fuel-fed flames singe and crackle the breeze-tossed air, I hear the man and the woman speak. They choose careful, matter-of-fact words. There is no fear in their voices or in their words. They have had, I imagine, a long acquaintance with the joys and gifts of the world and with its unreliable promises and its dangers.

## THE REAPPEARING

“The girl is in a bad way,” the man says. “But she may pull through.”

The woman does not dispute her husband’s opinion. Nor does she agree with it. But Tyler’s injuries have given her pause.

“What about the boy?”

“He’ll need a miracle to bring him back,” the man says.

Whether this man and his wife have more to say, I will never know. The throbbing ache in my forehead and the pain in my dislocated shoulder and in my broken leg grow more and more intense. The pain throws away the sound of their words. Yet I am determined to remain conscious until I see a medic from the city hospital trying to rescue Tyler. The blaring siren of an approaching ambulance tells me I will not have to wait any longer.

In the next instant, a wiry medic in a green hospital uniform is hurrying toward me. My eyes, crusted with dried blood, see the vague reality of this possibly youthful man. My uneasy mind is telling me that he might be a ghost, a Guardian Spirit made visible to those imperiled human beings whom Death is carefully observing. I, in turn, observe him—this efficient medic who works to assuage some of the pain that, with whiplashing fury, has taken possession of my body. The medic measures my pulse. He cauterizes the wounds to my bleeding forehead. He encloses my broken leg within a temporary splint. He washes away the crusted blood that is blinding me. All this while, I feel

myself slipping out of consciousness, plummeting into the nightmare that is concealing the horrors waiting to spring upon me. But I do not surrender to this unceasing pain. I do not give myself to the nightmare that some relentless Fate has prepared for me. Only when the medic has washed the crusted blood from my eyes do I consent to this nightmare. It is now, after I catch sight of a taller medic trying to revive Tyler, that I permit the darkness to swallow me up. Only then, uncertain and terrified at the same time, do I hurry inside the nightmare that has always been waiting for me.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SLEEPING PRINCES

“You’ve got to soldier through this thing,” my father says. “You can’t allow it to defeat you. No Hayworth has ever been a coward. Not the men. Not the women.”

He stands before me, hardhearted and arrogant. He is an especially tall adversary, six foot four inches. The unsentimental tone of his deep voice and the silver-gray color that has so naturally intertwined with his raven-black hair grant him the same leader’s distinction that he brings to his role as the CEO of a major cable corporation that oversees pristine and influential offices in New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Honolulu. I know first-hand. I have occasionally visited two or three of those offices, careful always to place myself with Miss Harrison or Mrs. Macgregor or Miss Flanagan, my father’s most essential, no-nonsense secretaries. Once, while vacationing in Hawaii with my mother, who is an actress, and her entourage of agents and publicists, I even surveyed my father’s corporate boardroom that is located on the twenty-fourth floor of one of the tallest buildings in Honolulu. No meeting was in session on that morning. But I did observe the gleaming, well-polished surface of the impressive, long table in that room and the rich leather

upholstery of the chairs that were waiting with precise uniformity on each side of the table to serve the commander of the room and his regiment of ambitious officers. On that occasion, my father was not present. Nevertheless, I heard in the deepest corner of my imagination, his harsh, grating voice delivering his militant litany of directives to those same ambitious executives. Here, in this luxurious hospital suite within Blue Ridge Medical Center two years after my visit to that Honolulu boardroom, I hear the same grating voice spewing forth its harshness and its advisory message.

“Bear up. Bear up,” my father tells me, delivering his words as though they belong to a carefully crafted memo that he is sending to one of his junior executives. “The faint-of-heart never won any battles worth mentioning.”

I resent his lecturing. I dislike his impatience. I detest his insinuation that I am a weak-willed daughter who requires his fatherly counsel. A prisoner of these twelve long weeks of convalescence in a hospital environment, I *am* struggling with hopelessness and depression. I have endured surgeries on my legs, arms, and shoulder that have slowly healed. I have soldiered through the recurring headaches from the concussion to the left side of my head. I have struggled through the ragged breathing that has been the aftermath of a collapsed lung. I have tolerated the pain from my life-threatening injuries. I have accepted my losses. With tight-lipped determination, I have been making the hard journey to my recovery. Though I have tried to conceal

## THE REAPPEARING

my wretchedness, though I have often brought a smile to my conversations with my parents, though I have insisted more than a few times that I have accepted all the bleak things that have happened to me, my father sees through me. He detects the fault line in my armor, the crevice in my rock-like toughness. Nevertheless, with the willful insolence that has returned to me since the accident, I push aside his impatience and his insinuation.

“Don’t worry about me,” I answer him. “I’m no crybaby. Stuff happens. Life kicks you around. You kick back.”

“Now you sound like a Hayworth,” he says, imagining that his arrogant words have worked as a fuse to spark my dormant courage.

“Of course she does,” my mother says.

She stands next to my father, carefully assessing my emotional state and the slow process of my healing.

“It’s not every girl who can come through the ordeal into which you’ve been thrown. Just think of it. You’ll be out of this place in a couple of weeks. You’ll get your real life back.”

For this hospital visit, my mother has allowed herself a stylized, informal look. Her perfectly coiffed blonde hair is pulled neatly back to make a coil at the nape of her neck. She is wearing a black high-neck sweater; black cropped, cigarette trousers; and black ballet pumps. She has removed her camel Batwing-style trench coat and with her signature, elegant poise placed it across one of the visitors’ chairs a



few feet away from the bed in which I am sitting up. I am not in the mood to hear her pep talks. They are part of her artifice, the carefully designed image that she has fashioned to represent the ideal woman she believes she has become. This contrived ideal is her brand. It reflects her unfailing ability to adapt to the latest fad, the current newspeak, and the most influential trend. She is, after all, Shawna Hayworth, the actress known for her glamour and her versatility. She has starred in popular musicals on New York stages and in equally successful dramatic films with global appeal. In this moment she has made a special effort to visit me here in the private rehabilitation wing of the hospital. She has summoned precise words and maternal intonations to convince me that I am making a complete recovery from the accident that grievously injured me and that has locked Tyler Danforth inside a coma. Because she wants to intensify the message that she is bringing to me, she finds new words to reinforce her belief that, as if she were a fairy godmother waving a magic wand in one of her films, she can send my sorrow scattering. She can show me the way out of my nightmare.

“Your father and I are going to help you get your life back,” she says, without perceiving the anguish that will not leave me. “When you are well, we’ll spend time with you in Palm Beach and on the French Riviera. We’ll ski in Lausanne and paraglide in Brazil. We’re going to do everything we can to make you happy.”

## THE REAPPEARING

My father comes into it again.

“Put a smile on your face,” he tells me. “Even if you are feeling miserable and convinced that you’ve reached the lowest point in your life, don’t let anyone else know. A true Hayworth never apologizes and never asks for pity. Apologies are signs of weakness. So are appeals for pity. Both are forms of begging.”

“You needn’t worry,” I fire back at him, insolent even in my despair and defeat. “I won’t disgrace the Hayworth name. I’ll be as hardhearted and as calculating as the most rotten of the Hayworths.”

My father glares at me in the same moment that he notices the flares of rebellion that have pushed my words forward. Then, because possibly he recognizes in my angry words a measure of his own capacity for insolence and rebellion, he breaks into harsh and grating laughter. His laugh has no merriment or affection. It is simply his wary appreciation of my self-possession, my aptitude for fighting back at my adversaries, my inclination for using words as if they were sharp blades.

“Whatever you do,” he says, “make certain you win. Everything else is unimportant.”

“A very wise policy, Rachel,” my mother tells me. “Apply it to your life and you’ll always find a reason to be happy.”

“What happens if you lose someone that you love? How do you find a reason to be happy then?”

My mother does not like my questions. She does not like any sign of my anguish. Always, she grows impatient with what she has called my “emotional neediness.” She is impatient now and hurries to set me straight.

“You move on to the next chapter,” she says. “You don’t look back. What’s done is finished. What’s happened cannot be called back. You have to accept the way things are. You can’t let your feelings get in the way of your moving forward.”

My brow creases. My anger rises. I cannot accept my mother’s words.

“Do you really believe what you are saying? Do you actually think that an uncaring disregard of the past can make you happy? Do you always find it easy to forget the persons who have brought something special into your life, the ones who have died or who have gone far away?”

“Of course I do,” my mother answers me. “I trust my instincts. I’m a survivor. I always find my way out of the darkness.”

“Then you have never really loved.”

All this while, my father has stood still, calibrating the emotional charge of my heated exchange with my mother. Now, my accusing my mother of never having loved anyone intensifies his interest.

“Of course I have loved,” my mother exclaims. “But in my own way. Not in your way. Not with neurotic

## THE REAPPEARING

dependency or with the subtly tyrannical obsession that makes a prisoner of the beloved.”

“I’ve never made a prisoner of Tyler!” I shout at her. “I’ve never prevented him from living the life that he wants.”

My father comes back into it.

“If that’s true,” he says, “then you must know that it is time to let him go. It’s time to move on without him to a new chapter in your life.”

“With him!” I say. “Only with him. As long as he is alive, and forever after that.”

Displeased by my stubbornness and my misplaced loyalty, my mother has more to say.

“Your Tyler is not coming back,” she says. “He’s been in a coma for three months. You know what the doctors have told his parents. He has made very little progress in these many weeks. They are doing all that they can to bring him back. But the odds are against him.”

That my mother is unfeeling does not surprise me. That she taunts me with her negative thoughts while I am trapped here in a hospital makes her dislike of me even more hurtful.

“Tyler *will* come back to me,” I say as tears fill my eyes. “I know he will. I know it.”

“Maybe he will,” my father says. “Maybe he won’t. But don’t depend on it. Don’t make him the only measure of

your future happiness. Don't lean on anybody. Be tough. Be like your brothers. Don't let your emotions mess you up."

"I am not my brothers," I tell him, "and I have no plans of becoming like them."

"You could do worse, honey," he says. "There's no woman better than the one who thinks like a man."

My father's words do not surprise me. For a long time, his contempt of me and his blunt dismissal of my thoughts and my actions have shown me that he never wanted a daughter. He has reveled in the rearing of his sons—my two brothers who are several years older than I. They have not been able to escape his influence even though they are living away from him. On most days, they are pleased to be anchored to that influence. Kendall, an honor student at Yale University Law School, is preparing to join our father's corporation. John, who is also aiming for a top spot in the corporation, is studying international law at The University of London. His future also belongs to our father. While they were living at home, our father treated my brothers as though they were recruits in an officer-training program and he was their drill instructor. They recognized no option except to become like him.

Now, a few years older and far more cynical, they are intolerant of any signs of weakness in the people around them. They are particularly hard on their male peers, befriending only men who are as strong and as confident as they are. Their interest in women is only sensual. They

## THE REAPPEARING

prefer nightclub girls who are used to being manhandled and are willing to trade their self-respect for diamonds, a fashionable wardrobe, and an upscale apartment. Eventually, when they marry, my brothers may choose career women who are like our mother—tough-minded, unsentimental, and ambitious. The wives they choose will know how to help them increase the fortunes they have inherited from our father and our mother.

Brainwashed, my brothers actually enjoy being our father's protégés. They even resemble him—tall, dark-haired, and good-looking. Some journalists, aware of my brothers' success on hockey rinks and in boxing rings and informed about their high academic rank, have predicted that they will equal and even exceed our father's success in the global business scene. These same journalists, ignoring our father's toxic masculinity, have called him a brilliant dealmaker in corporate boardrooms around the globe. With goals acquired from our father's instruction and with the same driving courage, my brothers have often joined him in his adventurous lifestyle. With him, they have hunted lions in the jungles of Africa. They have battled whales in the Galapagos Islands. They have raced Toyota Hybrids with other big leaguers in Le Mans Endurance Championships. They have piloted his Cessna Skycatcher across the skies of New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Montreal. In so many important ways, my brothers have become fully indoctrinated sons of our father.

In years to come, after their university days, they will always be seeking ruthless victories over business rivals, new and ingenious deals that spawn bigger profits, and exciting, global adventures that might dispel their occasional doubts about the lives they have made for themselves.

Whether flashes of truth subvert the lies that they now tell themselves about our father, I cannot say. I perceive, though, that they refuse to regard him as a man corrupted by false values. Most of the time, they tell themselves that he is the prototype of the man that they want to become.

Only one journalist wrote an accurate news article about my father. In that honest appraisal, this journalist spoke of the privileged life into which my father was born. He mentioned the wealth that my father, Randolph Hayworth, had inherited from the immense fortunes of other Hayworths. He evaluated the success that he had achieved because of his education at the best private schools and universities and because of his first-hand knowledge of the business world. This journalist severely criticized my father's lack of empathy toward most of his employees and his failure to pay them substantial wages and benefits. He analyzed some possible causes of my father's greed and his self-centeredness. With specific details drawn from my father's history, this journalist suggested that Randolph Hayworth always wanted more of everything. He was used to riding roughshod over his competitors. He was known to

## THE REAPPEARING

bully his adversaries. On several occasions, he expressed his displeasure with those indigent citizens who couldn't find a way to move up the ladder or discover an escape hatch from poverty and malnutrition or reinvent themselves by acquiring marketable skills. Yet his corporation was doing very little to improve the lot of the average worker.

Having noted all these shortcomings, this award-winning journalist called my father a sleeping prince—an entitled man who, despite having been born into one of the wealthiest families in the United States, has not yet wakened to the higher morality that makes an individual truly human. Randolph Hayworth is, this famous journalist asserted, a selfish man who disdains the disenfranchised poor and struggling middle-class workers. He is an arrogant leader who denies his hard-working employees first-rate health benefits and adequate pensions. He is a tyrant of industry whose immense power reflects the wide division that exists between the haves and the have-nots.

This stern journalist, judgmental yet fair, predicted that my brothers —“Randolph Hayworth's ambitious sons who have been ruthlessly programmed by their father”— will in time become his richly rewarded henchmen, glorified wingmen, duplicate versions of his sleeping prince status.

Now, in this moment here in my hospital room when I confront my heartless parents, there flashes through my troubled mind all these scenes from the past. I know my parents well. They want me to be like them. They prefer that



I enter each day searching for the newest, glamorous thrills; discovering the latest fashions; preparing for a top-flight career in banking or law or real estate; and learning the wildest strategies for making hundreds of millions of dollars. They are planning to do everything they can to dissuade me from my loyalty to Tyler, whom they regard as a dying boy with no future at all. It is this disturbing thought which rouses my anger to a new pitch of fury. My parents' belief that I could ever abandon Tyler or even forget him tells me everything that I need to know about them. My father's assertion that I should think like a man, and my mother's silent acquiescence to that assertion, goad my fury to an even higher pitch. Tense and bitter and sorrowful—and all at the same time—I lash out at them.

“You’ve never loved anyone the way that I love Tyler,” I say, my voice at first tremulous with anger and low-pitched. “You couldn’t have loved like that, or you wouldn’t be telling me to forget the only boy that I will ever love.”

With an uncaring shrug and matter-of-fact words, my father dismisses my angry remarks.

“You’re too young to know what real love is,” he says. “Maybe a boy your age knows. Most savvy boys are tuned in to the hard facts of life. They know that adolescent love is temporary. It never lasts and it’s not worth much.”

“It’s not that way at all,” I insist. “Not for everyone my age. Some of us do know what real love is. Some of us are even willing to die for it.”

## THE REAPPEARING

“Nonsense,” he says. “Anybody willing to die for love is really screwed up. Your mother and I know that. We live on the realistic level. Too bad you’re not like us. You’re just a fantasist who acts like a silly girl hampered by wishful thinking.”

Now my mother joins in, her arched eyebrows signifying her displeasure and her ingrained *hauteur*—her overbearing pride and her sense of herself as belonging to a social class higher and more important than nearly everyone else’s.

“Don’t ruin things for yourself, my girl,” she tells me. “Do not make yourself a prisoner of your feelings. Your father is setting you straight. You need to be tough with yourself. You need to think the way a successful man thinks. That’s the only way you will count for something. That’s the only way a woman can move up to the top. That’s the best way a woman can beat down any man who wants to deprive her of her rightful place or who wants to steal her chances to make a fortune. Think the way a man does. Forget these sentimental notions. Romance is a temporary illusion. When the first thrills wear away, you always have to deal with the harshness of the world. There will always be lovers who betray you, friends who disappoint you, and adversaries who use every low trick they can to ruin you. Think like a man and climb to the top like a woman who has claimed her fair share of the world.”

With no hesitation at all, I fire abrasive words back at her.

"I'll think like myself," I say, my voice still firmly controlled yet seething with hatred of all that she and my father are saying. "I'll do things my way and win everything that's important to me."

"Do things your way?" my father scoffs. "What has that ever got you except a bad reputation and a mess of trouble? You got yourself expelled from Brooks School, one of the best private schools in this country, because you did things your way. Now you have to settle for a run-of-the-mill public school."

"Blue Ridge High School is not run-of-the-mill," I answer him. "It's one of the best public schools in this country. It's on every list of the ten best public high schools."

My father hurries past my remark, intent on reviewing for my discomfort all my past offenses.

"You guzzled *your way* through bourbon, vodka, and whiskey at all your wild parties. You experimented with marijuana and cocaine, and you would have moved on to heroin if the police hadn't stopped you. You and your hoodlum boyfriends were crazy rebels and a disgrace to your families. Even in this period when you've tried to turn things around for yourself, you got yourself into a nearly fatal car crash. You've always been trouble for your mother and me. I suppose it's too late now to expect anything else from you."

## THE REAPPEARING

My temper flares out of control. I raise my voice now in protest.

“Tyler did not cause that car crash,” I say, quick to defend the boy that I love. “I didn’t do anything wrong by attending the dance with him. He didn’t do anything wrong. Besides, he’s a better person than I am. He’s helped me to change my life. He’s shown me how to make amends for my past wrongdoing. He’s brought me hope. He’s convinced me that, if I try really hard, I can make the world a little better.”

“He’s brought you bad luck,” my father says.

“Tyler Danforth is finished,” my mother declares. “Only a miracle could bring him back. Don’t be the fool who thinks that you are that miracle. You’re in this thing way over your head. You always have been. Be sensible for a change. Do the smart thing. Turn away from Tyler and move on.”

Now I lose control. I begin screaming as I jump out of my bed—stumble more than jump. Fury has overtaken me, scattering my frayed patience and smashing apart the promise I made to myself to remain docile and subdued.

“I’ve already told you how I feel! Over and over, at every one of your visits here, I’ve told you! Tyler is the only person who makes this world real to me. I’ll never move away from him. Never! Never!”

I rush toward my father and begin punching his strong right arm and shoulder. Still weak from my many surgeries

and the aftermath of pneumonia, I make an ineffectual opponent. My punches are more like closed-fist slaps. Their impact upon my father is far more psychological than physical. This is the first time that I have raised my hand against him. I go on screaming and crying at the same time, astonished by my act of rebellion and instantly fearful that, after this show of defiance, this blunt assault, I may never repair my broken bond with my father. I am only vaguely aware that, without much effort, my father has pinioned my arms and hands to my sides and, with my mother's assistance, brought me back to my sick bed.

"You've never loved me," I say to him and to my mother as my head sinks into the soft folds of my pillow. "You've never been on my side."

Miss Pearson, an efficient and kindhearted nurse, rushes into the room. Apparently, she has heard the screaming commotion. I notice the purity of her white hair, the wrinkled trceries of age upon her calm features, and the nearly concealed look of concern upon those same features. I imagine that she is dismayed because I am upset. She is well aware of the long, painful journey I have made toward recovery. But my journey is not over. My recovery is tenuous and ongoing. With gentle efficiency, she coaxes me to accept a sleeping pill.

"There, there, Rachel" she says with her quiet tone of encouragement. "You've pushed yourself too hard. You'll feel better after you've had a nap."

## THE REAPPEARING

The pill quickly takes effect, but not before I see my father and my mother observing me with ambivalent interest.

My father stares at me with tightlipped disdain. Anger and bitterness take hold of his sullen features and, almost imperceptibly, merge with the newborn regret and sadness that he tries hard to suppress. He turns away from my bed now, as though he cannot bear to look upon me. I am, after all, a conspicuous disappointment that calls into question his belief that he is an ideal father. He moves toward my mother and gently places his big hand upon her right shoulder. They are in collusion with each other. He whispers words to her that I cannot hear. Whatever those words mean, they bring to the blue eyes within her sculpted features an approving glance upon him and upon her lips the hint of a consenting smile. For an instant, she looks back at me with pity rather than love. I am the burden from whom she intends to escape. Then, as though she is trying to determine how far away I have traveled from being an acceptable daughter, she gazes upon me with piercing inquiry. How long she gazes upon me, I cannot say. The sleeping pill takes complete possession of my senses. Weariness draws me into its folds. Only vaguely am I aware that my father and my mother are no longer standing there. It is as if Miss Pearson or the sleeping pill or my own secret wish has, with magical powers, made them disappear.

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