**Secluded**

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# Secluded

by DragonWolf

Summary

In the seclusion is where old grief is remembered.

Notes

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There is a small forested area close to the edge of the city. It's unconnected from Temsik park but it is not far from it, a 20 minute walk, cut down to about 10 if you hurry enough.

It isn't a true forest, the only proper wild woodland animals in it are birds. But it is big enough to have less frequented areas, rarely ever seen by anyone but the people who have found it to be a perfect secluded place to just be, far enough away from the road to just be in the quiet. To exist in peace. Away from people for a bit. Away from everyone.

The tiny forested area receives two unusual guests in one night. Both are there for the same solemn reason.

The first is a man, young, average in appearance but not in the way he walks, his movements unnatural, slightly stiff, like a puppet being piloted by a master puppeteer who nonetheless can't quite replicate human movement. His face is set in a blank expression, his eyes hidden behind dark glasses.

He is carrying a dark small something in his hands, cradling it to his chest gently, gentler than most would give him credit for.

His thoughts are preoccupied, a little bit by anger, but mostly by grief. An old grief clawing at the soul like a scar never properly healed, a new grief cutting in like a knife through soft flesh, burning burning burning with a new cold flame of metal and despair.

His actions are swift. The dirt is soft with recent rain. The grave is small, befitting its occupant.

He lowers the tiny body into the dirt as if setting it down onto soft blankets.

His face betrays emotion for just a moment.

His only friend, the only one that stayed by his side through all the pain and darkness of the past 10 years, is gone. The gunshot wound in his flank has since stopped bleeding, the red blending into his fur as if it's not even there.

A crimson neckerchief marks the grave of the second Sessil he's had to bury.

The man leaves without ceremony.

The man is alone again. An old rage simmers under the surface, burning hotter than ever, pulsing along with the meteorite in his chest.

Somewhere across the city a spirit wearing the man's face feels a chill run up their form. They don't pay any mind to it.

They never find out where they are buried.

Then there's a woman. Her coat catches the dim light and seems to shine like it's its own lightsource. She walks briskly, her gait determined.

Her eyes are ever so slightly puffy and red, the tears have stopped a little bit ago but left their mark on her face. Her expression is that of repressed sorrow, as if she doesn't have the time to grieve properly.

A bundled up something sits in her arms, soft brown fur spilling over her sleeves, a tiny thing pressed to her chest in a prolonged facsimile of a hug. Its motionlessness is the only thing that gives away its nature.

It takes a bit for the woman to dig up the dirt. The hole in the ground is uneven and haphazard. She starts crying again somewhere in the process of making the grave. She can't hold back her sobs as she tries to pick up her unmoving companion.

She brushes longer stands of fur away from the dog's face. His eyes are closed as if napping, as if ready to open and start moving again, ready to become a ballistic ball of energy again in seconds.

The dog's body is cold. The woman blinks away the tears to the best of her ability. They cling to her eyelashes and don't let go, blurring her vision slightly.

There's nothing special marking the Little Warrior's grave. A stick, in the absence of anything more significant, of just the right size for a small dog to play with.

Missile would have been fine with it.

The woman stays for a bit. She's stopped crying again, even though tears threaten to well up even now.

She leaves eventually, called to do so by the urgency of the night's events. She doesn't feel any better. She doesn't suppose she will any time soon. It almost doesn't matter.

The little dog-shaped spirit doesn't even notice the chill that leaves him as soon as it comes. He's too excited to see the world from his perch on a loose leaf.

He doesn't know what a grave is, not really. Not this one. Someone else does. They can only sigh. It is out of their hands.

In this world, this time, the spirits meet again soon enough. They do not know of a tiny not-quite-forest at the edge of town. Even if they did they'd spare it no thought.

It doesn't matter to them.

Yet two people visit the forest. Two tiny graves sit, barely noticeable, disturbed earth laying over them like a blanket, warming them for all eternity of just a few scant hours.

Two people mourn their lost companions over the freshly dug up dirt.

It shouldn't matter. There are no graves there in the new present.

But.

The grief is real even if it no longer happened. The graves are real even if their occupants are no longer there.

There is a secluded little area in between the trees that no one ever visits. It remembers what everyone else no longer does.

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