

Nimue

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Chapter One

She was the best of them.

A lonely person but gifted with infinite potential. Like so many others I knew, the best of us are lost with tragedy, with violence, alone—forsaken by all, but those that truly loved them.

I am one of those people who must remember because if I don't, who will?

If I told you I traversed through a quantum realm, saved my darling from the Terror King, drifted away on a canoe, was stabbed and later nursed back to health underneath a tree that was so tall, it reached beyond the clouds, would you believe me?

Even if you don't, even if you won't, I will tell you any way. After all, I'm the master of this tale. You can determine its truth with your own heart.

"Brett!"

The math teacher shouted my name. I heard some giggling and I forced my eyes upward.

"Yes?" I replied, putting down the pen I had been using to scribble a fantasy story into my math notebook.

"Can you complete the problem?"

I looked at the blackboard. The numbers meant nothing to me. I felt stupid.

"No," I admitted.

The math teacher, a tall and lanky man, shook his head in disappointment. "This is why you need to pay attention," he said. "You are failing."

He didn't know me, I didn't know him. And I was a failure.

I said nothing, but looked around the room and felt either hostile or triumphant glances directed at me. I guess some people like to see others fail.

I picked out one of them in the crowd and stared back because maybe that would intimidate them into looking away.

Of course, I chose the biggest guy in the class to do this to: Greg. He wasn't particularly muscular but he was tall and rather heavy set. But instead of looking away, he kept right on staring. The only thing that changed was his expression, which turned from mild amusement into cold anger. Then, the bell rang.

I packed up my stuff and left the class in no particular hurry. I knew Greg was going to be waiting for me outside, which is just what I wanted. As I stepped outside, he pushed me across the hall. I nearly fell but didn't.

"You some kind of psycho or something?" Greg said, as a crowd of students stopped in the hall to watch us. "Don't you stare at me."

"I wasn't staring at you, I was staring back at you," I replied. "I don't like being looked at anymore than you."

"I was looking at you because you're dumb," he said.

"I doubt you read much higher than a third grade reading level," I retorted.

Some of the kids watching laughed at this, which only served to make him angrier.

"I'm going to kick your ass later," he said, his face turning a deep red.

"You're welcome to try."

Greg stormed off and I realized my heart was pounding in my chest. When all I wanted to be was left alone, I suddenly had to fight the biggest guy in my grade for no reason.

My phone buzzed just then. I stopped to look and, of course, it was a text from Mike.

"Hey! Can you meet me after school on the corner?" read the text.

"Sure, what's up?" I typed out a reply.

"I want to introduce you to my new gf!" he wrote.

I sighed. Typical Mike. He was much better looking and far more popular than I was. Of course he would want to show off his new girlfriend. If he really wanted to be useful, he should try introducing me to someone.

I felt jealous, but I knew if I tried to explain it to Mike, he would just be confused. Nevertheless, I agreed to meet him. After class, I started heading over to the corner.

The corner was called that because it was the corner of the high school and the pizzeria. A lot of scumbags hung out there, but it was also a convenient place to stand around and look cool if that was your thing.

Mike gave me a jovial wave and I looked around for his girlfriend.

"Hey man, thanks for coming," he said, giving me a pat on the back. Mike was square jawed with dirty blonde hair and blue eyes.

"Sure," I replied. "Where is she?"

"She'll be here any minute now," Mike said. He paused, looking me up and down. "Something the matter?"

"Not really," I said. "But I'm going to have to fight Greg at some point."

"Are you serious, dude?" Mike asked, with a perplexed expression. "How did you manage that?"

"I stared at him."

"Stared at him?" he replied slowly. "What's with you, dude? Greg is basically a gigantic gorilla."

"I don't care," I said, trying my best to sound braver than I was. I spat across the sidewalk into the street. "Sorta strange you show off every new girl you get when I can't even have one."

"Oh, relax dude!" He laughed, patting me on the back slightly harder than I'd like. "We'll get you a girlfriend eventually. Hey, there she is! Hey, Triste! Over here!"

Triste was walking towards us and I suddenly understood why he was so excited. She had dark hair that was cut above her shoulders, dark eyes that looked equally dangerous and beautiful, and prominent cheek bones that really gave her a unique and handsome look. Her body seemed skinny but also was covered by black baggy pants and a sweater which really didn't accentuate her body at all.

I looked over at Mike, who was grinning from ear to ear like an idiot. He looked so stupid, I couldn't help but smile and even feel happy for the guy.

Triste came right up to Mike and kissed him. "Hey, honey," she said, in a low, alluring voice. Mike turned deep crimson, something I had never seen happen.

"Triste, this is Brett, my best friend."

I stuck my hand out formally. "How do you do," I said, chancing a smile. She took it lightly and shook it formally. "How are you?" she asked. I looked into her eyes. She was smiling, but her eyes felt distant and cold.

"So, shall we get pizza?" Mike asked, clasping his hands together.

"No, I think I'd better go," I said, fake checking my phone.

"Oh come on, Brett!" Mike whined. "You won't be in the way. I did say I want you two to meet. It turns out you both have something in common."

What we had in common was left unsaid for the moment as Mike steered me by my shoulders toward the pizza place.

So we got pizza. I sat there, eating my plain slice while they flirted with each other the entire time. I had completely zoned out their conversation when Mike said. "You're into fantasy novels, right Brett?"

I looked at him then Triste. I suddenly realized where this was going and nodded.

“Triste is a huge fantasy lover,” Brett declared. “You guys probably would get along great!”

I looked at Triste, whose expression remained unchanged.

“Anything interesting you’re reading now?” I asked.

She stuffed her hands into her book bag and produced a rather plain looking, black hardcover book with not title or inscriptions on it. She held it up for me to see as if I could somehow discern the title of the book which, obviously, I couldn’t.

“What’s it called?” I asked.

“I’m not sure,” she replied.

Taken aback, I hesitated for a second then asked her a follow up. “What’s it about?”

“It’s not really about anything,” she replied. “It’s more of a document for something going on outside our realm.”

There was something enticing about this book. The flaws of the leather, nicks here and there, and the fact that it looked very old, piqued my interest. It also gave me a fluttery feeling in my chest that I couldn’t readily explain.

“Can I read it?” I asked.

“Sure, you can borrow it.”

She handed me the book as if it were some sacred religious text. I felt the leather binding and it was very heavy in my hands. I put it inside my back pack.

Mike and Triste continued to flirt with each other and I once again zoned out of the conversation. But the nameless book never left my mind.

Before I even got in my door on the way home, I heard my Dad yelling.

“—can’t come home all hours of the night and sleep on the couch!”

“What do you want me to do?” my mom yelled back.

“I want you HERE, with your family, where you belong!”

“I have my own life to live!”

I heard glass shattering and decided that home was not where I wanted to be. I turned around and walked slowly down the sidewalk to the Main Street. I heard nothing more than my feet on the pavement and the ever-growing distance of the shouting. Someday, it’ll all end, I thought.

A few blocks away, there was an odd abandoned lot which is surrounded by trees and a gate. I entered through a hole in the fence and sat down on the grass beside the nearest tree. It was dark, but I opened the flashlight on my phone and took out the book Triste gave me.

Something about the book made me a little shaky, but I opened it anyway and peered inside.

“The War of Eight Kingdoms” were the first words I saw. There was a picture of a man holding up a severed head. I shivered.

Triste was not exaggerating when she said the book wasn’t about anything. It was more of a historical document than anything, although it wasn’t any kind of history that I was aware of. And it was full of misery, war, death, famine, torture, and all other kinds of tragic things. It wasn’t even particularly engaging because it had no stories, no characters, and no plot. It seemed to say “these things happened, and that’s all there is to it.”

I was just ready to put the book down when I saw a blue glow out of the corner of my eye. I looked up and was nearly blinded. I staggered to my feet and held my hand above my eyes.

She had silver hair, she was small, and she was beautiful. She was also missing an arm. I couldn’t tell where she had come from, but she looked as confused as I was.

I made my way over to her. She didn’t look at me and I couldn’t be sure whether she was aware of me at all. The closer I got, the more I could hear her heavy breathing. I reached my hand out to touch her so I could warn her I was here, but just as soon as my hand reached her arm, she turned toward me.

Her eyes were white with black pupils. There was a scar on the right side of her face that came down her cheek to her lip. Her eyes widened and she screamed. The blue light pulsed forward like a tidal wave and I fell down, everything faded to black.

