

## A Daughter's Grief

The streets of Paris, France were packed with people of all sorts. Everyone was bustling about trying to get to work or meet up with friends. Whatever their reason, at least half of them had the same reason as me. I came to Paris as a tourist, I wanted to see the highlights of the city of love. Though the list of sights I wanted to see might differ from usual tourists. Yes, the Eiffel Tower was great to see, but I wanted to know what places the locals crowded too.

As I turned the corner onto another cobblestone street, I bumped into someone's shoulder.

"I am so sorry, sir!" I panicked as our bodies jolted with force.

The man turned to me, "It's no problem, though you should probably look where you are going. You dropped some things."

I looked down to see my bag had spilled out onto the ground, "Oh!"

As I bent down to grab the items, I felt my mother's wedding ring, hanging on a chain around my neck, fall out from under my shirt. I continued gathering myself but could feel a strong stare pointed toward my chest. My eyes narrowed in thought.

At first, I was thinking, "Was this man a pervert?", but suddenly remembered my mother's wedding ring was hanging around my neck. The ring was made up of a large sapphire with little encrusted diamonds following the band. I think I remembered Dad saying it cost him quite a lot of money to get Mom this ring. It was one of the reasons I tried to hide it under my shirt.

Abruptly, I felt the chain slip away from my neck. A small "tink" sound came from the ground as the ring hit the cobblestone. My heart started racing as I saw the ring roll

around into a small circle before coming to a stop. My neck stiffened as I leaned toward the ring. My hand shook as it reached out to grasp it. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a hand also reach towards the ring. My breathing quickened as I snatched the ring from the floor.

I rushed quickly to get up as I saw the man drag his hand back.

“Thank you for pointing out my dropped things,” I said, stepping further away from him.

He flushed lightly, “It’s no problem. Have a nice day, ma’am”.

He rushed back toward the direction he was originally going. I turned back towards the street and looked down at the ring and chain in my hand. It looked like the clasp was broken.

Putting the ring and broken chain into my pocket, I took a deep breath to calm my racing heart. I wonder if that man was actually going to steal my mother’s ring. I had heard many tales of thieves and scammers running around the streets of Paris, I just never thought I would be the target of one. I don’t know what I would have done if this ring had gotten stolen. It is the last thing I have left of my mother.

As I continued to walk, I stared down at my hands, I couldn’t help but be reminded of my mother. She was supposed to be with me on this trip. Coming to Paris was all my mother and I talked about since I was a child.

We had finally begun to plan the trip out a year ago when suddenly she became ill. Even though I tried to get her to reconsider pushing the trip off once she got better, she kept insisting we keep our original plans. Until the day she died, I finally knew why she wouldn’t let me change the date. She knew she wasn’t going to make the trip.

“Anna,” she said softly, “You have to go to Paris. For me”.

I couldn't look her in the eye. “We were supposed to go together, Mom.”

She sighed heavily, “Unfortunately things change, but I will still be with you as long as you have this ring.”

She grasped my hand between hers as she spoke. I tried so hard to swallow the knot in my throat at her smile. She pulled off her wedding ring my father had given her thirty years ago and put it into my hand. I could only nod in silence towards her request. She died only a few hours later. A few hours before her funeral, I ran to a jewelry shop and bought a good quality silver chain to hang the ring around my neck. I have worn it ever since that day, only taking it off to shower. I couldn't bear the thought of not having her with me. Especially for this trip.

Shaking the thoughts away from my head, I turn back towards my original destination and start heading towards the cute little coffee shop one of my friends had recommended to me.

Walking closer to the shop, I see a light pink sign reading *Trois Petit Souris*, meaning three little mice. It looked like a quiet little coffee shop that sat in one of the back alleyways of Paris.

I hear a little bell ring as I push the door open.

“Bonjour” I hear softly coming from what looks to be a kitchen.

“Ah, bonjour” I say back.

A short woman who looks to be in her mid-twenties with blonde hair pulled into a tight bun walks up behind the counter.

“What can I get you today?” she asks as she looks at me.

I look at the menu in thought before answering, “A cappuccino and a croissant please.”

She nods her head and rings up my order. I grabbed my wallet from my pocket and handed her some cash. After paying, I went to sit down at one of the many tables outside the café. I decide to read while I wait and pull my book out of my bag. The world around me gets lost as I read about a woman who travels to Ireland and falls in love during her week-long trip.

Sounds abruptly return to my ears as the clattering of dishes erupts in front of me. I quickly bookmark my page and place the book lightly into my lap.

“Thank you,” I say, and the waitress from before smiles at me and turns to go back inside.

I return to my novel as I sip the piping hot cappuccino and tear apart the croissant.

By the time I finish, the sun has started to set. It casts brilliant shades of pink and oranges across the sky. The surrounding sights are cast in a golden hue, making everything seem more romantic in the city of Paris. I smile to myself in the warmth before packing up my things and walking back out onto the cobblestone street, heading towards my hotel.

The walk had been quicker than I expected, the café must have been close by, and I had not noticed. Shrugging to myself, I walk into the hotel lobby and head towards the little elevator tucked away into the corner. My mother would have loved this place. She was the one to pick it out, but the architecture along with the atmosphere would have made my mother fall in love.

The ding of the elevator shakes me from my thoughts as the doors open to the third floor. The slight musty smell of the carpet fills my nose as I walk towards room 321. The door quickly unlocks with the key and I walk in, slinging my bag onto the bed, stuff tumbling onto the duvet.

I sigh and lay on the opposite side in exhaustion. "What a day it has been," I think to myself. Closing my eyes, I reach up to the chain that holds my mother's ring, only to touch skin. My hand touches around my neck, not feeling the cold metal that had been there for the last eight months, but it was not there.

My eyes burst open, and I sat up quickly, shoving my hand into my pocket, only to feel my wallet. No ring. I yank my wallet out in hopes it might have gotten stuck inside, yet the metal circle is nowhere to be found. My breathing rapidly increases as the sound of my heart pounding fills my ears.

I suddenly rush towards the door, swiftly yanking my shoes harshly onto my feet. I jerked the door open, not even making sure it closed behind me, as I ran down the hallway towards the door with the sign marking the stairs. Scrambling down three flights of stairs, all I could think to myself was, "I hope they are still open".

The door leading to the stairs unexpectedly opened, and another guest walked through the entrance. I sideswipe the poor woman slightly with my shoulder, barely stopping to apologize before continuing my sprint down the street toward the café.

What if the ring wasn't there? That piece of jewelry is all I have left of her, how could I have lost it? My vision starts to blur somewhat as my thoughts race.

A warm light catches the corner of my eye. The café sign lit up slightly in this dim alleyway. When did it get dark? How had I not noticed it was night?

I panted heavily, trying to catch my breath as I got to the door. My hand grabs the handle and pulls. The door won't budge. I look up at the window and see a closed sign hanging in front of my face. What? How could they be closed? What time is it? I reach into my pocket to grab my phone, only to realize I left it with everything else in my hotel room.

My hand falls limp at my side as I look at the ground. "Why?" was all I could think to myself as tears finally flooded my vision. My throat tightens as I feel my hands shake a little.

"How could this happen to me?" I say into the silence.

"Excuse-moi?" A voice sounds behind me.

My eyes widen as I turn around in surprise, "Oui?"

"I believe this is yours," she holds her hand out towards me, "I found this near the counter when closing up." In her hand lay my mother's ring, light from the sign glinting off it.

"M-Merci." I stuttered out in bewilderment as I shakily took the ring from her hand

"Vous êtes les bienvenus." She says to me, hand dropping to her side and walking towards the mouth of the alley.

I could only stand there staring at the piece of jewelry in my hand. Now that I look at it, it doesn't look like much. The ring looked like every other wedding ring any married woman wore on their finger. This piece of metal and gemstone is not my mother.

I sigh before tucking the ring carefully in my pocket and turning back in the direction of the hotel. The streetlights of Paris flood my vision as I step out of the little

alleyway. You could see the Eiffel Tower light up in the distance and the stars twinkling dimly above.

As I walked towards my room, I heard the muffled sound of a door closing. Facing that direction, I see a slightly familiar face. The man from earlier today steps out of the room only a few doors down from mine. His face lights up in surprise and recognition.

“Oh, hello,” he says. “What a coincidence.”

I nod my head slightly, “What a coincidence indeed.”

I smile to myself while facing the door to my room. “I will be okay,” I think as I enter my room, the door shutting quietly behind me.