

## **Amnesia? ...**

Sarah opened her eyes unwillingly. It was cold, too cold. The night was dead. She lay face down in the snow and even through the biting coldness of the snow; Sarah felt a dry stickiness clinging to her palms. She looked down and saw with the light from the moon that her hands shone with blood. She felt across her body and concluded that the blood was not hers.

Sarah moaned and rolled onto her back; she found that she was staring up at the moon through the towering branches of trees. Snow surrounded her, reflecting the moonlight with an intrusive manner. She ached all over from the burning cold and reached up to rub her sore eyes.

Sarah climbed to her feet and looked around. There were distinctly three sets of footprints leading up to the place where she had lay; two leading toward and one leading back. Snow was falling gently and crisply beginning to cover the footprints. Sarah shuddered from a mixture of cold and fear and started towards them.

The silence penetrated Sarah unnervingly; there was no rustle of trees, no whistle of wind and no subtle sound of nature relentlessly continuing in the dead silence. What struck Sarah the most about her situation was how little fear she had adopted. She had woken in the middle of the night in a snow covered forest with absolutely no clue of why or how she had had come to be there. Still further was the intrigue of whose blood was stained on her hands. She couldn't ever hurt somebody, could she?

After walking for two minutes, following the trail of footprints, Sarah collapsed hard against a tree. The tree dug into her spine uncomfortably but Sarah was too overcome with relief of a rest to care. She threw her head back against the tree and dug her hands into her pockets. She frowned and pulled out half a bar of chocolate folded over with tape. Sarah ripped the wrapper from it and crammed the chocolate into her mouth. Then she stopped, the anticipated satisfaction falling short. In fact, she felt nothing at all.

Sarah threw the remainder of chocolate to the ground and sighed. She looked back to where she had come and saw the three sets of footprints, now even more faded from the falling snow. Wait... three sets? Hadn't she just walked from there, thus making a fourth set of footsteps? She stared blankly at the ground for a while, pondering this detail before deciding that it didn't change things; she needed to get the hell out of there.

Sarah walked on, following the footsteps in the light of the moon. A pair of girls in short cut miniskirts came into view, walking towards Sarah and laughing animatedly.

"Hey!" Sarah yelled, stumbling toward them but neither heard her.

"Hey, help me please."

The two walked towards her and passed her, walking down the hill towards where Sarah had found herself.

Sarah threw herself toward the girls but tripped on a large stick embedded in the snow and landed hard, taking a mouthful of snow and rolling down the hill, stopping only with a thud as her head hit a tree.

Sarah moaned and scrambled to her feet, running forward to the clearing where the girls had been but there was no sign of them. Sarah yelled and stamped her foot on the ground.

She clambered up the snowy bank and re-found the footprints she had been following. Two minutes later, Sarah heard more voices in the distance and split off from the footprints to investigate. She began to make out an orange glow that she discovered came from a large wooden cabin, from which the sound of chatter and music was erupting.

Sarah broke into a stumbling run, expecting to feel warmth inside the cabin but breaking the confines, felt only a wash of fear. The cabin was dimly lit and filled with mostly men drinking and talking loudly.

Sarah fell to her knees and let out a small yell of 'help' but not a single face turned. She collapsed on the floor, pulling her knees into her chest and sobbed gently. The loud rumble of drunkenness and music eradicated her cries for help.

Sarah looked around desperately, so alien, so naked. She lay, her heavy breathing lifting her chest up and down roughly.

Then a scream. A high-pitched scream. The noise died as faces turned to the doorway. A girl of perhaps fifteen was standing in the doorway of the cabin, clutching her blood-soaked stomach and gasping for air but seemingly not finding it. Tears streamed down her face and dripped down from her cheeks. As the tears slipped from her face, it almost gave the illusion that they were transforming into blood droplets that were also splattering the floor by her feet.

She stood silently for a second staring right into Sarah with wide terror-filled eyes before falling forward and collapsing on the floor. Bodies moved forward, pushing towards the girl. Sarah's mind flashed black and she found herself lying on the floor. She expected to feel her ribs crushed under the stampede of bodies but felt only cold numbness.

Through the moving crowd, Sarah could see a pale boy with bright blue eyes and a dead expression, staring right at her through the moving horde. He slowly lifted a finger to his lips and then amongst the moving bodies, he disappeared.

Sara pulled herself to her feet and stumbled forward. The crowd had dispersed between the girl lying in the entrance and screams that could be heard further down the hill. There was a trail of blood from where the girl had come, the crimson trodden in with the ever-falling white snow. It almost hit Sarah as evil. The sight of fresh blood was always a bad thing but to see it amongst the untouched white was degrading, like a wedding dress stained in blood. The contrast of innocence and pain seemed...wrong.

Sarah had reached the peak of the hill, the cabin just a few steps behind her. The cabin was on the highest part of the slope and from where she stood; Sarah could see the snow-covered tops of trees for miles. She scanned the empty landscape for a few seconds and then for a little longer and just as she was beginning to think the boy had been a hallucination, she saw him again.

The pale boy stood beside a tree, staring up at Sarah and as if she could hear his voice in her head, (she imagined it to be innocent and child-like but with a second voice in unison adding a demonic tone to the voice, like in exorcism scenes in movies), the boy called to her.

She let her legs fall underneath her, carrying her down the hill like an angel, floating down the side. As she half ran, half fell, her legs tangled underneath her and she tripped, falling head over heel until she smacked hard into a tree and her vision blackened.

Sarah found her consciousness and pulled at it. She found her way to her body but could not open her eyes. She was frozen in place and could feel the snowdrops gently hitting her face and melting instantly. Sarah was blind not just in her eyes but in her soul. There were distant noises, perhaps a fox in the snow. Voices, distressed voices. Then a scream. Sarah recognised the scream subconsciously but her brain didn't connect at first. And then she realised.

It was her scream.

Sarah's eyes snapped open to face the night. The moon had disappeared and a trace of sun was looming. Sarah got to her feet and walked towards the source of the noise despite it having died down temporarily. It didn't matter because Sarah's feet carried her to where she was going. She knew where she was going because she had already been there.

Growing louder where her muffled screams and after twenty seconds of walking she saw the figure of a man lying on all fours on top of another figure that was sunken into the snow. Sarah let out a yelp. She stumbled forward through the deep snow, screaming. 'Stop!' She screamed. She finally reached the figures and brought her fist down as hard as she could into the man's head. She felt it collide, she felt the blow connect but it was distant, as if it had no effect on either of them.

Sarah lashed out again, tears streaming down her face until she collapsed on the floor, breathless. The world blackened as she struggled to stay conscious but she faded from sanity.

It was light now, the sun beginning to fall from the sky and Sarah found herself on her feet. She felt less numb and naked; she wore a certain warmth about herself that felt vaguely familiar. Her mother knelt in the snow facing the tree by which Sarah had died but her body had gone. Sarah could feel the gentle, lifeless sobs, muffled as if Sarah was inside a bubble.

Sarah took a step forward and reached out her hand, holding her mother's shoulder reassuringly. Her mother stopped crying and although Sarah could not see it, a warm smile tried her sorrow face. Sarah was at peace and now her mother knew.