

# HAUNTED

Benny slowed down at the cemetery

“ Go,” he said . I’ll be waiting”.

Elena sniffled and nodded, adjusting her coat.

It was a cold morning and the dew was pouring heavily.

At first she took each step gently, kicking away leaves as she walked, then skipping ,and when Benny was out of sight ,her steps increased until she began to run. She ran and ran with all the strength she could muster until she came to a stop and threw herself on a grave .

She wiped the leaves off the grave . It read:

Michael Harty born Wednesday July the 4<sup>th</sup> 1999

Died Tuesday September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

She clasped her hands and grasped desperately for breath .

She wanted to cry .

Droplets of tears fell from her eye as she dropped a flower on Michael's grave .

“ Michael , I'm sorry” she began amidst sobs. She wanted to cry out and scream and hurt herself but the tears didn't come out making her scratch her eyes in pain.

“ I didn't mean to .. she continued. It was a mistake and... and I'm sorry” she said, picking the flower and hugging it tightly.

“ I ..... Have to forgive myself. I hope you forgive me also “.she continued, starting to sob.

The misty air around her began to glow and whirl as the grave shook calmly. She turned around to notice a young boy standing behind her .

“ Mi... Michael ! “ She gasped.

The figure smiled and touched her elbow . He was glowing all over.

“ Oh Mike, I’m sorry “ she began sobbing. I didn’t know....I just ....”  
Her voice trailed off as she sobbed

Michael’s spirit glowed brighter as he moved closer to her .

“ It wasn’t your fault Elena .It’s okay “ he said.

“ No Michael. It was all my fault”. She moped . You’re dead and there’s nothing I can do to bring you or mom or dad back “.

“ Forgive yourself. It wasn’t your fault. It’s okay, “ Michael said, his voice shaking as though he wanted to cry.

“I can’t “ she cried

Michael stared at her his glowing eyes meeting Elena’s.

“You will cause me more pain . Forgive yourself “ .he said, patting her gently.

His touch felt so cool and calming that all Elena could do was cry. It was like she upturned a basin of tears that was held trapped in between her eyes.

“ It’s okay Elena. Now forgive you ..”

“ Oh Michael ! She gasped as she enveloped his spirit between her arms . At that moment, flashes of how he died played back in her memory.

She saw herself in her security outfit ,she saw Joseph and Rachel running out of the van with guns and grenades , some cops were tagging behind her and then.. she spotted the criminals in their base. She called Roger and he immediately sent a dispatch team to aid the arrest.. She moved really swiftly but then kicked a bottle causing one of the criminals to notice her.... She remembered how they opened fire on them and how Roger instructed the cops to move In....

She remembered chasing the crime boss and Benny running after her telling her to wait but she didn't listen and when she had a clear aim , she shot.... And the next thing she saw was Michael running towards her .....and then falling down before he could even reach her , he fell and blood gushed from his stomach.....she remembered screaming his name loudly and dropping to the floor to carry him... She remembered the cops and Benny chasing the leader afar off while she held bleeding Michael in her hands ..

“Call an ambulance! Ambulance ! Somebody please ! she cried ... She remembered how granny died and how Michael had to follow her to the crime scene .. how she shouted at him and told him not to leave the car for any reason when he tried to tell her something... How she told him she hated the fact that he had to go everywhere with her and how he was always getting in her way ... How she needed to arrest the lead criminal and receive a huge pay at work so she could take care of him ... It all ran

into her head like a ghost through a wall.... He was trying to tell her something but she shut him up and hid the car somewhere ....

The ambulance didn't take long to arrive but before they came he had already died while showing her the bullet proof vest she forgot in the car when she left.

“ Why !”... She screamed

“Michael why ! Why did you do this to me ! Why ! You should have stayed in the car ! Michael ! Michael, look at me ! She continued screaming “

“ You.... You ... He stammered trying hard to breath.. you'll..leee....ffft ...yo..your ...bu... bullet proof vest....in ...the...the car ..” .

She could see he was bleeding more as he talked but she was too terrified to stop him.

She just sat there and cried . The memories clinked like resounding cymbals ...Benny and the cops coming back with a brutally shot body of the bloody leader and crates of the dangerous ammunition they had recovered... and when he came behind her to touch her shoulders....

She remembered shaking him violently telling him she was sorry and she loved him and wanted him ... But his cold body stared back at her...

She remembered the paramedics taking his body from her and rushing him to the hospital even when she knew he was dead . She remembered Benny's blood stained arm around her shoulders and an " I'm sorry" behind her ears . . . . Robert standing there looking with his gun clasped tightly in his hands ... Rachel walking with tears towards her to give her a hug and then.....

Blank out...the next thing she saw was a white coat bent over her and a hand examining her left eye...

They told her Benny had died and that he would be given a private military funeral.

She remembered Robert saying he was sorry after saying she shouldn't have brought him along....

She remembered walking out of his office sobbing and Benny running after her ... She remembered the hug the ...the blood ....Michael's cold body.. the bullet proof vest in this hand ...the ambulance and the private military funeral....

The flashes of what happened and how it happened were still very fresh in her memory and played on like a cassette tape as quickly as they had happened.

" I can't Michael ! I didn't care enough ! I didn't love you enough ! I didn't show you I loved you even though I did ! Michael you died

because of me ! Mom and dad died because of me !” She sobbed painfully.

Michael didn't respond, he drew her away from himself and touched her chest.

Elena gasped quickly and it felt like he's hand froze her heart

“ I forgive you Elena.. I know you loved me . I know you loved dad and mom . It's okay .. I want you to live and show me your love by forgiving yourself. I want you to live happily. Mom and dad love you . They want you to be happy” he said and smiled .

It seemed like she didn't have any control over her mind anymore because as soon as he mentioned their parents, her memory once again played the story the officer told her about how they died.

She remembered tapping her feet furiously ,running up and down the balcony endlessly waiting for her birthday gift , while Tom and his friend ran up the stairs to his room. She remembered how she muttered and complained about not having her very special birthday gift on time and how her friends would laugh at her if she didn't get it... She remembered the doorbell ringing loudly ..... running to get the door and then meeting Mr. Jeff the local police officer at the door, his cap in his hand and a sad expression drawn across his face..... .she remembered staggering backwards and being speechless..... She remembered Mr. Jeff sitting her down and narrating the story so explicitly as he saw in the CCTV cameras.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Harty were on their way back from Sam's grocery and gift shop when they were killed by assassins. They noticed a car following them and tried taking a different route from their home but

were still being followed. Soon , they were being chased by two more cars. Mr. Harty increased the speed when they arrived at the crescent bridge but they were overtaken by two cars while the last one followed behind . They began shooting at the car and her father got shot in the chest and her mother in the stomach.

Mr. Harty tried to wind up the window but the assassins shot at them from both sides. Being wounded , Mr. Harty attempted to place the car on the protection mode and released the bullet resistant glass locking all the doors from inside ,but the assassins kept shooting at the vehicle.

The car began to swerve but they didn't stop the chase. Instead , two of the cars came so close to stick to the car so it didn't move while one of the assassins threw a grenade to blow up the window when Mr. Harty suddenly jammed the brakes and reversed, letting the grenade roll off the bridge . The car behind rammed into them as they tried to escape again and the two cars behind him intercepted his path until they drove the car off the bridge where it drowned....

She remembered Michael's toy dropping from his hand as he listened from the balcony. .... how he screamed " it's all your fault ! you caused it ! you let them die ! you let them get you some stupid gift and you let them die ! you killed them ! I hate you ! "

She remembered screaming his name loudly in tears while his friend ran out of the house terrified . .... Mr. Jeff saying they were killed because of the last story they published..... She remembered how her father's TV station was closed down and how Mr. Jeff bundled them to their grandma's..... how all their parents property were handed over to a lawyer until they were of age.... The wrecked car without the bodies shown on the news ..... The gunshot on the car .....her mother's bracelet they found dangling out of the wrecked car... The news headline that their rival tv station sang for many days ....

“ Owners of popular tv station, The Nation’s , were brutally murdered by assassins after returning from a gift shop where they went to buy a birthday gift for their daughter “...

The crystal clear recall of her grandmother’s wrinkled hands spread out for an embrace.....how she stopped them from watching the news anymore .....

..the agony ...she felt the pain and hate in her brother’s eye when he looked at her.....

She remembered one time at breakfast her grandmother asked her to pass her her special tea mug. She wouldn’t take tea in any other one .

She remembered not answering , and her grandmother flaring up with disdain in her eyes

“You don’t like the prison I’ve built you ? “She shirked.

Elena was startled; she had never seen her grandmother act that way. Apparently the old woman had had enough already.

“Yeah ? She got up and walked to Elena

“You want to know what the funny thing is ? You keep on talking to me like I’m a stranger.

I was there when you were born and I’m here right now with you . I told you everything was okay .Now you’re trying to cut me out of this like I have never been part of it” .

She remembered crying and screaming

“I know I’m intense and controlling but you need to learn how to cope with it .That’s just the way it is . If you didn’t want me in your house you shouldn’t have let me move in ! can it get any better ?”..she said and stormed out her grandmother’s voice trailing behind her .

“Well if you want your own life, wake up and take your own advice !”

That was the first and last time such an argument happened. Though breakfast was ruined, Elena felt somewhat peaceful, like she had thrown some huge burden off her shoulders.

Her Grandmother cleaned the table while trying to stop her brother Michael from making a mess of his milk and cutting his pancake in bits without eating them ...he just kept muttering inaudibly and Elena could swear she heard him call her an ingrate, but she was too angry to say anything to him.

She entered her room, broke a few things and cried herself to sleep without dinner .

Most of the time she felt she was burning in a dream that would never stop. She wished badly that the pain would stop, that she would stop seeing her parents ,that she would stop drifting away from her body and watching the whole murder again, and she could just sleep even for a minute. She wished she didn't scream at her grandmother and wished most importantly she were dead

Perhaps they would have been better off without her.

The memories crushed her brain in quick succession... How her heartbeat changed with a different tempo each time her grandmother talked about her father or mother.....

She remembered screaming so loudly at night and her grandmother shaking her vigorously

“Wake up ! Wake up, it's just a dream ! Or when she would say shh- No ,no sweetheart it's okay , don't panic love “ whenever her brother was frightened.....

.... She remembered the nightmares..... She would see herself float out of her own body and watch how they died as if she was there when it happened.....

The beads of sweat round her neck ...every time she woke up.. ....

She would see her dad in her dreams today and her mother the next.... She remembered sneaking to take pills just so she could sleep....

The memories were all there as clear as crystal and still pierced as sharp as a knife ....

Michael's warm hands woke her from her unpleasant reverie..

“ I do Michael.. I love you and mom and dad and...and... I forgive myself !” She sobbed but this time so gently as a feather falling on the surface of the ocean .

“ It's okay,” Michael said .

Elena looked up and searched his beaming eyes...it was glowing and all she felt was warmth and love.....and then he began to glow brighter and brighter till she had to shield her eyes from the light.

“ Wha...what’s happening ? She stammered.

But the light just grew brighter and distant

“Michael ! Michael ! Don’t leave me please ! ... I love you !” She cried trying to grab his hands..

“ I love you too Elena “ he said smiling as his spirit faded away , distant into the sky.

She stayed speechless. She felt sad but she couldn’t cry. She felt her cold hands gripping her stomach.

“ I love you more,” she muttered . She stared at his grave and felt her stomach flutter then a smile crept up her lips , trickling down into giggles and into a full blown laughter.

She looked up at the sky and she could swear she saw Michael , her mom and dad smiling and waving at her... She was astounded by the sight and as they faded into the clouds. She felt as if the ghost that had tormented her flew away as the clouds disappeared.... She lay down on the grave and smiled at the sky.

She smiled and waved at the clouds. This time around, she walked calmly and happily .

She thought of her father, his nose , his eyes , his laughter ,how he never liked noise, how he played the viola every morning , his favorite meal: coffee and bacon. She thought of her beautiful mother, how she was always bent above a table writing new articles with her father, how she made a lot of racket whenever Maddie, her friend came around .....the opposite of her father .Elena chuckled..

She thought of Michael. He's round and small face ,how he never talked when he was a baby and how they thought he was a mute ...how he was always shy around guests and never really talked to anyone at school except Peter, his best friend who was a freaking weirdo... Michael's colorful parrot which he fed everyday. He saved a lot to get the parrot even when their mother insisted she would get him one herself.

She thought of her grandmother who still loved eating chocolate chips and milk despite her old age. She thought of the routine breakfast of pancakes and milk every morning. Her Grandmother would sit most of the time knitting a new sweater for Michael and then one afternoon she died of a stroke .

She thought of Rachel, her friend at work, Robert, her boss and egocentric Joseph, who had a crush on her when she first joined the undercover team .

She thought of Benny, his hair, his hand ,his face, how he stayed by her when her brother died ... She remembered how she had first behaved when he came on the team . She was snobbish and arrogant but he couldn't care less .Elena chuckled lightly... "I was a real wimp .." she thought to herself.

She thought again of his soft words, his calm countenance, his chin ...

" His chin ? What on earth ? She smiled again at her own funny thoughts. She thought of Mr. Jeff , Mrs. Samantha, her principal and her fluffy dog.

Lastly she thought of herself .Her greedy self as a child , a moody teenager and a haunted adult . How she joined the military....how she became an undercover agent ....her first case in Quebec city and how afraid she was to hold a gun back then.. then.. she thought of the arrest and the recovery of the ammunition in Ontario. She sighed.

She had come out of the cemetery now and it seemed like all the thoughts and those terrifying moments and nightmares were locked behind those cemetery gates ....

She turned to face the cemetery and stared on until Benny's voice jerked her back to reality. She turned abruptly as he came down from the car and approached her

“ Are you alright ? “ he said

Elena nodded and it was evident she was blushing as her cheeks flushed pink ...



