

DEAR BROTHER

Felix clamped the small oil lamp to his belt, the flickering flame illuminating the gravestone. With aching arms, he dug his old and battered shovel deep into the earth's core, it vibrating as it hit a hard object. He'd found it.

Felix hastily lifted the lid of the silky white coffin. Engraved on the hardwood was "Anna Herlin." Muddy hands grabbed the gold rings, diamond earrings, and a citrine necklace. In his rush, the necklace slipped onto the dirt as he slid his prizes into his pockets, its sparkle going unnoticed.

The last moments of the moon's eerie glow revealed the crows perched on nearby tombstones, their eyes watching Felix's every move as he shoveled the dirt back into place. A chill ran down his spine as their caws echoed through the night, a sinister choir bearing witness to his actions.

The sun rose as he wiped the sweat off his face as he walked away. A satisfied grin painted over his face as he dreamt of the next warm meal to come from the heavyweight in his pocket.

"Excuse me," a voice called.

Felix tensed.

"Would you know where Felix Herlin's grave might be?" Felix Herlin. A name never his own, yet a heavy weight on his shoulders. Felix; fortune and luck. Something he never lived up to.

Felix turned to see a man dressed in a pristine suit, his brown hair slicked back with gel. His face was so young, he looked as if he were a child trying to dress up as an adult.

But it was a face Felix had seen before.

In comparison, the only clothing to Felix's own name was his old tattered jacket covered in mud, pants and shoes no better. He would've tried to brush it off, but it was like glue.

He motioned the man to follow him.

Neither of them say a word, listening only to the soft crunch of the dirt underneath their shoes, Felix nervously fidgeting with his fingers.

"Here," He gestured, the dirt of the grave next over suspiciously moist and fresh.

"Thank you." As he spoke the man's eyes trailed down to his heavy pockets, his eyes widening in surprise before being quickly washed away with a practiced but crooked smile.

Felix returned it, before turning away to leave and give the man privacy.

The man whispered into the cold air after his first step, freezing him in his tracks

"Is this...?"

Felix whipped his head around, seeing the man crouched down, a small citrine necklace in his palm.

Felix left, returning to his home only a few steps away from the graveyard.

When the church bells struck twelve, Felix peeked through his window to see as the man walked away. Once he was sure the coast was clear, he walked back over to the graveyard, locking the gates.

The next night, he couldn't help but feel uneasy, like eyes were constantly on him. The loudest screech of a crow above to the sound of a rabbit set him on edge. Frantically scanning his surroundings, waiting for something to jump out and grab him like a deer in headlights.

As the moon rose higher in the sky, the deeper he would dig. Again, his shovel hit a hard object.

It was as he cracked open the coffin's lid that he came face to face with a man, his features almost identical to the man he'd met earlier today. He was very well off, wearing an expensive vintage watch that was easily worth a fortune along with his expensive suit.

A horrified gasp pierced the air, breaking Felix out of his trance.

He whipped his head around, making eye contact with the man from the day before, a pocket knife and a well-lit lamp in his hands. He turned his head to look down into the hole, before tripping over himself as he stepped back, arms flailing and items dropping as he fell with a loud thump.

Felix's mouth opened and closed, trying to find an explanation that didn't exist. Shaking hands reached and gripped tight around the handle of his trusty shovel. Adrenaline filled him as he pulled himself out of the hole.

He couldn't see his own expression, but the other man's face told him it was something nasty. His eyes were blown wide as he gasped desperately for air, arms raised in surrender as he tried to shuffle away.

Without a second thought, Felix raised his shovel above his head.

"Wait!" The man cried.

The other man's voice sobered Felix, his shovel dropping from his hands as he realized his actions. The moment it hit the ground, the shovel snapped in half, the old tape failing to hold it together. He dropped to his knees, tugging at his hair as he began to whisper apologies over and over like a mantra.

The man stared at him, a look of both fear and understanding in his gaze. Carefully, he pushed himself up from the ground and inched closer to Felix, like a stranger warming up to a wild cat.

"It doesn't have to be this way." His hand slowly tugged down his tie, uncovering the citrine necklace he'd dropped last night.

Felix stared, unable to move even as his hands shook uncontrollably.

"My mother once said that everyone deserves to have a chance." His thumb gently glided over the citrine necklace, almost like he was caressing a loved one.

Felix's eyes whipped up to the man's face, his eyes staring straight into the other's soul. The man's words and his touch on the citrine necklace made something stir within Felix, relighting a flame that he had long thought extinguished.

Felix began to stand, his hand reaching forward and gripping onto the bladed end of the broken shovel.

"Mother always did say that, didn't she," he agreed.

He raised his arms once more.