

Graveyard Picnic

By C. Jade Wyton

Little Robin goes on a peaceful picnic with her father, at the graveyard where her mother is buried.

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It wasn't a long walk from the Stoneclaw house to Copperpit's graveyard; though with little legs, the rough rocky path felt a lot more difficult to navigate. The footholds that had been worn down from years of use were from feet much bigger than her own, but Robin was determined she didn't need to be carried.

She wasn't a baby anymore. She was four! She was old enough to walk on her own, no matter how much her dad fussed.

'Careful, love,' he said softly, offering her his hand as they came to a set of stairs. 'Do you need me to carry you up?'

'Nuh-uh!' Robin declared, shaking her head. Though, she still took Daimon's hand so she could balance herself. She held it tight, using it to pull herself up and make the big first step... and she immediately felt winded and changed her mind; holding up her hands and grabbing at her father. 'Yeah.'

'Alright,' Daimon purred, scooping an arm around his daughter and lifting her effortlessly. He put her down at the top of the stairs, giving her a gentle push forward so she didn't fall backwards as she got her footing and swished her tail happily.

She swiped playfully at the flowers in his other hand as he pet her head, and giggled when he gently batted her with them.

'Why do you always bring Mum flowers?' Robin asked. 'I don't get it. She can't smell them, she's dead!'

It was a genuine question, though her father laughed at it like it was a joke.

'I don't *get* it!' Robin pushed.

'It's as much for my peace of mind as it is for hers,' he answered. 'I love her. And being able to give her a gift—even if she can't really accept it—helps me feel better about not being able to see her. And also, if she's turned into a ghost, she'll know I've not forgotten her. *She was always so scared of being forgotten....*'

Robin wasn't sure that last bit was meant for her ears, with how quietly he'd said it. But she replied to her father anyway, 'Is it easy to forget about people?'

'Sometimes,' Daimon answered. 'Some people.... Not her, though.'

'Oh,' Robin's ear twitched in acknowledgement. And then they flicked up and she pointed to the familiar graveyard gate. 'There it is, Dad!'

'Too right!' Daimon grinned, walking effortlessly in pace with his daughter as she hurried to the gate as fast as her little legs would take her.

She tried to shove the heavy iron gate, though it didn't budge until Daimon unlatched it from the top. Robin stumbled as it swung open and then turned to her father, looking *very* proud of herself as she started through the old, worn-down paths that trailed the graveyard.

She waved at families as they passed and was greeted back warmly. Then, she

came to the familiar pair of headstones by the pond and stopped, her tail flicking back and forth as Daimon pulled off his backpack and unclipped it.

‘Hello, Mum,’ she greeted the stone on the left. Then, she nodded to the stone on the right. ‘Hello, Grandpa Farren.’

A gentle *whoosh* of wind brushed the back of Robin’s fur and she glanced back to see her father placing down the family’s old picnic blanket.

‘Would you like to give Farren the letter from Uncle Birdie?’ he asked, taking out a small envelope.

Robin recognised it as the one they’d gotten from her uncle, Bertram, in their recent trip to Thistlebond and nodded. She took the envelope and placed it on the grave, shifting the old rusted dagger to hold it down in the wind.

She recalled her father mentioning the blade had been put there by her aunt Sheshalan; Farren’s oldest friend.

She grinned at her father as he placed the flowers on her mother’s grave, and then hurried over to the picnic blanket.

She stuck her hand in the bag, barely listening as her father said something to the headstones, and pulled out a small container of chopped vegetables. She struggled to open the lid as she wandered towards the pond; stopping just short of the water as the ducks *quacked* and *quarked* at the sight of her and excitedly swum over.

‘Be careful, Robin,’ Daimon warned. ‘Take a step back.’

Robin did as she was told, taking two small paces back until she was a safe distance, and then managed to *pop!* the lid off the vegetables and began throwing them to the ducks.

‘That’s my girl,’ Daimon praised, softly. Then he gave a heavy grunt and lowered himself onto the blanket. ‘Do you want the chicken, or the pork sandwich?’

‘Chicken!’ Robin answered, her gaze not moving from the birds as they dunked themselves under the water as they ate. ‘Chicken is my favourite food! I could eat a whole chicken all on my own, I bet!’

Daimon let out a loud, hearty laugh and Robin turned back just so she could see how wide he was smiling. ‘Your mother’s favourite food was chicken, too, you know!’ he said. ‘When she was pregnant with you it was almost all she ate.’

Robin gave a nod of acknowledgement before upending the contents of her container into the pond and hurrying back to her father. She sat down with him, nuzzling into his side, and purred, ‘Can you tell me another story about Mum?’

‘Always.’

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