

### Last Gift

Elene buzzed around her kitchen happily. Tomorrow was their anniversary. Adrien, her husband of three years, planned to take her somewhere special. They'd have the cheesecake afterwards, for dessert.

"I'm making it with cherries—your favorite," she said.

"I'm looking forward to it."

As Elene pulled out the ingredients, she gasped. "I forgot the cherries! I'll be back soon!"

"It's fine. We don't—" Adrien started, but she was already out the door.

He watched as she pulled out and drove away. Adrien looked at his watch. It was 3 o'clock. It'd be another hour before she could start dinner and the cheesecake.

*I'll save us some time*, he thought, and started making the crust for the cheesecake.

The doorbell rang as he finished. Adrien received the package and looked at it. It was addressed to his wife, but it wasn't from a company he knew. He placed it in her favorite chair.

"Be back soon...?" Adrien asked. "Is she driving across the city to find cherries?"

Sirens blared in the distance, cutting through between the trees. Adrien looked out the window, knowing he wouldn't see anything. He tried to call her, but her phone went to voicemail. It was now 6 o'clock. Adrien picked up a magazine. He checked his watch again. Five minutes had passed. He got up and went to the window again.

The phone rang and he hurried to answer it.

"Elene? Where are you? It's been hours since you left!" Adrien said, exasperated.

"Is this Mr. McCoy?" a lady asked on the other side.

"Yes."

"I'm calling from St. Paul's Hospital. Your wife, Elene was in an accident. She's currently in surgery."

Blood drained from his face. A million questions raced through his mind, but mainly, he felt guilty.

Adrien spent the next two days at his wife's side. She died at 10PM on Monday. Their anniversary had been filled with misery and waning hope.

Adrien stared at her laptop. Elene was a gamer. He logged into her Skyrim account, but didn't touch the controls.

Her character stood atop a hill, overlooking a valley of dense trees. The sun slowly rose over the mountainous horizon. It was beautiful. This was the last thing she saw in the game. He watched the sunrise with her, tears welling in his eyes.

Adrien barely ate. He laid on the sofa, staring at the ceiling. Sometimes, he'd try to watch TV, but the images had no meaning. His eyes drifted to the package, still on his wife's favorite chair.

"Elene bought something." He continued staring. "A present? For me?"

Tears rolled down his cheeks. This was her last gift to him. A part of him did not want to know what it was. He wanted to keep it a secret...something special just between them. He didn't want that feeling to pass.

Adrien picked up the package tenderly and cradled it against his heart. To him, at this moment, it was Elene. Light turned to darkness and Adrien at last set it on his lap, then next to him on the sofa.

It was a present. She would want him to open it...to enjoy it...

One day he'd open it...eventually. But not today.

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