

The Widow's Morning

by Ryn Cricket

I can't believe he's dead. There his body lay in the coffin so peaceful, a little mangled, but masked well. I could only stare in disbelief and wonderment. It was so fast. One minute everything was fine, and then he was gone--just like that.

"You know, he was such a good man." a woman whispered in my ear. I didn't know who she was, but I nodded.

"I'm so sorry for you and the children." I heard over and over.

"How are they holding up?"

"Lisa keeps thinking he's outside mowing the lawn or working on the car," I would reply. "But Lily is so young, I think she may have forgotten him already."

"It will get easier with time." I heard more than anything. Did these very well-meaning people know how cliché they were? I mean I guess there isn't much you can say in this situation. And I guess I didn't know what I wanted to hear either.

He was on his way to do "research" at the library when he had the heart attack. I wasn't with him. He thought he just had the flu, but he also thought he was invincible and insisted on going anyway. He was always doing research, but never had anything to show for all those hours.

"Who's that girl?" I heard someone whisper to someone else. I looked around. I didn't know her either. She looked to be about 17, but with brown frizzy hair, lipstick in a completely unnatural shade

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/ryn-cricket/the-widows-morning>»*

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of pink, and blue eye shadow put on like someone in their 60's. She didn't look at me. No direct eye contact with anyone. She went straight to his body, cried like a child, and ran out in a scene.

Whispers flew, like wild darts across the room. I didn't know what I was supposed to say. Right then, it wasn't my job to figure things out; it was my job to cry.

"What is all this research about?" I asked him one time. "What is so important that you would rather spend these hours with your computer than sleeping with or talking to me."

All he replied was, "It's none of your business."

No one was surprised that his teenage son didn't come, they haven't talked in years, but when his teenage daughter arrived, with two close friends, she wouldn't go near the casket. Maybe she was sad or scared. Maybe she didn't want to see him like that.

I was too busy getting hugs, and hand squeezes to go over and talk to her just then. She talked and giggled with her friends in the corner. Was she that removed from him, did she just not know how to show respect? I watched her through the people around me who were reciting the same things I had heard a hundred times already. All I really had to do was nod. She still laughed, giggled and texted on her phone as if she were in a school hallway. Then she stopped for a minute, walked directly to her father, and it looked like she spit in his face. I couldn't be sure. I wasn't that close, but then she walked past me with her friends right behind her, and nodded at me. I wanted to tell her I would call her, we would get together sometime, but I felt confined by well-wishers.

As I looked around, I saw all my friends and family around to support me, and be here for me, and there was no one there that I knew, just to mourn him. Most of his family or friends didn't even

come, not to mourn anyway. It seemed proof enough for me that the thallium I put in his coffee that last week together was a good idea. At least my girls were going to get something.

