



## Momento Mori

by Truly Hunter

Constance stood in the doorway of Enid's dark bedroom. Her fists were planted firmly against her hips. The bright light from the hallway back lit her body and created a silhouette like a void within the frame.

"Are you even listening?" Constance prodded.

Enid imagined her bedroom window shattering, a black clad stranger swinging into the room waving a knife around as he offered to end it all for her.

Constance cleared her throat loudly.

Enid let her daydream slip away and sat up a little straighter.

"You were telling me that I take you and Imogen for granted and my lack of responsibility is going to lead me down the kind of dark path I won't be able to return from." She'd heard this over 100 times. She didn't need to listen to know the script.

"Your sister looks up to you..." Her mother's voice trailed off and Enid knew Constance was wondering why anyone would look up to her derelict older daughter. "She became a violinist because she could see how passionate you are about your own music."

Enid rolled her eyes and sighed. She crossed her arms and leaned back in her desk chair.

"It's not okay to roll your eyes about this."

"Dude, Imogen doesn't need me to be there, okay? She'll slay the recital no matter what." Imogen was perfect and completely capable of playing without her support. "She'll get the scholarship. Trust me. You'll have your money."

Enid turned her desk chair away from her mother's nagging. She faced her computer, moved her mouse to wake it up, then navigated to Facebook to find her instant messages. Three consecutive dings indicated the reminders from her band mates confirming the start time of their show. 7pm at The Velvet Mafioso club in New Haven.

"That is a hurtful thing to say, Enid. You know this is not just about money."

Enid smirked. A sharp breath of air escaped her nose.

"There will be other chances for you to play with your band, but this—"

"You're kidding, right?" Enid whipped back around to face Constance head on.

"This isn't just some random gig. Funeral Records will be there. That label is scouting, mom, do you even know what that means?" Enid pulled her long hair over one shoulder then looked down at the violet strands and began braiding. Her hands began to shake so she moved them quickly, tugging the hair into place. She knew what was coming.

"This is your sister's shot to ensure her future. You know we can't pay for University ourselves. Ever since your dad—"

"I get it!" Enid was expected to work her ass off to keep Imogen in new shoes and fresh underwear. In return she got to sacrifice her own future so Imogen could succeed. As usual. "This is bull..."

"Your attitude is a real disappointment. You're so—"

"Selfish?"

"For once, please...can you think of someone besides yourself?"

Enid clenched her jaw so tightly she could feel her teeth grinding as they locked against each other. She'd been working her ass off since she was 13 to keep her family afloat – this was her reward.

“She doesn’t need me there. You guys are gonna be fine on your own.”

There was a long silence. It pressed against the wide gap between Enid and her mother, each one of their bodies protected by crossed arms.

“Yesterday she asked me... Why does Enid yell so loud? Does she hate me?”

Somewhere inside of her gut, Enid felt a tug. She tightened her shoulders, drawing them up toward her ears.

“She begged me to make you come to her recital. She wants to impress you. She said it would make you like her again.”

Enid’s jaw was a vice, clamped around her tongue and tightened so firmly it could not move. Her eyes lingered on the dark shadows in the far corner of her bedroom. After some time she listened to the sound of her door close. Her mother’s footsteps echoed down the hall. It wasn’t selfish to want her own success. She deserved to have something of her own.

She glanced at her clock. 6:00pm. She got up to get ready for the gig.

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Leaves were scattered by the force of Enid’s bright red ‘94 Mazda Hatchback as it raced down Enodia Street. The road was dark as pitch. Streetlights cast large yellow circles on the road every few meters.

*BI-BING!* A text came through on Enid’s phone.

*“Kore: Are you on your way?”*

She glanced down at the screen for just a second.

“I’m not even late...” She murmured as she looked at the dashboard clock.

6:45pm.

She put her eyes back on the road.

*BI-BING!*

*“Kore: Seriously, we need to set up.”*

Enid glanced down again, one hand on the wheel as she looked at her phone.

“I’m coming as fast as I can...” she murmured defensively.

As Enid turned her sights back on the road she could feel the same nagging tug in her belly that she had experienced after her argument with Constance.

*“Does she hate me?”* Imogen’s soft voice drifted through Enid’s mind - a tenuous echo. She couldn’t stop hearing it.

Enid’s fingers tightened around the steering wheel. She didn’t even see the stop sign lingering beneath the low hanging branches of the weeping willow that towered over the four way stop at Enodia and Momento Road.

Two spots of brightly glowing violet flashed. A shadow passed beneath the streetlight. Something small. Black. Enid swerved without thinking. Her chest throttled her heart. A bump. A squawk. She lost control of the wheel. Her vision was eclipsed by night as she swerved off the road. Then there was nothing but throbbing. Then there was nothing.

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“Need some help in there?” A casual voice outside drifted in between the shards of broken window.

Enid could feel a biting ache in her forehead. She reached up and touched the throb. Something warm wet her fingers. Her stomach wound around itself. Her thoughts felt stalled. She couldn’t fully piece together what had happened.

“Holy Hell...”

“Not quite,” said the voice. He sounded young.

The young man outside began to work the door handle. He yanked and jimmied. Metal on metal scraped obnoxiously. Enid cringed.

He pried the door open, reached in, unlatched her belt, then hauled her out of the car in one deft movement. As he stood her up, Enid's legs wobbled. She stumbled forward and toppled onto her knees near the curb. Her heavy head hung on her shoulders. Her stomach heaved against its own emptiness.

It took a great amount of strength to hoist her head back and hold it in place. She looked around. For many moments everything before her was coated in a murky leaden fog.

"Oh God..." Enid said. She sat back on her heels. Her body felt as if it were moving through jello.

"Wow, you really totalled this thing," the young man commented. Three metallic clangs echoed into the fog. Was he kicking her bumper?

"Can you not do that?" Enid roughly rubbed her eyes. When she opened them again the fog had cleared. Across the road, a tall iron fence wrapped around a field filled with graves. She grasped her gut. She expected to feel physically ill. Instead, all she felt was the sting and rush of panic.

"No-no-no..." She tried to push herself back onto her feet. Her arms trembled with effort but she couldn't seem to move. "I'm so fucked!" Enid's voice grated dryly against her throat.

"You sure did fuck up." The click and hiss of a lighter and cigarette accompanied the words. "As usual, huh?"

Footsteps clicked toward Enid. Soon all she could smell was smoke and tar.

"Hey, screw you..." Enid said as she rubbed her bruised skull.

“Oh, that’s right.” The man stopped beside her. He knelt down and held out his slender white hand, offering her the cigarette. “It’s never your fault.”

Enid lifted her eyes toward the man. His face was cast in shadow above her, his vibrant violet illuminated from behind looked like a ghostly halo.

“Right...whatever. Can you just help me up?” The roughness of the pavement dug into her weak knees.

“Help yourself.” The man took the cigarette back and dragged heavily on it as he stood up.

Enid sighed.

“Who are you again?” Enid attempted to push herself from her knees to her feet. Her body hung on her bones.

“Come on, you can do it,” the man said lightly as he moseyed a few feet and continued to smoke.

It took several tries for Enid to stand. Once she had, she stood still waiting for her clarity of mind to flood back. Slowly memories of the accident trickled in.

The car.

Her skull ached as she whipped her head left and right.

“Where did my car go?”

The man sauntered up languidly and stood too close to her.

“My car? Where the hell is my car?” It was gone. Enid’s body filled with the pinch and cut of terror that comes with the realization that one is truly screwed.

“We won’t need it.”

Enid turned on the man. She pursed her lips, ready to bare her teeth. Her words caught in her throat. The man's eyes looked familiar. They flashed in the shadow of night. She couldn't remember what she was going to say.

"You gonna call someone? Maybe your mom?" he asked.

"Oh, shit..." Enid patted her pockets. She breathed a sigh of relief. Her phone was still there. She pulled it out and looked at it. Cracked from top to bottom. "Oh f—" She pressed the 'on' button rapidly. The screen flickered and flashed. Broken. How was she supposed to tell her band she couldn't make it? "Crap. They're gonna hate me."

"More than they already do?" The man asked, seemingly unsurprised.

Enid's eyes flicked over to him. She gave him her best withering glare.

"You got something to say to me?" she asked incredulously.

"Yeah." He took a few steps toward her. "I'm Eden." He held out his hand.



The Velvet Mafioso, usually booming with wild music and excited voices, was dead silent. The only sound was the echo of Enid's own footsteps as she walked slowly down the alley toward the side door of the club. When she reached the band entrance, a small red door in the Velvet's brick wall, she stood alone before it. Her chest was tightly wrapped around her lungs and she had to fight against its steely grip as she struggled to breathe.

"Sounds like you missed your shot."

"Shut up!" Enid snapped. She whipped around to face Eden. Her chin was quivering so she clenched her jaw. "Are you just here to make things worse?"

"You treat your friends just like your family. You take them for granted until they walk away and leave you feeling like the victim."



“Oh my GOD, I have never wanted to punch someone so badly.” Enid’s fingers wound into vice grips. “You don’t even know me,” she spat as she took a step toward him, “you think you can tell me—”

Without warning a raven in flight swooped in front of her.

“AH—” Enid threw her hands up over her face and backed away.

“What is it that makes you so angry with me, Enid?”

She lowered her hands and watched as Eden drew nearer.

“Is it that you’ve never heard your own thoughts out loud before?” His shiny violet hair reflected the light of the streetlamps and distracted Enid as if it was hypnotic. There was something so familiar about his appearance. His words seemed to flow as if from her own thoughts.

“Why do you talk in code? If you have something to say, say it!”

He was near enough she could smell his smoky scent.

“You’re pissed off because your mom treats your sister like she’s the second coming. Ever since your dad died, you’ve had to grow up faster than you wanted to.” He took another step closer.

The air began to grow cold.

“Stop it.” Enid could see her breath; her words in the air.

“You’ve worked hard to keep food on the table. Watched your sister cry in your mother’s arms. Been told you’ve got to be strong - never show your pain - never show how much you miss him.”

Enid could feel pressure rising inside of her throat. It filled her head, pushing on her skull from the inside. As Eden took another step toward her, his lavender hair reflecting moonlight, she took one step back.

“You want to tell the woman, hey, I need you just as much as she does. What about me? But after years of sucking down tears, there’s no point.” His voice was so relaxed it felt like he was mocking her.

“Okay, I said stop.” Enid took another step back. She was trapped between the red door and Eden’s advance. What was it about him that was so arresting? If anyone else talked to her this way, she’d have ripped them a new one.

“She just doesn’t love you as much. She’s cruel. She wants you to suffer. Isn’t that it?”

“Don’t.” Her back was against the door. Eden just kept pressing forward. She could smell the tar on his breath. The acid in his words stripped her down.

“And you can never tell her...”

“I get it—”

“That you wish it hadn’t been him, you wish it had been—”

“STOP!” Enid’s scream echoed - reverberated off the walls. Her eyes were so wide she could feel the strain in her neck.

Eden offered a languid grin. It slid over his features like a snake.

She felt the cold of the red door seeping through the thin cotton of her black t-shirt as she pressed her back against it. She was chilled to the bone. The frozen sting of tears and open wound of despair pulsed behind her eyeballs. She clenched her eyes shut, but tears would not fall. She knew in that moment what it was. He was her – they were one.

“Time to meet your maker,” Eden said with a satisfied grin.

“W-what?” She pried her eyes open.

Eden’s hands, hard and cold as gravestones, shoved against her chest.



The sensation of falling into a void was like having the breath sucked out of her lungs until she suffocated. Her body begged for the stability of solid ground. When she finally hit the floor, she had vertigo so bad she wondered if she would throw up until her bowels were ejected from her mouth.

Enid woke on the floor of a morgue, her head still pounding. When she touched it, she could feel the blood from the accident which had somehow remained undried. It should have been warm - it was cold as ice. The bright red of it on her fingertips was the only color in the dark grey room.

Enid stood slowly - her body wavered. In the center of the room, beside the wall-to-wall drawers where they kept the dead, was a table. It was covered with a long white sheet. From the bottom of the sheet, greying feet protruded. She inched forward, her eyes focused on the toe tag. She was close enough now to read it: Enid Cliffe, Car Accident.

Immediately Enid began to lose control of her breathing. She shook her head. Panting with fear, she rounded the table. When she reached the side, she ripped away the sheet.

There on the table lay her body. Eyes sunken, her decaying skin beginning to turn a sickly grey-green.

“Please no...” She grasped the corpse’s shoulders and began to shake the body.

“Wake up!” she demanded of the corpse. “You’re so stupid,” she howled. “Wake. Up.” Her body would not respond. She continued to shake the body until she collapsed onto her own chest. Dead.

Had Eden – had she been right? Was she angry at her sister and her mother because of how she had been treated after her father’s death. “I’m so sorry,” she said into the empty room, “...sorry that I was so shitty. A shitty daughter, a horrible sister...a terrible friend.” She plead with the darkness, “Please, don’t let this be true. I’m not dead.” She started to beat her fist against the stony skin of her own body. “Mom! Where are you? I’m sorry. I was selfish...” Her voice was a mournful wail that haunted the empty room with its echo. “It wasn’t your fault...it wasn’t anybody’s fault...Not that he died. Not that it was so hard for all of us.” She continued to cry until she had exhausted herself.

When inside she was like a void, empty of anything left to give - she raised her eyes to stare darkly at the face of her corpse.

In an instant, the body’s mouth stretched unnaturally wide. From within, a crow squeezed its way out. It flew into Enid’s face.

Enid screamed, her arms up in front of herself as she ducked to evade.

The doors of the morgue flew open with a powerful gust of wind. Enid turned to watch the crow leave. It flapped its onyx wings and soared down the hall. Enid ran to the doorway of the morgue and watched it fly. As the black bird flew toward the hospital’s emergency exit, its body began to morph into the ashen shadow of a specter. Its rippling flicker was like a reflection on dull grey water. The tall body and unruly brown hair was instantly recognizable.

“Dad?”

Enid gave chase. She longed to touch the billowing image of her father. His body blinked in and out of view as he waited with his back turned. He faced the door marked exit.

Every step she took, it seemed her father was farther away and it felt like she could run for hours and never reach him. Each step took more effort than the last. Her muscles felt rigid with rigor mortis. Her body moved through the ether as if water surrounded each limb.

When finally she drew near enough, she reached for him, delicate fingers extending through space. He turned toward her, she caught a glimpse of his face, heavy with grief. Her hand drifted through him and out the other side. It made contact with the exit door. The momentum of her run pushed the door open.

A flash of light blinded Enid. She closed her eyes tight. When she opened them again, she was standing in a parking lot surrounded by trees. Above the forest of spruce, rays of morning sunlight cascaded up into the bright blue sky. It warmed her skin.

Near the edge of the lot, standing at the mouth of the forest, were two shimmering figures, their bodies wavered in light pink and sky blue iridescent waves. One was a tall woman, her face lined by years of joy and sorrow. The other, a slight young girl, her round face and wide eyes framed by cropped auburn waves. They smiled in unison; their love and light filled Enid's being. Arm in arm, they extended their hands toward her. All at once Enid felt safe. She knew she could run to them and that their love would envelop her. Laughter bounced up inside Enid with each step as she ran to meet them. Her smile beamed. The love of her mother and sister welcomed her as she fused into their arms. Enid began to fade as they protected her with their embrace. Her body began to shimmer like sunlight on a clear blue pond. As the three women walked hand in hand into the forest, two black ravens, one with eyes of violet, flew across the sun.