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I Came Looking For You

by Stuart Carruthers

Phones rang unanswered and red flashing alarms warned of an incoming emergency. The weekend rush hour had arrived. Room Twenty Four A, located at the far end of Hospital Number Seven was a million miles away from anywhere.

Christine, who's seventeenth birthday was in two days time, sat on the end of her bed crying uncontrollably. Violently dragging her dirty nails over her skeleton arms she didn't notice the drips of blood pooling on the floor beneath her.

The bus into town was half empty. The few passengers on the top deck were either asleep or drunk. Clutching the single sheet of paper in her right hand, Christine stared out of the window and into the lights of the passing houses.

Leaning her slight frame against the big wooden door, it took all her remaining strength to prise open a gap big enough to allow her to access the one place she felt safe. The guilt was too much. Ashamed, unclean, desperate. The air tasted of that familiar smell you only find inside a church. The silence was overwhelming. Kneeling down she slowly lowered her head and her long black hair covered her weeping red eyes. Whispering for forgiveness she could sense he was listening, but her sin weighted heavy on her soul.

In the months, then years that passed, not a day went by when Christine didn't think about Grace. The smell of a newborn baby never leaves you. Her new façade was well constructed.

New surroundings allowed her to blend into the background unnoticed. No relationships. They bring unwanted questions and commitment, something that terrified her.

Eva knew she was different. She bore no resemblance to the people she called Mom and Dad. Not long before her adopted mother passed away, they told her who she really was and their version of why she was adopted. She also found out what her real name was. The emotional rollercoaster unleashed that Tuesday afternoon took a long time to stop. Questions came and went. The answers didn't.

Charles and Beth still ran the café opposite the train station. He talked, she cooked. Eva never paid much attention to his rambling stories until one day he mentioned that he was undertaking some research for a customer who was trying to locate her brother. After months of deliberating, Eva nervously walked into the café one frosty morning.

Charles had a new case to investigate.