

Now and Forever

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"Damn you," I spat out, "You promised me forever. What happened to our forever?"

<https://www.storiesspace.com/stories/flash-fiction/now-and-forever.aspx>

I sat leaning against the stone pillar of the decades-old bridge, watching as the sun began to rise over the horizon, my legs dangling over the edge, my hand resting on the recently installed railing.

No traffic would cross the bridge coming into the quiet backwater town that had been our home all our lives, and I concealed myself well enough not to be seen by any motorists leaving for their big city job. When the school year ended, I hadn't put in for a summer assignment, so my time was my own.

I'd arrived roughly an hour earlier, parked my car on the abandoned logging road and with a flashlight in hand began the trek to my destination. The only things I carried were my favorite photo of us from our last vacation and a small box containing what remained of you, what I'd held onto for so long. Today, I would finally let you go.

Tears of defeat spilled from my eyes as I looked at your handsome face, your blue eyes stared back at me knowingly from the photo clutched in my hand, "Damn you," I spat out, "You promised me forever. What happened to our forever?!"

My body shook with my sobs causing the box on my lap to shift, almost fall into the swiftly moving river below. I grabbed it, not ready to let you go just yet. You'd left without goodbye last time, this time it would be on my terms.

I knew what I was about to do was probably illegal, but you were gone and I no longer cared about legalities. I'm sure many of the townsfolk would consider it scandalous, but it didn't matter what they

thought. It would certainly keep the busybodies occupied for quite some time.

An approaching car stopped at the bridge entrance, and I was sure I'd been caught, but a sudden rustling in the brush near the water let me know it was the wildlife and not I that had halted the driver's progress. Only after the car passed did I release the breath that I didn't realize I'd been holding.

In recent months so many people had bluntly stated that I needed to move on while I was still young. Stop wasting my life.

What the hell did they know? They all had someone waiting when they got home each night. Something I no longer had and certainly did not want.

Again I glanced at the photo, and a new spate of tears sprang from my eyes. If I held out any longer, I'd lose my nerve. It was time.

I slowly rose to my feet and walked to the railing; A soft, steady breeze blew against my back as I placed my foot on the lowest rung. I pocketed the photo and with my free hand pulled myself up.

Tentatively, I peered over my shoulder before climbing to the next rung, the top of the railing was just above my knees now. I opened the box and gazed at its contents.

Unsteadily, I took the next rung and leaned out over the water as I spoke our vows, "For all that we are separately and all that we can be together, I love you, and I'll stand beside you, now and forever."

With that, I leaned a bit further and tipped the box and watched as your ashes floated on the breeze, some falling into the water, some carried to the grass just beyond the riverbank.

The spot where you claimed me the night you proposed, the place that claimed you that early morning of the freak storm when your car crashed through the bridge into the icy river. The area where I finally set you free.

I stepped down and paused for a moment, transfixed by the silence as the memories washed over me. The morning sun glinted off the rushing water as I turned and started the long journey back to my car.

