

Years 5 & 6

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Year 6, Aspiri Primary School

The Sound of Rain on Hollow Streets

The rain had started just past dusk, soft at first, like the sigh of something old remembering how to cry. It tapped gently at the crooked rooftops of the town of Halvers, where shutters were always closed, and lights burned low behind frosted glass. By the time the moon – ghostly and dark – rose into the sky, the rain had found its rhythm, steady and deliberate, washing the streets as if they might one day be clean again.

Isla walked those streets barefoot, her boots tied together by the laces and slung over her shoulder. The cobblestones were slick, the gutters murmuring with the flow of water, and somewhere far off, a bell tolled. Not for any church – it had been years since the churches of Halvers opened their doors – but for something older. A warning. Or a welcome.

She paused at the edge of Market Square, where the stalls stood empty and shivering in the dark. The canvas tarps, once bright with dyes and painted fruit, now hung like the skins of forgotten animals. Isla stepped into the square without hesitation.

“You always come back when it rains,” said a voice. Soft, familiar, and entirely impossible.

She didn’t turn. “And you always say that.”

A pause. A footstep. “Do I?”

“You do.” Her voice was calm, though she could feel her heart clawing at her chest.

The figure emerged from the shadows beside the dried-up fountain. He wore the same coat he’d worn the night he vanished – dark green, frayed at the cuffs, buttons of mismatched metal. His hair was longer now, messier, curling at the edges like ivy left to grow wild. But his eyes were the same: green-grey and endless.

“Hello, Corin,” Isla said.

He tilted his head. “You remember.”

“How could I forget?”

Silence stretched between them, taut and fraying. The square held its breath.

Corin looked up at the rain. “I didn’t think you’d come this time.”

“I didn’t think I would either,” she said. “But something about tonight . . .”

“The bell,” he said.

She nodded.

They stood a moment longer, two ghosts in a town that had grown used to forgetting its dead. Then Isla finally moved, walking toward the fountain. Her bare feet made no sound against the stone. She touched the rim with one hand, tracing a finger through the moss.

“You’re not real,” she said, not unkindly.

“No,” Corin agreed. “But neither is Halvers anymore.”

She looked up. “The town?” she asked.

He smiled, a little sadly. “You haven’t noticed?”

She thought of the empty houses, the papered-over windows, the way no one ever seemed to age anymore. She thought of how the sun hadn’t risen for days and how

the birds no longer sang. Of how the library refused to open to certain pages, and how her mother still set a place at the table for her father, gone ten winters now.

"I thought it was just . . . grief," she said.

Corin walked closer. "Grief does strange things to the world. And so does forgetting."

"You think I forgot you?"

"No," he said. "But others did. And piece by piece, Halvers forgot itself."

The wind stirred through the square. Somewhere, a shutter banged open and then closed again.

Isla felt the chill in her bones now, deep and aching. "So, what happens next?" she asked.

"You already know."

A tremor passed through her. "The well."

Corin nodded.

The old well at the edge of town. They used to play there, when they were children. Throw pebbles in and make wishes, never knowing the well didn't lead down – it led sideways.

"I thought it was just a story," she whispered.

"It is," said Corin. "But stories are true here. You knew that once."

She remembered. All at once, it came rushing back – how the woods whispered in the dark, how cats disappeared for days and returned with stars in their fur. How Corin had dared to climb down into the well one autumn evening, looking for answers.

He had never come back.

Until now.

"I buried your coat," she said. "Under the old maple."

"I know."

"I cried for weeks."

"I know that too."

She closed her eyes. "If I go to the well . . ."

"You won't come back," he said. "Not to this."

"But I'll find you."

"Yes."

She opened her eyes. The rain had soaked her to the bone, and yet she felt warm. Or perhaps she was simply burning.

Corin held out his hand. "You don't have to choose now. The well waits."

"I don't want it to wait."

"No?"

She shook her head. "What's left here? People who no longer speak? Houses full of dust and half-memories? If I'm already half-gone . . ."

He said nothing. Just stood there, hand out, like he had all the time in the world.

And perhaps he did.

Isla took a deep breath. The air tasted like old secrets and river stones.

Then she reached out – and took his hand.

They walked together through the dark, her hand in his, their feet splashing through the thin rivers of rain winding along the roads. Past the school, where the windows wept, past the inn with its crooked sign still swinging in a wind that had no direction. Past the statue of Saint Morwenna, who had no face anymore.

The well stood at the far edge of Halvers, nestled in a grove of trees that leaned too close together. The stones were slick with moss, the old rope pulley long gone.

“I thought I’d be afraid,” Isla said.

“You were, once.”

“And now?”

“Now you remember.”

She stepped to the edge. The well didn’t seem deep. Just dark. Like looking into a memory that refused to stay still.

“Will it hurt?” she asked.

Corin squeezed her hand. “No. It will feel like waking up.”

She nodded.

Then she climbed over the edge – and let go.

When Isla opened her eyes, she was standing on a hill overlooking Halvers.

Only it wasn’t Halvers. Not quite.

The town was whole again. Bright banners fluttered from rooftops. Lanterns glowed in windows. People laughed as they crossed the square. The air shimmered with music she couldn’t quite place, like wind chimes played by the sun.

She turned.

Corin stood beside her, the same, and yet . . . not. He looked real now. Solid. Whole. And so did she.

“Where are we?” she asked.

“A memory,” he said. “A dream. A future. Call it what you like.”

She looked at the town again, her heart thudding quietly. “Can we stay?”

“As long as we want.”

They walked down the hill together.

The rain had stopped.

The rain continued to fall softly, tapping against the empty pavement of the hollow streets. Memories of laughter and light flickered in her mind – moments that were now gone, like whispers carried off by the wind. The echoes of those happy days settled into the past, gentle ghosts she could no longer touch.

Yet, even as the shadows of what once was stretched across her heart, a quiet warmth kindled within her chest. She realised then that joy was not only found in what had been, but also in what could still be – small sparks of light glowing from deep inside, refusing to fade.

Though the streets were silent and grey, her spirit could still glow – vibrant and alive, painting the empty spaces with colours of hope and possibility. The sound of rain was no longer a melancholy echo but a gentle melody, a reminder that even after the happiest memories have passed, the heart can still shine bright.

She lifted her face toward the falling drops, letting the cool water trace paths down her skin. In that moment, she was both the memory and the promise – both the past and the unfolding future. And beneath the sound of rain on hollow streets, she chose to shine.

She didn’t need to live off these memories, she could create better ones, so she let go.

So instead, she came up the well.

It looked smaller now. Less like an ending, more like a question. And Isla wasn’t sure she had the answer anymore.

She stared into its depthless dark, Corin’s hand curled gently around hers. There was no pressure. Just the offering.

“Come with me. Come back down,” he said softly.

She hesitated.

The thought of peace, of reunion, of escaping the grey weight of Halvers – of its silence and sorrow – tempted her. And yet . . .

She thought of the children who still walked its cracked streets. Of the flicker of candles behind shuttered windows. Of her mother, who still set a place at the table and waited, even when she claimed she wasn't waiting at all.

"I think," Isla whispered, "there's still something left to save."

Corin looked at her – not disappointed, not surprised. Just quiet.

"You always had more heart than this place deserved," he said.

She smiled, but it trembled. "Maybe. But I think it needs me now."

A silence passed between them. The rain had softened again – no longer a lament, but a hush. Like the town was holding its breath.

Corin reached out and tucked a strand of wet hair behind her ear. "Then go."

"Will I ever see you again?"

"I'm already part of you."

And just like that – he was gone.

The rain continued to fall, but the fog that had clung to the town for so long seemed to lift just a little. Isla stepped away from the well. She looked around as if seeing Halvers for the first time.

Not broken.

Not gone.

Sleeping.

Waiting.

She made her way back through the trees and onto the streets she'd known her whole life. At the fountain in the square, she stopped. Her reflection looked tired, yes – but clear. Present.

"I remember you," she whispered. "And I'll help them remember too."

She knelt beside the fountain and began pulling away the rotted tarp from an old market stall. Tomorrow, she would sweep. And after that, she would write down the names of everyone who had ever left. She would knock on doors. Light candles.

Speak aloud the memories no one dared to say anymore.

She would bring the stories back.

And as the clouds began to thin and the rain grew warmer, somewhere in the distance –

a bell rang.

Not in mourning.

But in morning.

The rain softened as Isla stepped into the square once more, the cobblestones shining like old silver. Around her, the town still slumbered in sorrow, but something had shifted. The stillness wasn't so heavy. The silence didn't feel so final.

She passed the fountain and paused, laying her hand against its rim. Moss clung to the stone, but beneath it, she felt the pulse of something stirring. Not magic. Not quite. But memory. A heartbeat waiting to be remembered.

"I remember you," she whispered to the stone, to the rain, to the town itself. "And I'm not the only one."

And then she got to work.

Day by day, Isla swept the streets. She opened shutters, lit lanterns, patched holes in old stalls. She sang while she worked – old songs, lullabies, anything that carried a tune. She wrote names on paper and tucked them in doorways. Left flowers.

Whispered stories into keyholes.

And little by little, Halvers began to wake.

Children played again. Neighbours spoke. And though the sky still rained sometimes, it no longer felt like mourning. It felt like memory washing clean.

At the edge of the fountain, she carved a message into the stone. A quiet truth for any who came after:

“Even in a town that forgets, one heart that remembers can bring the light back.

Hope is not a place you go; it’s something you build.”

And beneath that, she signed her name.

– Isla