

A stranger I met

Valyn glanced around at the passing faces around her as she drifted through the merry crowd. Couples laughing, children giggling, and the overall feeling of peace...all made her overwhelmed, knowing she would never have the joy of experiencing such contentment. It was almost new years, but the snow from the festive holidays was still taking its time to disperse. She planned to spend it sitting on the couch, watching reruns of an old show that would take her mind off the throbbing pain of loneliness that dug a pit in her chest.

She had no family to think of, aside from a mother that disappeared on her fifth birthday. It was 1919, and Russia was still suffering from the first world war. Valyn sat at the humble dinner table in the shack they called a home, as her father sang happy birthday, bringing her a small cake in his brown overalls that were tattered and dirty from working in the mines. Her mother read the newspaper with a sunken expression, void of her surroundings. It was disheartening how little she cared for the moment, but Valyn stayed silent and simply paid attention to her father instead. She lay awake in her compact bed as she listened to the indignant shouts through the thin paper walls, and the next morning her mother was gone, with her father crying at the dinner table.

Valyn and her father migrated to the United Kingdom where she became a social worker and went to college, but during her final year he fell ill and died before she finished with her degree and finally resided in Bonn in 1950 and now she found herself sitting on a bench in the city centre with a plastic bag of microwave dinner. It had been thirty years since she saw her mother, and barely remembered what she looked like.

“Excuse me, please could you take a picture of my family?” an old woman mumbled sweetly, and Valyn smiled and nodded as she took the small camera and raised it, but before he could take the photo the world around her suddenly seemed to freeze as she

lowered the camera and looked the woman in the eyes. Her uncanny golden hair and indelible brown eyes almost made her stop breathing as she whispered weakly.

“Mother?”.