

Tiger Lilies - Cooper Stankovich

The library is old and musty, filled to the brim with books ranging from ancient to archaic upheld by shelves that appear to be melting with the weight that they bear. The largest shelf appears as if it holds the entire 51 volumes of *The Harvard Classics*; if a feather so much as rested upon them, it would fall to the depths of hell.

My Grandfather and I never really spoke. He was a reserved man and occupied his time by listening to the whispers of the ocean from the beach and reminiscing on days past. After I heard that he had died after falling from the pier in the storm last week, I felt nothing. But my Father was a different story.

"Toby, please start unpacking the library. I can't stay here much longer." He can't keep it together. Like an elephant seal, he sends snot and sea water flying everywhere.

"Yes Dad."

As he stands up and drags himself towards the door, I catch a glimpse of gold in the corner of my eye protruding from underneath the desk. I wait until he leaves to pull it out from the darkness that has held it captive there for what seems to be an eternity, keyed in by the one-inch layer of dust obscuring the golden book cover from view. Inside, the

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inscription reads, *'To my dearest Ida, to death do us part, love Avery.'*

The pages seemed heavy, weighed down by some indescribable feeling of dread. But what I didn't know then is that those few pages held a force more powerful than that of Poseidon himself and would stay with me for the rest of my days.

Written like a journal of sorts, it detailed the story of two who were destined to become one. They met under the full moon one blistering summer night to the sound of roaring waves and howling wind. As I turned to the tenth page I found that I experienced an immense feeling of light headedness, so much so that I fell to the floor. Only to find that when I landed, I was no longer in that antediluvian library but resting lightly on a carpet of sand accompanied by the most gorgeous girl I had ever seen.

She had hair of pure orange silk that stretched to Shanghai and back, and the figure of the goddesses Aphrodite and Venus combined. She was beautiful. And there I was sitting on the ground gawking at her with my mouth open, speechless. As I stood up and gazed into her eyes all I could see was pearls. We lingered amongst the heavenly bliss that surrounded us for what seemed like an eternity. Gradually I broke free of our rapture and in that moment I experienced an overwhelming urge

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to join my lips with hers, only to discover that she tasted of tattered leather and dust. Once again I was trapped in the grave of forgotten stories and people.

So I read...

That night they became one under the watch of galaxies and stars, to the sound of deafening waves that pummelled against the granules they laid on.

I had to get back into that world... I belonged there with her but with each word I devoured I became more and more lustful for her pearlescent skin, craving it like a bee does its nectar.

Nectar... just like the bee hives that can be found in meadows interspersed throughout the hillsides that surrounded their town. It was here that Ida and Avery found themselves most often, amongst the humming birds and the tall luscious grass, surrounded by pale birch trees which glistened in the pleasant sun. Her home brought new light to the word Eden as he was her Adam and she was his Eve. They frolicked all day and stared into each other's eyes at night until sleep pulled them away from the ecstasy that protected them from the danger that lurked ever nearer.

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1st of April, 1935

*The night was young, and the water held a fluorescent eminence
as we bathed in the moon light with our bodies entangled
beneath the ripples that held us captive. Truly loving someone
is an indescribable feeling. Our love is not like that of a
typical couple but one of epic proportions.*

The orange tiger lilies bloomed that lustrous evening.

My heart burned with jealousy and ached for mere glimpse of
her.

2nd of January, 1936

*Butterflies danced to the sound of our feet landing softly on
the supple grass as we twirled through the sweet rose scented
air. But, alas, her mind was elsewhere, occupied in her
theoretical world where there were no restraints but that of
time.*

She left early that day, as did the orange tiger lily's petal.

The journal quivered as the cascading anxiety rushed into my
heart.

6th of June, 1936

*Day three without her, I couldn't stand it! I scoured the hill
sides in search of her beauty, I checked in every waterfall
for a wisp of her passion and finally in her Eden for a taste*

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*of our love. But there was no longer any Eden left to search.
The trees were charred and the grass was singed, leaving only
the acrid smell of smoke.*

*All that was spared was a single sacred orange tiger lily.
Only to watch it wilt before my eyes.*

There was one place left to search.

Even I knew where you were.

Just like before I suddenly felt an overwhelming feeling of light-headedness that pushed me to the ground so I could once again feel the satisfying grit of sand between my fingers. I panicked and screamed her name as the anxiety pierced my chest which felt as though a black hole was opening up and sucking all that was sane inside. My mind is unhinging while I bound faster than a shooting star towards where my heart guides me. And then I spotted her on the pier cowering beneath her half-wit of a father.

Ida was catholic, but not by choice.

I rushed to her aid as her screams of agony riddled my ears and punctured the night. Her father shouted, "Thou shall not indulge in sexual immorality, those who stray from the path of god with cleansed of their impurities!"

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I reached the platform only to witness the blood spurt from her temple as the deafening bullet pierced her skin and exited her skull. The force of the blow instantly killed Ida, my one, true love. Pushing her over the balcony which separates her from the ocean that she will now call her home, her Eden of silence and a coffin of pearls. In that instant I felt a boiling rage flood my veins, clouding my vision as I beat her father to a bloody pulp that resembled a piece of meat more than *it* resembled a man.

As I reach for the gun and lift it to his serrated face, I ask ...

The writing is cut off by a splatter of blood and accompanied by a lock of orange hair. Once again I am trapped in the tomb of forgotten stories leaving Ida and Avery awaiting my decision. Do I leave her father to suffer an eternity of mourning and misery, or do I satisfy my lust for his life? As I lift my eyes from the archaic book to the desk, the pen shimmers with temptation.

THE END