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Fall

Inhaltsangabe

Andromeda always loved autumn, but the nightmares changed everything, even her love of fall.

Vorwort

Warning: Contains lots of angst, self-reproaches and a mentioned but major character death!

Inhaltsverzeichnis

1. Untitled

Untitled

It all had begun in fall. The start of fall had been the beginning of the end, the start of fall had changed everything. Nobody knew what exactly had happened to Andromeda Black during that time, not her friends, not her sisters, not even herself. She'd always loved autumn, had always loved to sit on her window sill, look out of the window and watch the leaves fall down from the trees or to spend countless hours taking a walk in an ocean of different shades of red and yellow.

But now? Now, she'd not even leave the house, would hardly even leave her bedroom. It was her sister, forcing her to at least take meals in the dining room, to at least talk to her, even if it were only a few words. Narcissa would follow her to her room, afraid to leave her alone, afraid of what'd happen if she closed the door behind her back, and they'd look at each other, would only look at each other for minutes, hours, none of them ever speaking a word.

Their mother's death had taken its toll on all of them, but most of all on Andromeda. Druella had never been the same again after her husband had fallen in the war, had longed to follow him every day during the rest of her life. Her passing had not come surprisingly for her daughters, only a year after Cygnus had left this world. They all knew that her mother had died of a broken heart.

Soon routine had returned to their lives, but not to Andromeda's. For her, everything had changed. No one had ever understood the bond that had connected her to her mother, had there ever been any. All they knew was that Andromeda had never forgiven her mother that she had left them so early.

“Never forgive, never forget,” she whispered, all of a sudden, rather to herself than to Narcissa who would still sit next to her, not wanting to leave as if she were afraid of the things her sister could do to herself once left alone.

“I beg you pardon?” she asked quietly, her eyes widened with surprise to hear her sister's voice.

Andromeda would only shake her head, turning her head to look out of the window, her eyes following the dark silhouettes of the trees located in the garden. “Nothing,” she replied absent-mindedly. “If you might excuse me now, Cissy, I am tired and-“

Now it was Narcissa to shake her head. Carefully she touched her sister's shoulder for a moment, giving a deep, quiet sigh. “Listen, Andy,” she said. “I know you don't want to talk to me, but I can't help you if you don't trust me.”

“Of course I trust you,” Andromeda whispered. “But you can't help me, Cissy. No one can help me.”

For a moment she closed her eyes, smiling a shy, barely noticeable smile. “I cannot express how much I love fall,” she said quietly. “Do you remember how we used to take walks in the afternoon, shortly before sunset? The entire world seemed to be covered in this warm, golden light that made us forget about all our troubles for a moment.”

Silence followed, none of the sisters would speak a word, wouldn't even look at each other until, all of a sudden, Andromeda slowly reached out her hand, touching Narcissa's.

“You can't help me, Cissy,” she repeated barely audible. “I-”

She'd not finish her sentence. Broke off, again giving a deep, sad sigh. No. No, Narcissa couldn't help her, no one could. How many times had she been forced to lie to her, how many times had she pretended to be all right... But she wasn't all right, of course she wasn't. What had happened to her during the past months, what had made her lose control, what had broken her? She did not know. Did not know anything.

The nightmares had started long before her mother had died, seemed to drive her into sheer madness. But how, how could she ever talk about them? How could she even ever lose a word about these dreams, about the things they did to her? Especially now, now that her sisters had their own problems, now that everything had changed? No, she couldn't talk to them, couldn't bother them with her ridiculous problems.

But what if she lost her mind? What, if she was about to lose her mind, what, if the nightmares would never stop again? She did not know, did not know anything.

“I know that you miss her,” Narcissa said all of a sudden, breaking the silence, causing her to wince. Andromeda bit her lip, her attempts to control her breathing failing. Why... Why did she have to bring her up, why did she have to talk about her? Now, now that even thinking of her mother seemed to make everything worse... She still wouldn't turn around, still wouldn't look at her sister, remained motionless, not speaking a word.

“I miss her too,” she continued, her voice husky, tearful. “Of course I miss her... But-“

She broke off. Andromeda heard her rise from her chair, as if she were ready to resign, ready to leave the room, but then... Then she'd only turn around, sit down on the bed, pulling her close into her arms.

Andromeda could feel tears stream down her sister's face, could feel her entire body shaking. Again she bit her lip, again she'd only sigh, again she'd remain silent, desperately trying to regain control over her thoughts.

All this seemed so unreal, seemed like a dream to her, like one of her nightmares. She'd never forgive her mother, never! How angry she was at her, how incredibly angry... Why had she left them? Why had she left so early, why had she-

As if it'd been her fault. As if it'd all been her mother's fault, as if it'd only been her death that had broken her. Of course not. Of course it hadn't. But still, still she missed her, missed her so much... She'd loved her, had loved her more than anything else, even though so many things had happened over all these years, even though she'd done so much to her, had hurt her so many times...

Never forgive. Never forget.

But hadn't she been her mother? No matter how many times she'd hurt her, hadn't she been the woman who'd given birth to her, the woman who'd raised her? No matter what she'd done to her, hadn't she-

Andromeda wouldn't even finish her thought. Was unable to suppress a quiet sob, unable to hold back her tears any longer. She'd never cried since her mother's passing, had never even shed a single tear. But now? Now, that she held Narcissa in her arms, her usually so strong little sister, now that she felt her tears against her skin, she was unable to keep control over her emotions any longer.

“It's not just mother's death bothering you...” Narcissa whispered into her ear, her breath finally having normalised. “Isn't it, Andy? It's something else...”

She'd not reply. Wouldn't reply, wouldn't speak a word. Only closed her eyes, for just a second, then looked at her, looked deeply into her sister's bright, blue eyes... And nodded. Of course it was. But what? What had changed her so much, what bothered her so much that it even seemed to make sleep intolerable? If only she knew... If only she had the ability to break away from her past, to break away from everything, to start anew, if only she had the ability to be happy...

“Andy,” Narcissa said quietly, taking her hands into hers, giving a deep sigh. “Please. Talk to me. I... I worry-“

She broke off for a moment, as if she didn't know what to say, as if she were looking for the right words. But then, then again she sighed, shook her head. It seemed to take her great effort to hold back the tears that once again wanted to just uncontrollably flow down her face.

“I worry for you,” she whispered. “I... I hear you scream, in the middle of the night... But every time I look after you, you're asleep, fast asleep! I... Andy, I don't want to lose you, too...”

Andromeda gasped for breath, bit her lip as she heard her sister's voice, as she saw the expression on her face... No. No, she wouldn't lose her; of course she'd not lose her! How many times had she sworn herself not to lead a life like her mother had led, how many times had she sworn herself to be different. But was she really different? Were her and her mother really this different? They both had loved, they both had made mistakes... Weren't they just the same?

As if your mother ever loved you.

“Of course she did!” Andromeda shouted, all of a sudden, feeling how Narcissa winced right next to her. “Of course she loved me... Of course she did...”

“Andy-“

“Cissy, you don't understand... You... You can't understand! Even I can't...” Slowly Andromeda got up from her bed, heading for the door as if she wanted to leave, but turned around only a second later. “I... Merlin, I wish I knew what to say. I wish I knew what to tell you, I wish I knew what to think! I can't sleep any more, I... Every time I close my eyes I-“

Again, she'd not finish her sentence. Again she'd only break off, would only shake her head. No she wouldn't understand. Narcissa wouldn't understand, of course she wouldn't. She had not been hurt like she'd been hurt, she'd not lost everything that had ever been important to her. She'd always been loved by their parents, had always been adored. Not her, not Andromeda. For her, everything had been different. Everything.

“You know how much they loved you,” Narcissa said as if she'd read her mind. “Especially mother. You know how much he cared for you, more than for any of us.”

“She knew I needed her,” Andromeda whispered, barely audible. “She knew how much I needed her but never was there for me. How could she have cared?”

Of course she knew that Narcissa was right. Of course she knew that everything she said was right, of course she was doing her injustice, but she was so hurt, so incredibly hurt! Why wasn't she there for her now? Why not now, now that she needed her the most? She'd left her, had left them all! So how... How could she ever forgive her?

“Andy,” Narcissa said quietly, reaching out her hand to touch her again. “Andy, I know that she hurt you, she hurt us too! She's made mistakes, but we all do. You know how hard it was for her to allow herself to feel and admit her emotions, especially towards you, and you know why. Please, don't blame her for something she couldn't help.”

Never forget. Never forgive.

Andromeda only shook her head, laughing a quiet, cold laugh. No. No, she couldn't blame her mother for the things she'd done, of course she couldn't. It wasn't Druella who'd broken her, it wasn't her mother, and it wasn't her death. So were it the nightmares? Were it really the nightmares that seemed to destroy her? But how could they, if she lost any memory of the dreams as soon as she opened her eyes? How could they break her, if

she was unable to remember them each day she woke? She did not know. Did not know anything.

“Cissy...” she whispered, sobbing a quiet, dry sob. “I... I'm going mad... I think I'm going mad!”

Quickly she turned away from her sister, not wanting her to see her in a state like this, not wanting her to notice her pain, but it was too late. Narcissa had already taken her arm, had turned around, would now force her to look into her eyes. She opened her mouth to speak, But Andromeda had been faster than her.

“You said you hear me scream,” she said quietly. “In the middle of the night... I... I don't know when it started, but... Nightmares, they... they come every night. They seem to haunt me, to- I can't even sleep any more, Cissy! I'm too afraid to fall asleep, too afraid to even close my eyes... But what can I do? Never sleep again, for the rest of my life? Stay awake until I die? I'm not myself any more... I... I can't go on any longer... I just can't!”

Never forget. Never forgive.

“Why didn't you tell me?” Narcissa asked, her voice no more than a whisper. “Andy, why didn't you tell me earlier?”

“You couldn't have changed it. You couldn't have changed it; you couldn't have helped me... No one can help me...”

No. No one would ever be able to help her, no one would be able to take the nightmares from her, to make her the person she used to be. She had changed, had changed irrevocably, would never be the same again. Was it her fate? Was it her fate never to be happy, to drift away from the world, to lead a lonely life, a life in insanity? She did not know. Did not know anything, did not want her sister to look at her with the same face expression she'd looked at their mother shortly before her death, did not want to worry her, to bother her even more.

Never forget. Never forgive. It's your fault. It's all your fault, Andromeda. You could have saved her. But what did you do? Nothing. You did nothing, nothing! You just watched her die. It's your fault!

“It's my fault!” she shouted out, not even knowing what she said, not even control her words, finally speaking out what she'd never spoken out, finally able to understand what her subconscious had always seemed to tell her. Dizziness would overwhelm her, all of a sudden she was dizzy, so incredibly dizzy... Had Narcissa not held her, she'd have fallen down to the floor, having lost any control over her body. “It's my fault, it's all my fault! I could have saved her...”

“Andy,” Narcissa said firmly, holding her tight as she lead her to her bed again, carefully sitting her down. “Andy, listen-“

“No, Cissy... No! You don't understand... I could have saved her! I could have been there for her! I'm not better than her, no... I wasn't there for her enough; I wasn't there! Not even when she needed me the most! It's my fault... It's all my fault...”

“Andy... Andy, please... Listen to me... It's not your fault! It's not your fault that she died! You know what kind of life she led in the end, you know that all she wanted was to follow father, you know it! You know that you couldn't have saved her! None of us could have saved her! Not me, not Bella, not you! You were always there for her, more than any of us. Can't you remember? Can't you remember how you took care of her in the time after father died? Can't you remember how sat at her bedside, waiting until she finally fell asleep, can't you remember how you heard her cry in the middle of the night because she was too ashamed to show any of us her tears? Please... Please, don't blame yourself for things you could never have averted.”

Never forget. Never forgive.

Andromeda wouldn't even hear her sister's words, wouldn't even understand what she'd said, had only started to sob, to uncontrollably sob, wetting Narcissa's clothes with her tears. Had it been this? All these months, had she been riven by grief, had it been guilt breaking her, had it been guilt making her lose control, changing her so much? Guilt... Finally she was able to speak out what she'd felt for such a long time, finally she realised what had been happening to her, finally she knew... But how... How could have guilt also caused her nightmares, had they started a long time before her mother had died, how-

Could she have saved her? Could she really have saved her mother, could she really have been there for her more than she was? She did not know, did not know anything. Had she gone mad already? Had she already lost her mind, had insanity already overwhelmed her, taken control over her body, over her mind? So many questions, so many questions she'd never find an answer to, so much-

“Andy,” Narcissa's voice said right next to her, but she wouldn't react, wouldn't reply to her sister, no... Why should she, why should she still talk to her, why should she bother her even more... Wouldn't everything be better without her? Wouldn't it be better if she just disappeared, if she left, never looking back?

“Andy...” her sister said again, but again, she'd not answer. Wouldn't want to speak, wouldn't even want to think... All she wanted was to sleep, to just fall into a dreamless sleep and never wake up again.

“Andromeda!” Narcissa now shouted, turning her head to force her to look at her, to finally react to her words.

“Listen to me,” she said slowly, her voice firm and cold, in a way Andromeda had never heard her speak before. “It was not your fault. It was not your fault that mother died, you could not have helped her. You could not have saved her. Do you understand?”

Nothing.

“Andromeda, do you understand?”

Andromeda wanted to turn her head, wanted to look away but Narcissa wouldn't allow her to move, wouldn't allow her to escape. She nodded, slowly, barely noticeable, biting her lip as she spoke out one single word.

“Yes.”

But was she right? Was Narcissa really right, had it been impossible for her to save her, had it been impossible to help her? Had she really done everything she'd been able to do? She did not know. Of course she didn't. But how could Narcissa know, too? How could her sister know if Andromeda had done everything she was capable to do? Had she found her? Had Narcissa found her mother, dead in the bathroom, had she held her lifeless body in her arms, unable to move, unable to even breathe? No. No, it'd been her, Andromeda! It'd been her to find her, her to notify her sisters! Not Cissy, not Bella, her! Her sisters hadn't seen their mother dead, they hadn't looked into her once so expressional eyes, eyes that had become empty.

Their strong, unbreakable mother had fallen, had left and would never return. How much she loved her, how much she missed her... She'd give everything to bring her back, even her own life.

“She knew she'd die,” Andromeda said, all of a sudden, looking deeply into her sister's eyes. “She knew and she-“

She broke off for a moment, taking a deep breath, desperately attempting to control her voice, to suppress

her sobs. “Do you know what she said to me, the last time we saw each other?” she continued, “Do you know? She... She spoke to me, like she never spoke to me before. It was a farewell! She made her farewell, and I didn't notice! I didn't notice, I did nothing. Nothing, Cissy... I did nothing! I should have thought about her words, I... I should have noticed that something was wrong! Instead I just... Nothing. I did nothing... It's my fault. It's all my fault...”

“You couldn't have known,” Narcissa whispered, but Andromeda only shook her head. Of course she could, of course she could've known, she should have listened! If she had listened...

Silence followed, none of the sisters would speak a word. They'd only sit there, holding each other, lost in their thoughts, lost in memories. How much had Andromeda fought with her mother. How many times had they had arguments about nothing, nothing at all... Nothing of this could be undone, none of these words could be unsaid... How much would she give to talk to her again, once, only once, how much would she give to be able to apologise for everything she'd done, for every time she'd hurt her...

Finally she rose from her bed, placing a soft kiss on her sister's forehead before she headed for the door, opening it, stepping out of her room.

“Where are you going?” Narcissa asked, causing her to turn around for one last time, to look at her.

“Taking a walk,” she replied. “I... I just need some air.”

“I'll join you.”

“No. Go to sleep, Cissy, it's late.”

“Promise me that you'll come back.”

“I promise.”

She had no memory of when she'd last left the house. Had no memory of when she'd last stepped into the fresh air, of when she'd last felt the cold wind against her skin. She was freezing, had forgot to take her cloak with her, but she didn't care. Wouldn't care about anything, not now. Minutes, hours seemed to pass as she walked through the streets, still unable to keep her thoughts in order, to regain control over her mind. Never would she forgive herself for not being able to save her mother, no. Never. And never would she forget.

Slowly she sank down to a bench, far away from her home, far away from Narcissa, far away from the room she'd locked herself into for such a long time. Slowly she'd turn her head, watching a leaf fall down from a chestnut tree, gracefully landing on her thigh.

Never forget. Never forgive.

Her mother had fallen, like the autumn leaves had fallen from the trees and Andromeda knew that, one day, she would fall, too.