

## Shadows of Stonewall Inn

Our shadows danced around the pavement as we approached Stonewall Inn, a place in which you could find the outcasts of society. As we stepped inside, we were met with the sounds of peeling laughter, the musty smell of stale beer, and joyous looks upon people's faces as they danced the night away. I smiled at Marley and asked, "May I have this dance?" she giggled and accepted. We twirled around the floor laughing and tripping over each other's feet. The night was glorious.

Suddenly cop after cop came bursting through the doors; recently there was a law passed stating gay people couldn't drink, so they were doing a routine spot check. Female officers took people thought to be crossdressers into the restrooms to be checked, and people were being arrested left and right; bystanders outside were examining the situation with looks of distaste, but also, shockingly enough, many of their gazes reflected feelings of sympathy and fury.

In a split second, Marley was ripped from my side and was roughly put into handcuffs. "Let her go!" I yelled at the officers, but they shoved her through the crowd towards the police van. One of the women being arrested was yelling at the mass of bystanders, but I was too disoriented to make out what she was saying; my head was spinning as I processed what was happening. The one thing that was overwhelmingly clear was the fact that Marley had been arrested.

Moments later when the first stone was thrown, I understood what the woman had done; she had riled up the crowd and called them to action. Bottles, stones, pennies, and other objects hit their intended targets. The cops quickly set up a barricade during the time I was looking for Marley, and the rioters were trying to break it down. My heart was pounding in my chest as I

searched the crowd for her hoping she was still alive. I heard a sharp crack as the wooden barricade broke and the rioters made their way in. The cops swiftly subdued the intruders, but as the struggle ensued, I saw her. She had cuts running down her arms and the blood from her cuts stained her clothes and pooled around the ground where she lay. "*Oh Marley, please don't be dead!*" I tried to put together a half-decent plan to get her out of there.

My thoughts were panicked, and I was terrified that my lack of a plan would get her killed. Finally, after a while, I came up with an idea; what if there were openings behind or beside the bar? After running a quick lap around the building, I assessed my options. I really only had one; a chipped black door behind the bar. I twisted the cold metal handle and stepped inside. The metallic stench of blood and booze was overwhelming, so I pinched my nose and again considered my choices. I could leave Marley and hope the paramedics come in time, or I could go in and use the little bit of medical training I had to perhaps get her home for the holidays. I didn't have to think twice. I braced myself and ran down the hallway to search for medical supplies from the main room. There were none to be found. My blood ran cold as I surveyed the scene. Glass from broken windows littered the wooden floor, stones that the rioters had thrown were lying on the ground, and the cops sat on stools jeering at the prisoners; I couldn't help but feel disgusted at the words they were using towards innocent people just trying to share love with each other. I quickly raced around trying to find Marley.

All the thoughts that had been whirling around my mind dissipated when I saw her again. Her once elegant red dress was torn and stained, her skin was bruised from objects missing their desired targets, and blood was gushing out of several wounds. Tears streamed down my face as I hurried over to her and tore off a part of my sleeve and held it against the worst of her wounds in an attempt to stop the bleeding. There was too much blood; I was getting lightheaded, and she

just wouldn't stop bleeding. I finally heard sirens and felt slightly relieved; she might just survive. The cops pulled me off of her and the paramedics lifted her onto a stretcher. The ride to the hospital was long and agonizing; her breathing was shallow, and it petrified me to think that she might not live to see the next day. When we got to the hospital, she was rushed in, and a nurse told me to go to the waiting room. My hands were cold and clammy, and my brain was working up scenarios that were not helping calm me down at all.

The next morning, I opened my eyes and looked around at my bland surroundings; I was puzzled, where was I? After blinking the last traces of sleep away, my moment of blissful confusion was torn away from me. Fear for Marley came rushing back as my mind ran through the events of the night before. I rushed over to the front desk and asked, "What room is Marley Lambert in? "

The nurse looked me up and nonchalantly replied, "She can't have visitors at the moment." I froze; was it that bad? "Oh don't look so frightened- so far, she's holding her own. " I heaved a sigh of relief; she was okay at least for now. I gave the nurse my landline number and walked home as the day seemed to mock me; it was too beautiful a day for my sweet Marley to be in the hospital while the birds sang in perfect harmony, while the clouds were white and fluffy like spun cotton, while the sky was a shade of bright blue, and the sun shone brightly onto the pavement. It reminded me that if she died, the world would not be mourning with me; if I had to wear the accustomed black to a funeral, the sun would continue shining brightly, the birds would continue singing, and the clouds would probably disappear altogether.

Finally, I arrived at my house; it was good to be somewhere familiar. I walked over to the counter setting down my keys, sat on my couch, and flipped on the television. I dozed off for several minutes when I was startled awake by my landline ringing. Walking over, I picked up the

receiver and mumbled, "Hello?" There was a short pause before I heard the nurse from the front desk murmur the words that flipped my world upside down.

"I'm sorry for your loss, the nurse stated coldly without preamble" I felt my blood instantly run cold, and it felt as if my heart might shatter into millions of tiny pieces that I would never be able to put back together. Dropping the phone, I grabbed my keys and rushed out the door to the hospital.

Barreling through the streets of Greenwich, I passed a series of brick buildings housing shops with brightly lit fronts advertising their newest products. I finally arrived at the hospital after running for what seemed like hours, and I dashed through the automatic doors. The hospital orderly at the front desk glanced in my direction, asked my purpose, and quickly called Marley's doctor. When he walked over his brow was furrowed and his hazel eyes reflected a melancholy tone as he told me the worst news I had ever heard, "She lost so much blood, and she had serious internal injuries." I tuned him out as my heart was again crushed by the news.

She couldn't be dead, it wasn't possible. We had so many plans for our future; we were going to travel the world, study law, and live happily ever after. Now I realize those were ignorant plans of children who do not understand how cruel the world can be; one second you could be having a joyous time with someone you love, but then the next... they could be savagely ripped from your clutches by death or some other malicious force. I was so busy processing the disastrous news that I did not realize the doctor was still speaking, "Ma'am? Ma'am!" he said, trying to get my attention; I looked up and he gestured towards a room, "Would you like to go see her?" It took a few moments for me to process his words.

The room was not one deserving of my Marley; it had boring beige walls, white sheets, a small bedside table, and the only thing adorning the walls was a metal clock. The only beautiful thing in the room was Marley sleeping peacefully as her chest rose and fell slowly. I quietly pulled up a chair and began dreaming about all the possibilities ahead for Marley and me.