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## The Shadow Letters

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Victoria Garcia. *Dream Current*. Digital Illustration.

### *The Shadow Letters*

SARAH KUEKING

**May 3rd**

Dear Autumn,

I am well aware of how unlikely it is that you will read this. Perhaps part of me hopes you never will. Doing so would merely serve to destroy that miserable union you call a marriage.

Do you recall who I am? I understand over twelve years have gone by since you've last seen me alive. With my lifelong tendency towards misfortune, 'tis likely you hardly even think of me any longer.

But you're always on my mind. I left Mother alone in Heaven to be with you. My Shadow is always concealed in yours, trailing after you at every moment of every day, and every night when you go to sleep, I'm there. I lay with you way before that husband of yours did.

I cannot fathom how you can possibly be happy with such a dimwit. He cannot

even manage to embrace you without hyperventilating, nor otherwise please you how a *real* husband should. You deserve a far more satisfactory specimen as a spouse.

But you have always been relentless in your pursuit of the needy, and your husband definitely needs... *help*; of that, I am certain. I trust you will fix him in a year's time and promptly end it so you can be with someone who truly loves you. I'll be faithfully Shadowing you once you are freed from him.

## **November 2nd**

Autumn,

You must not recall what today is. I cannot blame you. It is not as if any of our old friends are around to remind you.

Besides, now the day has a new significance for you and your husband. It is difficult for me to fathom that the two of you have been married six months already. In my state of being— or, rather, *not* being— time passes much quicker than I recall from when I used to breathe out of necessity.

What shocks me most is that the two of you seem to be... *getting along*. Your husband still hardly touches you, yet you laugh at every one of his jokes even when they're not particularly humorous. When your gaze settles on him, your eyes gleam as if they're reflecting the moonlight in a way they never did when you once glanced at me.

I am disappointed once again to not receive the only gift I desire most in this afterlife, but I suppose most of the deceased no longer celebrate their birthdays.

## **December 24th**

Autumn,

All by your lonesome on Christmas Eve? What madness has your sorry excuse for a husband subjected you to?

I shall never judge you for wishing to spend the holiday with your family. I would never manipulate you into choosing between them and me only to refuse to provide you with the means to return home.

Do not fret; I am here.

I am here when you need company to converse with. I shall always be willing to lend an ear, even if you cannot always hear my response.

I am here when you need physical contact—someone to hold your hand, someone to embrace. It may not always be obvious when I provide comfort, but when you feel an electric tingle radiating from your palm down to your fingertips or a cold breeze on your shoulders, you will know I am the culprit.

I am here for you. Always.

## January 1st

Autumn,

If I knew flowers had such power over people, I would have asked for more at my own funeral.

I am aware your husband did more than gift you with roses. He apologized, bought your entire family dinner, and vowed to be more attentive to your needs in the New Year.

Of course, not a soul keeps a single New Year's resolution. Five months longer.

## May 2nd

Autumn,

Tomorrow, your time together shall be up.

Or so I thought, at least.

After treating you to an extravagant meal tonight, he got on one knee and asked if you wished to remain married.

A single teardrop escaped the corner of your eye as you replied, and, on the first occasion in a year of marriage, he kissed you.

Tomorrow, the two of you shall likely celebrate your joyous union with friends and loved ones.

It seems you no longer need me, but I cannot bear to even consider the prospect of departing, because...

I cannot tell you my true feelings. I am dead, while he is alive. You two have an opportunity we shall never get.

I think it is time for me to observe quietly from the Shadows.

(at right) Tom Montgomery Fate.  
*Detours of Intention*. Photography.

