

GAYLE

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *if i stay*

FORMAN



i was here

SOMETHING TO HIDE?

Ben looks uncomfortable. "What are you looking for, exactly?"

I shake my head. "I'm not sure. But something is suspicious."

"Suspicious how? Like she was, what, murdered?"

"I don't know what I think. But something's weird about it, something's fishy. Starting with the fact that Meg wasn't suicidal. I've been thinking about this. Even if I didn't know what was going on when she moved here, I've known her all her life. And not in all those years did she ever think about this or talk about it. So something else happened. Something to push her over the edge."

"Something to push her over the edge," Ben repeats. He shakes his head and lights a fresh cigarette with the butt of his last one.

"What, exactly?"

"I'm not sure. But there was this line in her suicide note, about the decision being hers alone to make. Like who else's would it be?"

Ben looks tired. He's quiet for a long time. "Maybe she wrote that to exonerate you."

I hold his gaze for a moment longer than is comfortable. "Well, she didn't."

ALSO BY
GAYLE FORMAN

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If I Stay

Where She Went

Just One Day

Just One Year

Just One Night (novella)

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HERE

BY
Gayle Forman



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For Suzy Gonzales

x x x

1

The day after Meg died, I received this letter:

I regret to inform you that I have had to take my own life. This decision has been a long time coming, and was mine alone to make. I know it will cause you pain, and for that I am sorry, but please know that I needed to end my own pain. This has nothing to do with you and everything to do with me. It's not your fault.

Meg

She emailed copies of the letter to her parents and to me, and to the Tacoma police department, along with another note informing them which motel she was at, which room she was in, what poison she had ingested, and how her body should be safely handled. On the pillow at the motel room was another note—instructing the maid to call the police and not touch her body—along with a fifty-dollar tip.

She sent the emails on a time delay. So that she would be long gone by the time we received them.

Of course, I didn't know any of that until later. So when I first read Meg's email on the computer at our town's public library, I thought it had to be some kind of joke. Or a hoax. I called Meg, and when she didn't answer, I called her parents.

"Did you get Meg's email?" I asked them.

"What email?"

2

There are memorial services. And there are vigils. And then there are prayer circles. It gets hard to keep them straight. At the vigils, you hold candles, but sometimes you do that at the prayer circles. At the memorial services, people talk, though what is there to say?

It was bad enough she had to die. On purpose. But for subjecting me to all of this, I could kill her.

"Cody, are you ready?" Tricia calls.

It is late on a Thursday afternoon, and we are going to the fifth service in the past month. This one is a candlelight vigil. I think.

I emerge from my bedroom. My mother is zipping up the black cocktail dress she picked up from the Goodwill after Meg died. She's been using it as her funeral dress, but I'm sure that once this blows over, it'll go into rotation as a going-out dress. She looks hot in it. Like so many people in town, mourning becomes her.

"Why aren't you dressed?" she asks.

"All my nice clothes are dirty."

"What nice clothes?"

"Fine, all my vaguely funereal clothes are dirty."

"Dirty never stopped you before."

We glare at each other. When I was eight, Tricia announced I was old enough to do my own laundry. I hate doing laundry. You can see where this leads.

"I don't get why we have to go to another one," I say.

"Because the town needs to process."

"Cheese needs to process. The town needs to find another drama to distract itself with."

There are fifteen hundred and seventy-four people in our town, according to the fading sign on the highway. "Fifteen hundred and seventy-three," Meg said when she escaped to college in Tacoma on a full scholarship last fall. "Fifteen hundred and seventy-two when you come to Seattle and we get our apartment together," she'd added.

It remains stuck at fifteen hundred and seventy-three now, and I suspect it'll stay there until someone else is born or dies. Most people don't leave. Even when Tammy Henthoff and Matt Parner left their respective spouses to run off together—the gossip that was the hottest news before Meg—they moved to an RV park on the edge of town.

"Do I have to go?" I'm not sure why I bother to ask her this. Tricia is my mother, but she's not an authority in that way. I know I have to go, and I know why. For Joe and Sue.

They're Meg's parents. Or they were. I keep stumbling over the verb tenses. Do you cease being someone's parents because they died? Because they died on purpose?

Joe and Sue look blasted into heartbreak, the hollows under their eyes so deep, I don't see how they'll ever go away. And it's for them I find my least stinky dress and put it on. I get ready to sing. Again.

Amazing Grace. How Vile the Sound.