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Cover Page Footnote

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FORGOTTEN NAMES AND UNMARKED GRAVES: A COLLECTION OF
POEMS BY A NURSING MAJOR

By Taylor Howse

THE SHEEP IN A WOLF'S SKIN

With a twist of your wrist, you carved out my heart.
And with the same hand you wrote the stories of me as the villain.
You claimed to hide behind the hunter, cowering in the corner.
Yet your delicate hands were the ones that did the deed.
You sealed my fate; justified my death.
Why must the victors always get the spoils, the last say?

A room painted red, staining the cloak from which you acquired your name.
Building a house in our forest, you claimed it as yours.
With a dagger in your basket and an axe in your cloak,
You stalked us in the shadows, a beast of the night.
Blowing smoke into our dens and laying traps in our woods;
A relentless hunt, a meritless execution.

How can you condemn someone for their nature?
You are the nightmare of this story, the demon of our dreams.
You slay us for our hunger, yet you gorge yourselves on our meals;
The leftover scraps of game rot on the table.
And your broken kin that lies dead in the room, is in no way a trade for my pack.
You who slayed them, you who murdered in cold blood.

If I had been the one to live, would I still have been painted the villain?
Or will the wolf always be the villain of the story?
Forever the moral of the fable, the enemy of man.
And wouldn't that be the true devastation, for us to be forever scorned and mistrusted.
Tell me, Red Riding Hood, my dear damsel of disaster and death,
Will you sleep soundly tonight, wrapped in the skin of your enemy?

Your resounding cackling should be answer enough.
Oh, how big your eyes are as you stand over my body, laughing.
Do you not mourn the passing of your kin, you heartless beast?
A goblets' red contents staining your face and sharp, glistening teeth.
And as the hunter comes upon the threshold, even he will hesitate.
A fallen angel clad in red, your mere existence a defiance to the heavens.

You will be the heroine of this story and I will die for a meaningless cause.
But at least I have the consolation of knowing the hunter sees the true beast.
The devil wrapped in a red cloak; a sheep in a wolf's skin.
But even he fears you, the beautiful lie.
Yet if he were to reveal your ugly truth, how would you react?
How would you paint that story Red Riding Hood, the villain, the true killer?

THE FORGOTTEN CINDERELLAS

Let's make a toast to all the forgotten Cinderellas,
Staring into the glass window display of a life we'll never have.
Those picturesque lives only look pristine from the other side.
For what is a happily ever after these days without our prince?
A forgotten life; a meritless existence.
Our stories are never recorded unless we have a ring on every finger and gloves overtop.
Poised. Delicate. Beautiful. Graceful.
An incomplete existence, we are all told we'll live, unless we can utter "I do."
Obedient. Complacent. Silent. Lifeless.
"You are not worth being loved unless he loves you."
For what is a woman, if not a man's coveted accessory?
Worn. Displayed. Forgotten in her beautiful cage.
And isn't that the true travesty?
There is a reason why they end the tale there.
The End.
Nothing more.
And they lived happily ever after.
Or did they?
I guess we'll never know since it's the end of the tale.
A toast to all the forgotten Cinderellas—
We were forgotten long before anyone bothered to write our story.

FORGOTTEN NAMES AND UNMARKED GRAVES

I'm screaming these names to keep them alive,
Because I am a killer if I let myself forget.
No one ever dies if people still whisper the name centuries later.
A book on a shelf covered in dust, full of these forgotten names.
And it does not matter what is written in the book,
Since the greatest tragedy will always be the last time someone ever picks it up.
And sometimes it does not matter what you filled your pages with,
Because sometimes your last chapter is an unmarked grave.
A tomb for the forgotten warriors and thinkers.
A grave for the fallen kingdoms who thought they would last forever.
Their hero's dying with the last breaths of their people.
How do I sing this requiem if I do not know their names?
How do I convey my empathy if they are already dead and forgotten?
How do I avoid this inescapable destiny?