

**First Place**  
**The Makeshift Graveyard**

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Gary was the type of person who thrived in the shadows. Not to be mistaken, he still enjoyed a good time with company, it was simply his natural tendency to be forgotten. That's why Gary liked the graveyard.

It was his job, as caretaker, to look after the nearly- immaculate graves on the patch of land. As it turned out, the dead were good listeners. There was nowhere for them to be, no one for them to see. They had finished their journey and could now stop and listen.

On this particular evening, the crisp, autumn air brought a slight breeze that would occasionally whistle through the tombstones. There were minimal trees surrounding the graveyard, so the wind was amplified as it brushed against any surface it came into contact with. Dried leaves crunched under Gary's feet as he tried to sweep them away with an old mop he'd brought from home. As he walked past Arthur's grave, he gently swept his mop across the stone. Arthur had been there for quite some time, perhaps five years. For a brief period, they had been friends. Arthur's rise to success happened not long after and all contact with him ceased. However, his fame had fizzled out the moment he had fallen into that horrible lake. Gary shook his head, such a difficult place to resurface from.

Gary walked past some of the other graves, a nightly routine. Their tombstones looked so bare, not a single petal upon them. Gary understood the feeling. All of their life, their dedication. To be known by so many, only to be forgotten when their time came.

As he finished sweeping, Gary stopped to examine the last grave. This was the oldest one by far. His best friend, Theodore. Gary sat down beside the grave. His pants, covered in stains, succumbed to the dirt. He looked up and examined Theodore's grave in disdain.

'The tombstone doesn't do you justice, does it?' He waited a bit, as if expecting a reply. The wind intensified, howling in his ear, so he casually zipped up his old grey coat. 'The lettering is quite sloppy. Not my finest work. I'd fix it, but I have some new friends coming tonight.'

Gary went on. 'Of course, they will never replace you. No one could. Although we had our differences, when life moved on for you. That doesn't matter now. You've come back for me, as they all have. And now I am the one who will be remembered, who people will listen to.'

He brushed one last speck of dust off Theodore's grave, then stood up. As he did so, flashing blue and red lights in the distance grew closer, as did the wails for attention. The cars parked around the little graveyard, the lights becoming blindingly bright.

Gary took one last glance at his friend's grave and said, 'It appears that my new friends are here.' And with that, he put his hands up in surrender.