

THE IMMORTAL CURSE

978 Years of Immortality

It was one of those beautiful days where the sun wasn't too harsh, and the temperature didn't need a jacket. The coastline of California was one of his favorite drives, but even it was starting to get boring. The speedometer read 140mph, so he pressed the gas harder. Speeding through the next left turn, his phone rings. He reaches for it, taking his eyes off the road for just a millisecond. When he looks back, it's too late. He slams on his breaks, but his Lamborghini smashes into a grey Camry.

Completely unharmed, he runs to the driver-side and pulls the driver out. *uhhg...* he thinks, as he sees her pregnant belly. He calls 911, knowing they'll be too late. Both cars are demolished. It's his fault. The only way to rectify this situation was... magic. One advantage of being immortal is the gift of special powers. He whispers into the dying mother's ear...

"Help is on the way. I grant you one wish. Who lives, you or your unborn child. I'm not powerful enough to save both."

With the mother's last breath, she manages two words.

"My baby...."

In the near distance, Jackson hears the howling sirens. Placing his hands over the mother's belly, they start to glow. Then, he vanishes.

Oh, what the hell! The Grim Reaper advances. Never having seen the rare gift of immortality being given to a mortal, Grimmie kept a close eye on this one. Knowing that if you give life to one who was destined to die, a twist of fate will occur. Jackson had messed up. Grimmie collects the mother's soul, sadly leaving the baby's to live, and with a POOF, he disappeared.

21 Years After the Car Accident

Running late, Jennie dashes to grab her jacket, and purse—oh wait where's my phone? Her goal is to visit Stanford University before heading to work today. Stanford is her DREAM college, and she wants to tour it before she sends in her application. At the same time, arriving late meant that her putrid boss, Eddie, would fire her for sure! Her phone alerts her Uber is here.

Jackson, test-driving a Maserati convertible, stops at a light. A Hyundai drives up next to him. Suddenly, he shivers. *Whoa! What's going on?* He wonders. *It's been over 999 years, and nothing like this has happened before.* The last time he shivered was when the Royal Princess had snuck him a smile as they had passed each other in the palace.

Deciding to follow this car for fun, he starts his pursuit. The car stops at a university, and out pops a pretty young woman with long brown hair and a familiar smile. He leaves with the pleasant image in his mind. *What odd events today? It's been boring for too long.*

Since graduating high school, Jennie worked for a year and a half saving up for college. With financial aid, and her jobs, MAYBE she could start college in the fall. With a hopeful look on her face, Jennie waltz's through the University gates.

An hour later, she zombie walks out, looking pale and holding back the waterworks. She had just come out of the financial aid office. *Don't cry*, she tells herself. She's overcome so much already. Having been an orphan, and a foster child of a neglectful couple, she finally felt free being on her own. The University offered a small scholarship, but even with other financial aid, going this fall was out of the question. The tuition was too high, and she was too poor. Her college wish was not going to happen, and that reality crushed her spirit. Not knowing how she got to an empty bench, she sat down and let out the tears with a siren's wail.

'Why me! Why is my life so hard!'

While having lunch, Jackson hears her words clearly in his head. *Whoa, stop ruining my lunch.* Having been alone for so long, he had become... apathetic. His hands begin to glow. *HUH?* And he vanishes holding his fork!

Jennie is bent over weeping until she sees a pair of Balenciaga shoes a foot away from her own worn Skechers. Wiping her eyes and covering her face, knowing she looks like a natural disaster, she glances up. She catches sight of a fork in his hands - taken aback - "Were you eating?"

Whipping the fork at her, Jackson silently realizes she's the woman he followed today...but barks at her anyways.

"I was having an enjoyable lunch before pitiful, whiny cries exploded in my head. Who are you?"

So over this rude man, Jennie felt her frustrations erupt. She learned at a young age to stand up for herself because she knew no one else would do it for her.

"Who am I? Who are you?! What do you mean, 'In your head?' Back up before you get smacked. I'm not in the mood for entertaining freaks today. And put away your fork!" she screams.

Jennie jumps up—rushing past this jerk—deciding it was best to remove herself from this situation before she got angrier.

The crazy fork wielding guy grabs her arm to stop her. Jackson's head explodes the moment he touches her arm. Visions of familiar memories flash into his mind until the heart wrenching image of his only love appears. *Could it be?* His blue eyes look deep into her brown eyes like he was searching for something. Remembering the event that started his immortal life, he sees his love fall to the ground with an arrow to her heart. He was betrayed by her brother, the king and his best friend. Only the Royal Princess stood by his side. This ended with his own heart being split in half by his best friends' sword, and he was miraculously given immortality. Could the princess have returned to him? He continued looking into her eyes.

The second he touches her, Jennie feels an electric shock run through her body. She pauses and looks the stranger in the eyes. *Did he just electrocute me?* She was puzzled by this cute, but creepy guy. Fight or Flight? She contemplated screaming, but when he looked back into her eyes, something felt familiar.

Jackson's demeanor makes a 180 and suddenly he gives her the smolder.

"I'm sorry, you do look upset, I shouldn't have intruded so bluntly. Can I buy you a coffee?" He coos at her.

Hearing her grumbling stomach, it was crazy, but her mouth says, "How about we grab a bite to eat? It must be quick. I have to get to work."

Jackson smiles saying he knows just the place.

Shaking his head profusely, Grimmie appears. The Reaper tilts his head. *So, it's happened.* He grimaces at the thought. *I'm not one to feel emotions, but Jackson has me all messed up.* He watches the couple leave. *Not again...*

Jennie ate and dashed off to work, but Jackson remained in her thoughts. Knowing she should hate this weirdo but feeling compelled to get to know him, made her feel conflicted. It felt like there was some kind of magic sticking Jackson to her thoughts like a fly stuck in honey.

Even though relationships terrify her, she felt like doing something special for Jackson's upcoming birthday. They both love the same thing, and he said he wants one. The family above her just got some... maybe?

Jackson arrives home after the lunch and he starts reviewing their conversation. They talked for a wonderful 30 minutes. Wanting to know everything about her, he asked for her birthday. Jennie's reply flashbaked him to the the car accident 21 years ago, and suddenly he understood that this was not their first meeting. Distracted by that memory, he used the day he became immortal as his birthdate. It was coming up, and he was hoping to use it as an excuse to see her again soon.

The Grim Reaper was leaning against the wall of Jackson's penthouse apartment with his arms crossed. *I need a quarter*, he thinks to himself. *Heads, I do nothing. Tails, I do something.* Looking at Jackson's dining room table, he sees some coins. He flips one.

Jackson sees the coin tossed into the air, rolls his eyes, and says,

"Reveal yourself, you stalker! I've felt your presence for almost 1000 years now so how about we finally meet?"

Gimmie, shocked at his own negligence of being caught, shows himself and catches the quarter. Gimmie looks and sees tails. He turns to face Jackson and tilts his head.

"Let me introduce myself," taking his top hat off and swooping it down and across his body as he bows, "I'm the Grim Reaper."

"Yeah?" yawns Jackson. "I'm going to call you Grim Grim. Thank you! You've been my only companion all these years, even though you did it like a creepy stalker. I hope you enjoyed some of my life."

Gimmie tilts his head the other way. "I'm not supposed to be here, but your case is unique. Seems like you've met someone new recently, yes?"

Hearing this, Jackson advances savagely towards the Grim Reaper.

"Grim Grim, heed my warning, do not go near Jennie. If you plan to do her harm, you will feel my wrath for all of eternity!"

"Whoa, calm down. It's you who's a threat to her," answers Gimmie.

Jackson snarls at the Grim Reaper, "Explain." Grimmie looks at the marble floor and says...

"On the day of the car accident, you saved a baby and gave it a life you once loved. Therefore— it was given the Princess's soul. But you cursed each other that day too." Grimmie pauses to make sure Jackson was listening to every spoken word. "The Princess gave up her life and begged for you to live. The gods rarely listen to such wishes, yet, that day they granted you immortality. But ONLY on the condition that your heart remains split in half. If the Princess falls in love with you, your heart will mend, and you WILL die. If you don't tell the princess and keep your heart split, you will live on. However; now that you two have met..." Grimmie softly finishes, "Within a year, Jennie will die violently." Reaper throws his hands up. "Don't kill the messenger."

"I never thought you two would meet, but today changes everything."

Jackson can't believe his ears. Immortality or death both had to be without Jennie. He was cursed.

"You're saying it's her or me? I choose to die, I have lived for too long anyways, keep her safe!" Jackson concedes.

Grimmie answers, "She has to fall in love with you, and she will be heartbroken when you die."

"No, not again. Is there no other way? I need to die before she falls in love with me, we're barely acquaintances right now, the loss would be at its minimum. Tell me, what can be done?" implored Jackson. All he could think about was saving his princess.

"There's only one way," says the Reaper as one tear falls. *Why did I have to like this one so much?* "On the 1000th anniversary of your Immortality, you may take your own immortal life. It's coming up in a week. That's your only chance. After that, it's you or her in however this plays out." Grimmie explains.

Nothing to think about. Jackson knew what he was going to do.

At that moment, his cell phone rings and Jennie's name displays on the screen. Ignoring it, he runs into his bedroom, buries his face in a pillow, and punches his bed over and over until the sun rises the next morning.

Voicemail? Ok, Jennie leaves him a cute message asking him to call her back. She had the best idea for his birthday and wanted to make sure he was free that night.

1000 Years of Immortality

It's Jackson's birthday, and Jennie had not heard from him. Although put off, she wants to see him. Was he real? How does a guy come on so strongly and then vanish? Needing answers, she prepares to go over to his place. She wraps his present, leaving a small air hole, and heads out.

Jackson sees the poison sitting on his desk. He had all his final plans in order. He grabs the bottle and goes to his couch. Picking up his cell, he texts Jennie for the last time.

'I haven't forgotten you, I never will. Stay strong, live a long happy life, find love, and never look back. Love forever, Jackson'— He swallows all the sour contents of the bottle in one gulp.

Grimmie sits next to Jackson and doesn't move. Rivers of tears flow out of his eyes. Jackson looks over at Grim Grim and jokes, "You're a bit of a cry baby, huh? Just kidding, my friend." Jackson coughs quietly, and then gives the Reaper a genuine smile.

"Thank you," were his last earthly words to Grim Grim. Grimmie looks at Jackson, then peers through a window and into the sky.

"Yes," he proclaims to the gods. "His heart was pure."

The sky darkens and lightning strikes.

Grimmie tilts his head and smiles.

While heading over, the text appears on Jennie's phone. Mortified by it, she urges the Uber driver to hurry.

The Uber Driver stops, "I can't get through, Miss. There's police and ambulances in front of the building."

"Let me out here, please," she grabs the present and sprints to the front door. Before she can get through, a policeman stops her. There's been an incident in the building and they were being careful with who enters.

"I'm here to see Jackson Evakris. It's his birthday, he's expecting me, see?" she shoves the text into the police officer's face.

He reads it and says, "Come with me, please."

They walk to the back of an ambulance. There, on a stretcher, lays Jackson under a blanket. Even with his head covered, she knows it's him and crumbles to the ground. The present makes a little yelp. She opens the gift and pulls out a lab puppy. She holds it tight and starts crying. The police officer asks her questions but she hears nothing. She just keeps staring at Jackson's body and remains frozen.

Cold hands grab her from under her arms and pull her up. She doesn't see who it is, but she was able to stand. In her ear, she hears a whisper.

"Go home. He's finally getting the rest he deserves. Live, Live well. That's what he wanted for you." She turns quickly but no one was there.

Total Days: 1

Jennie looks at her new huge apartment. She starts Stanford in the fall and she doesn't work for that mean Eddie anymore. Jackson left her everything. Jennie connects the leash to Jack's collar and tells him to behave himself today. The puppy lovingly looks back at her.

Jackson remained in her thoughts constantly. He had mentioned getting a dog, and she loved dogs too. The family above her had a female lab who had puppies. She asked them if she could have one for a gift and this one ran straight to her. She had chosen Jackson's birthday gift.

She takes the convertible Maserati. They arrive and walk over to the funeral ceremony. It's packed so full, she can't see the casket. Jennie decides to leave and come back later, when everyone's gone. She solemnly walks with the puppy in her arms and heads back to the car. The sting of tears linger in her eyes. Jackson Evakris came into her life like a fork wielding psycho, and left it as her savior.

Forgetting him would be impossible. She will live, but if she couldn't love him, she'd love no one.

Back at the car, she puts the puppy into its carrier in the backseat. She sits in the driver's seat, deciding to put down the convertible top because the sun isn't too harsh, and the temperature doesn't need a jacket. Suddenly, the puppy starts barking. Turning to him, "What's up little buddy?" she baby talks to the puppy, "Do you need to go to the bathroom?"

The puppy stops barking and just looks back at her. *Hmm...* she turns more to make sure the puppy is ok and then untwists to face the front.

Jennie lets out a startled scream, "Ah! Who are...?!?!?!"

Out of nowhere, a man was in her passenger seat. Jackson turns towards her slowly and tells her to drive. "Go," he says.

Shaking, she does as told. Her mind full of questions, her heart rapidly beating. She keeps glancing at him every 2 seconds.

"Yes, I'm real," he laughs. "I'll explain everything but we need to get out of here first."

They get to Jennie's apartment and Jackson asks her to sit down. Jennie doesn't know whether to slug him or hug him. This was too much! She looks over at the puppy who has now decided Jackson is his new best friend.

"AWW! You remembered!" Jackson smiles brightly. "You shouldn't have!"

"I need answers!" Jennie sternly requests. "This rollercoaster crap needs to stop!"

Jackson agrees and calls out, "Grim Grim, you there?"

Jennie sees a blurry man with a back top hat slowly appear out of thin air. He tilts his head to one side and grabs his hat with his left arm, swooping down to give a bow.

She crouches on the couch looking at Jackson and then at The Grim Reaper. *Oh, this better be good!* she thinks to herself.

The weather outside changes spontaneously and it begins to pour. The booming clash of thunder and lightning shakes the earth. Jackson sees her frightened expression from the weather's misbehavior and goes to sit next to her. He places his arm around her shoulders and suddenly, Jennie knows this is where she belongs, and feels safe. She looks back at the Reaper and hears...

"Hello Jennie, let me introduce myself..."

1. I believe that my grammar has improved. In the first draft, there were some questionable sentences and wrong dialogue format. Now, I've fixed the dialogue, and had people read my story and tell me what would make it make more sense. I focused on replacing 'was,' and 'had,' with other verbs.
2. My paper improved in that I really perfected, and narrowed down the storyline. I also worked hard to create characterization that people could relate to. I took a BIG risk when I decided to take out *the entire beginning*, and make it a flashback later in the story.
3. The first draft of this story was about 6000 words, but the max amount of words it could be was 3000 or less. This was a HUGE problem for me. However, i did overcome this challenge. Just slowly. I read my story carefully and got rid of unnecessary details. I also payed attention to sentences where I could switch around words to make the sentence shorter. I've learned to accept changing things in my writing.