

AUDIO DISTORTION

New Directions

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“Play for your fans, not for your critics. When you get up there, sing for the kids jammed up against the front of the stage, screaming, and singing every single word along with you...”

~Catrin Sharpe

Prologue

Catrin

I'm sitting here, staring at a huge gash in the cliff that was once filled with earth, wondering.

Where is it now – the earth I mean.

Was it slow and gradual, or did it all just suddenly fall, and disappear into the sea?

And of course, I apply it all to my life.

How do I find myself a month away from turning thirty-one, and alone? I can assure you, it wasn't part of my plan...

And, before you ask, no – I'm not distraught, or depressed, or unhappy.

Mostly... I'm just very confused.

Nick and I tried – we really did. But it never seemed like we were *in love*.

Not like Emily and Leonard.

Not like Willie and Vicki.

Not like Stanley and Emma.

It was fun and frivolous at first – and I honestly thought it was what I wanted. Nick did everything he could to make me feel like I was the highpoint of his world. But, I'd gotten so accustomed to my 'life' that I failed to fit into his.

You see, Nick has not only accepted his life, but lives it to the fullest. I on the other hand, keep fighting to keep my life alive. The life I've convinced myself I need to live...

Music. Performing. Screaming fans...

Nick knew it wasn't his path. It was fun, and he was pretty good at it, but it wasn't the life he is

destined to live. Nick Sharpe is, and I believe will always be, a down to earth, nine to five kind of guy. All I can do now is hope he finds someone worthy of sharing it with him.

We still talk, and although neither of us has filed the paperwork, I'm pretty sure our marriage is over. Six months ago, I moved out, and let him get on with his life – again. When the others heard about it, each of them offered me a place to stay. I politely declined, and instead, headed for my parent's house in Southport, where I've been hiding out ever since, lost in a void of confusion.

Then, on a blustery British afternoon, I answered a knock on the door, and found Martha standing there, looking... well... 'irritated' is the best description I can come up with. She made me (she's very 'convincing' when she wants to be) pack some clothes, and after a train ride to Liverpool, I found myself on a ferry to the island.

When we arrived, Dafydd – Martha's 'significant other' – and their daughter Gwen were waiting for us. They took me home, and set me up in their guest room.

That was three days ago.

This morning I got up, and again hiked the three miles to this spot. And, just as I've done the last two days, I'm sitting, on a grassy cliff, on the Isle of Man, staring at a huge hole, wondering what became of the missing contents... and considering my future.

one

Emily

Catrin Meredith... *or...* Catrin Sharpe.

None of us are really sure at this point...

We *are* certain, she's a lost soul of sorts.

The moment I heard about her and Nick, I called her. It was strange only in that she didn't really seem to have much to say. When she told me she was moving out, I – just like everyone else – offered her our guest room.

She declined.

When she came back to England, Leonard called her – this time to offer her a spot with the orchestra.

She declined.

That was six months ago.

We're all very concerned about her, and today, I decide it's time to take action. I call the one person I know, who can relate to being 'lost'... the person Cadi helped to find her way, when she too, was lost...

two

emma

I'm sitting under the tree, doing what else – writing. Although he can barely hold it, Carson is trying to play my guitar, as I watch.

Cadi and Nick's breakup touched something in me, and since the day she told us, I've been writing – almost non-stop. It's as if everything my heart has been bottling up for three years, has found its way out. All the lyrics seem so pained, and so depressing, Stanley and Logan questioned me about them.

Years ago, I told a friend that fame, and the pressures that come with it, are strange and fickle things. I know firsthand, as I had to struggle though a lot of it myself. Although I have, for now, escaped the 'insanity' of being famous, someone very close to me is struggling.

As I turn my attention back to the notebook in my lap, my phone rings. The caller ID tells me who it is.

"Hey, Emily! How's things?"

"Not good, Emma."

"Cadi?"

"Yeah. We've got to do something. Her mom says she's so lost, it's beginning to worry her. Apparently, she spends her days, wandering aimlessly, and staring off into space a lot. I honestly never thought she'd have this much trouble, letting all of it go..."

"Have any of us really let it go?"

"Meaning?"

"Are you content with being 'done'? Or is it right there, gnawing at you...?"

Silence. A strange, prolonged silence.

“I’m sorry Em... that probably wasn’t fair.”

Still, she doesn’t say anything.

“Emily?”

“I gotta go, Emma. If you come up with an idea about Cadi, call me back.”

“Okay. And Emily...”

I hear a click and a dial tone even before I can finish what I’m saying. And yes, it does weird me out a bit. Emily has never hung up on me before, and I’m a bit concerned.

I shake off the thought, clear the phone, and then find the number I need. Once I dial, I put the phone to my ear.

“Hello?” the male voice at the other end says.

“Hey Dafydd! It’s Emma Campbell.”

“*The Emma Campbell?*” he says, following it with a laugh.

“Oh hush! Is Martha handy?”

“She and Gwen are in town. I can have her call you when she gets home.”

“That will work. I need her help with something.”

“Cadi?”

“How would you know that?”

“Her mother called...”

“Wow. I hope involving you guys isn’t...”

He interrupts me midsentence.

“She is, and always will be, family. By extension, you too, are family. Marti has a plan, and I’ll have her call you as soon as she gets here. The more family involved, the better the chances of success!”

“Thanks, Dafydd – you rock! Talk to you later.”

“Bye.”

I hang up, and sit quietly contemplating what he said. He’s absolutely right. This needs to be a *family*

intervention! As Carson climbs into my lap, I hit the speed dial number I want, and wait.

“Discovery Studios.”

“Hey, Mrs. Morgan. How’s things...”

three

Stanley

“Mr. Campbell, you got a sec?” I hear from behind me. When I turn around, I find Sally Wright standing in the doorway, looking way too serious.

“Hey! You’re in the wrong school, girl!” I blurt out, and follow it with a laugh.

Sally, having graduated FCHS, is now a sophomore at CSU. She smiles at my comment and crosses the room, stopping in front of my desk.

“So... what’s up?”

“This,” she says, handing me a sheet of paper.

The moment I see the letterhead, I have to force myself not to laugh. I take a second, and read the letter.

“Wow... ‘undiscovered talent’? Very cool.”

“Thing is, none of us has any idea how they found out about us. We’ve never played anywhere of any importance...”

“And whose fault is that?” I ask, again fighting off a laugh.

Sally blushes, just like she’s always done, and then smiles.

“It’s not that we didn’t want to... it’s just... well...”

“I know – too many complications. At least you kept playing together.” I glance at the letter again, and then ask, “They sent it to Pete, huh?”

“Yeah – at his parent’s house. He’s trying to figure out how they got the address...”

“When is it?”

“In seven weeks, according to the letter...”

“And what are you guys gonna do?”

“Well...” she replies, again blushing.

“Okay, so you guys want to discuss it I assume?”

“If you have some time... yeah.”

“My house, Saturday morning, around 9:00?”

“Cool. We’ll see you then.”

I hand her the letter, she turns and she heads up the aisle, and out the door. I turn and go back to grading papers...