

## **Do Not**

2006 by darkness4light

Do not stand at my grave and weep;  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die. ~ Mary Frye

If people expected Brian to break down, they didn't really know him at all. Mikey went out with him, watched him, looked after him and stood far enough in the shadows when the tears seeped down Brian's cheeks. Emmett was still his flamboyant self, allowed Brian to make lewd innuendos, annoyed Brian and made himself available whenever Brian's mood-swings allowed true friends. Debbie yelled at Brian, fed him, swore at him and sat hugging him in her front room every Sunday. Mel and Lindsay alternately made her usual smug comments, smiled adoringly, barely tolerated his random visits to Gus and never mentioned Justin's name in a crowded room. Ted just ignored the whole thing.

If you didn't look closely you would have thought everything was the same as pre-Justin times. If you ignored the husbands, boyfriends, extra children, the fact Gus could talk and the extra few years on everyone. In fact if you didn't look closely, you couldn't see the cracks in the perfect family portrait.

In the land of Pittsburgh time went slowly, crawling and then rushing in turn; as if nature itself had gained a grudge against the family who let Justin go. The ground warmed, the snow melted and spring came, the summer swept through Pittsburgh so quickly without warning that Brian felt as if he'd just stepped off the Wurlitzers. Autumn tugged the leaves from the trees, leaving footprints when winter came. It was so easy to get swept up in time when you live in one place for so long, you go down the same streets, go the same places. Years rush by without knowing, Brian felt this, they all did. Their lives tugged at them and the corners of their eyes. Brian felt it happening, the only thing that kept Brian feeling young was the love of Justin, even with the 'old man' remarks.

Time rushed, the snow came and it was suddenly over two years since Justin had gone to New York. The phone calls had stopped, the emails were tapering off and the incessant text messages to various members of the family and to Jennifer, who hadn't yet found out how to work the thing yet, were becoming a eagerly anticipated treat. It hadn't meant to be this way. This wasn't what Justin had fought for five years for. This was what the big city had brought him.

Once again Brian's car graced the streets of New York City, the speed well exceeded by the limitations of law. Brian had no time for law, not since he'd defeated the law in the form of a homophobic police chief, been threatened by it numerous times for the way he was and lived, and ever since a law had seen the bombing of his club and the murder and attempted murder of those he loved. Law was made to be broken. Mikey sat beside him, as he had many times when visiting the city, Ben was in the back seat at time to time leaning forward to place a comforting hand on his husband's shoulder. Emmett sat asleep with his head on Ted's shoulder. Debbie sat the other side wittering on about the directions. Brian knew he'd be certifiably insane before they even got there.

Standing on a crowded lawn Brian let the tears run down his face as sobs choked his throat. He knelt down and traced his fingers over stone below his fingers, cold and weather-blown. As Debbie changed the flowers and neatened up Brian remembered the day his world fell apart.

It was a plane crash. The plane had exploded in the air when one of the engines caught fire. The authorities were still trying to explain why. Brian had been in Pittsburgh when it happened staring at the TV screen as Gus curled into his lap trying to block out the voice of the CNN spokesman telling them that his other daddy had died. The world had carried on, but in Liberty Avenue the rainbow coloured flags flew at half mast or were taken down. Many urged Michael to carry on Rage but after JT how could Rage and Zephyr go on alone, let alone the real counterparts?

There wasn't enough of him to fly home so Brian arranged for the service and burial to be held in New York. He'd mused among the others that the many time Justin had been on the brink of death and dragged back, one stupid engine failure was enough to take him away. It wasn't fair, but then if you live in the the same universe Brian did, you found that out pretty quickly.

Brian looked back at the stone with a slight smile on his face, reading the words.

I will see you again

Justin Taylor-Kinney

November 2 1984 - 6 February 2008

Loved husband, son, father, friend and inspiration

Another tear treks its way down Brian's cheek as he regards the words. "Yeah sunshine, I will see you again, very soon."

Mikey helps Brian up and as the wind picks up its plain to see how thin Brian is, how pale under the tan he took years perfecting. The cancer came back just after Justin died, more terrible and dangerous than ever. He tried to fight it for his son but it seemed to mock the doctor's attempts to nuke it with chemo and lasers by spreading like some sick meal, devouring everything in its path.

Mikey and Emmett watch as Brian falls asleep after phoning Gus that night. Even in the darkness and through his sickness Brian still looks young, just like Justin as he stepped onto his plane. Mikey blinks through tears as they watch him sleep.

Brian walks through the light, ahead of him bright blue and blond seeing nothing else he walks to him and Mikey swears he sees Brian smile as he slips away.

The End