Things You Just Aren't Taught

by ShamanOfHedon

Summary

Written & set before Silent Hill 3 came out so I didn't know who Heather was. A tale about facing your past, forgiveness, and accept that life isn't always what we hope.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

"Well, I suppose the first thing I should clarify," said the elderly gentleman in the worn plaid easy chair, "is that Silent Hill is not evil. It is a place, a location. It has no soul or consciousness of it's own. It was built to serve a purpose."

Sheila couldn't imagine what possible purpose this nightmare could have, only that she desperately wanted to wake up. For the moment she felt safe with the old man, in his strange little den. Granted, the decor made her feel terribly uncomfortable, but at least those things were locked outside.

Those things...

Four hours ago, she would never, COULD never have imagined such things could exist. She could never have even imagined them possible. Yet in these past few hours, she had dodged and ran and sometimes even just barely escaped from dozens of them, and could not wholeheartedly doubt their realism.

Four hours ago, she was at the Lakeside Amusement Park. She was on a family outing, her mother and younger brother with her. They came here twice every summer, for a day where they could forget the past, the bad memories that chased and taunted them all the rest of the year. It only took them twenty minutes to drive around the lake from their home in Blue Creek Apartments, and it was a tremendous boost to their spirits.
Sheila and her little brother had gotten on the roller coaster, and were nearing the end of the ride. They went into the long dark tunnel that immediately preceded the ride's end, but this time ended differently than all their previous rides. Whereas they normally came out the other side giggling, asking their mother gleefully if they could go again, this ride ended in silence.

Halfway through the tunnel, the lighthearted screaming around her suddenly died out, in an instant, and when she came out of the tunnel the bright sunshine was gone, blocked out by a thick dense fog. She found herself alone in the car, her brother and every other rider gone without a trace.

The cars came to their usual stop, and she noticed that the entire park was silent. The fog shrouded everything. There were no people still here, anywhere. She screamed for her brother and mother at the top of her lungs, but no one answered. Lakeside was quite suddenly as Silent as the town's name.

She ran around in a panic for a few minutes, shouting for anyone to answer her, desperately seeking anyone who might still be here. When she finally stopped and sat on a bench, exhausted and out of breath, she noticed for the first time that the weather was not all that had changed.

She looked at her surroundings, and noticed that the place looked...she wasn't sure how else to think it... aged somehow. All the metal surfaces were cracking and rusted. All wood was rotting and splintered. Previously brand new posters were peeling and warped on the walls, rides looked dilapidated, as if left for years uncared for, and there was...

Sheila had to stifle the urge to vomit as she recalled the moment she first saw the stains. The crimson, freshly left bloodstains all over the park. She was sitting in it. She had walked through it. She found fresh samples dripping from her hands, and she screamed. This scream, however, finally got someone's attention, and this was NOT a good thing.

She heard a bizarre sound, a combination of someone stepping into raw ground beef and someone dragging a car door on concrete. She looked towards the sound and saw... words escaped her. She could not have described it to you if her life depended on it, and it very likely did.

She was being approached by something that looked like a hunched over circus strongman, with no skin left on it's body. It's exposed muscle tissue looked like rotting meat, and small writhing things kept falling from any gaps between the muscles themselves. Broken beer bottles extruded from various places all over it's body, and what should have been it's head was an oversize metal beer keg, dented and rusty, dragging on the ground in front of this thing. It was hunched over by it's own head.

One hand was being used to push it's own head further along, the other held a very silly looking weapon that would have normally made Sheila laugh, had it not looked so heavy. It appeared to be a giant sledgehammer, but the head of the tool was another beer keg, rusted like the creature's head, but looking far heavier and more sturdy. The creature was dragging it behind itself, and for all the heavy accoutrement's and dragging metal, the creature was moving very fast.

Sheila screamed again and began to run, blindly, trying every building door she could find, finding them all locked, and she eventually forgot her mother and brother entirely and escaped the park altogether.

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The elderly gentleman cleared his throat to break her reverie. She shook her head for a moment and looked back at him.
"You are wondering why you are here now," the elderly gentleman stated. "You are wanting to know why some of the creatures seem so specific to your mind."

Sheila looked directly at the Old man, and shook her head.

"All I want to know is where my family is, and how I wake up from this fucking nightmare."

The elderly gentleman, who she realized still had not introduced himself, smiled at her, and even let out a condescending chuckle she found quite rude. He looked at the decor surrounding them in his little shack in the graveyard, and seemed to motion to various things.

He gestured to a painting of a burned girl in a grey school uniform, with a younger but identical girl in a pink and white child's dress crawling out from within the older girl's stomach. The plate beneath the painting read "Cheryl Escapes Her Ruined Truth". He then pointed out a life-sized humanoid statue, a grotesque caricature of something only possibly human. It wore an apron that looked like human skin, held a spear, and it's head was encased in a large rusted steel triangle. The plate on the stand read "The piercer Of Tainted Hearts", and displayed trophy-like on the wall behind it was a ridiculously over-sized kitchen steak-knife, made to seem far less ridiculous by the dried blood it was caked in.

"Mr. Sunderland called him the Pyramid-Head," the Old man cackled, as if this were a tremendously amusing revelation.

Sheila didn't get the joke.

She stood up and walked around the room, genuinely unsurprised to realize 'Pyramid-Head' was following her movements. Nothing surprised her by this point, not even that that sofa she'd been sitting on gurgled and threw up the moment she stood. The bizarre thing licked what she guessed were it's lips, or possibly something a great deal more personal, and settled back into a still state.

She was staring at a fresh painting, the oils still wet, the picture changing it's shape before her eyes like a strange video. It depicted a girl, perhaps a year or two older than her, running from what appeared to be mummified dogs in a subway station. The plate read "Heather; a Work in Progress".

"That's the new project," the old man said. "She's here now, Going through her trial. She's doing rather well I think. If she survives her test, her painting will dissolve, or become something unexplainable, like Allessa's painting over there."

"The one called Cheryl?" Sheila asked.

"Yes," he replied, "that one. I suppose you could technically say Allessa made it out of Silent Hill, but she had to die giving birth to herself to do it, so it really doesn't count."

Sheila had no idea what he meant by that statement, nor did she truly care to. She was too busy studying some drawings on the old man's desk. They appeared to be blueprints for nightmares. Drawings of skinless children and dogs, mannequins with four legs and no arms or head, things that looked like humanoid rotting pterodactyls. Among these drawings was the Keg Monster she had spent the last 4 hours running from, plus drawings of the other three... things... she'd encountered during that time.

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After running for what seemed like hours around the lake to try and make her way home, Sheila took a break inside Heaven's Night, the strip club her mother danced at. She'd spent many an hour
mulling about back stage as her mother peeled for a pittance every night, selling her looks for grocery money.

She knew where the manager kept his handgun collection.

She desperately searched his office for a key to the back storeroom, knowing there would be more of those things out there. There were three kinds besides the Keg Monster, and she'd named them all. She tried to give them silly names to ease her fear of them, but somehow joke names just made them feel more real.

The shambling female things she'd named the 'Silicon Oil Spills', because they looked like decaying supermodels. They were dressed in filthy shredded lingerie and had horrifically oversize breasts, which leaked a thick puss like liquid all over themselves, and were covered in swollen boils. These rotting strippers had no faces, save one small hole directly in the middle of where the face should have been, from which a huge writhing tongue that looked vaguely like a snake writhed. They carried with them rusted steel poles that they seemed intent on burying in Sheila's skull.

The second creature was more an annoyance than anything else, but was still a threat to her safety if she allowed them to get too close. She called them 'Tom-and-Jerries', because they looked like zombiefied cats with mouse corpses sewn into their flesh. The cat parts had no lower jaw, and constantly allowed a hissing sound out, while the mouse halves sticking out everywhere were constantly biting and chewing at the host body, as if trying to eat their way free.

The third she simply called 'Them', because she couldn't think of a silly name for something so grotesque. They looked like grizzly bear skeletons, with only bits of meat still clinging to the bones, except it walked on it's hind legs, and it's forelegs were dangling steel baseball bats, covered in nails and broken glass, constantly swinging at her. It's head, if you could call it that, was a leg-hold trap snapping open and shut of it's own accord, dangling from the creature's neck bones.

One of "Them" was beating against the rear entrance as she used a pry bar to open the manager's desk to get the storeroom key. She could hear it whining. Strange, she thought, that a creature with no actual mouth of it's own could make such sad sounds. and it broke through the rear door just as she found the key.

She guessed she had maybe 5 minutes max before the bear creature found it's way upstairs to the office she was in, so she took the the key and frantically unlocked the storeroom so she could be armed.

Of course luck was not going to be that kind.

The storeroom was barren, with no furnishings or items of any kind, save one single handgun in the middle of the floor, and one single box of bullets, less than half full, giving maybe a dozen or more shots at best. There was also graffiti on the opposite wall, in fresh blood, that seemed to have been left there specifically for her.

"You're not supposed to be here," it read. "Go find the shack in the boneyard."

Sheila decided against wasting any of these bullets on them, and climbed out through the office fire escape. She ran as best she could in the direction of Forest Green, the only cemetery in or around Silent Hill with anything resembling a 'shack' on it's ground.

She knew this because she and several of her high-school buddies used to go up there to get drunk, before the accident.
The accident.

She paused where she stood, and realized that she had forgotten about her mother and brother, and about a lot of things that mattered to her. She looked to her right and noticed she was right outside Brookhaven Hospital. She swallowed nervously, and decided the cemetery could wait.

Not at all to her surprise, the hospital was dark, but in something of a really convenient coincidence, she thought, there was a small pocket flashlight on the reception counter. She was starting to wonder if someone helping her. Or perhaps fucking with her head. It occurred to her about the single gun in the storeroom at Heaven's Night as well. It was as if she was being allowed to find only what she needed to survive, only when it was needed, and absolutely nothing more.

She took the flashlight and turned it on, not planning on passing the gift up, and turned towards the elevator. She stopped momentarily in shock as the light illuminated a few things she’d not realized were there.

One of the hospital's nurses was standing in the corner, unmoving. She had something resembling a giant silicon slug obscuring her entire face, and her uniform and entire body were bloody. Sheila immediately braced herself to be attacked, but the nurse stood there silently. She raised her right arm and pointed towards the stairs, and then froze into motionlessness once more.

Sheila didn’t move for a moment, waiting to see if this was a trap, but the nurse had become for all intents and purposes a statue, frozen and immobile. Sheila hesitantly followed the nurse's direction, and walked towards the stairs. She went into the stairwell and found another nurse, who raised her arm to point up the staircase. Sheila followed her directions.

Several more nurses were waiting for her, and all did the same thing, guiding her in the direction she already knew. She had never taken this trip, but she knew it. She had practiced it in her mind a thousand times, but never found the courage to take it for real. She knew where the nurses were leading her, and courage or not, she could not defy them now, feeling as though this could be her last chance to take this trip before the destination was gone forever.

One last nurse held the door for her, motioning her inside. She hesitated at first, but after a moment steeled herself and walked inside. This was the one single room in the hospital with any lighting, though it was scarce and dim, and so for the moment she turned hers off. Slowly she walked towards the single bed still occupied in this room, to where the light was, illuminating a frail man.

The man was catatonic it seemed, his eyes open but blank, and he was thin and deteriorated. He had severe tissue scars in many places, and was missing two limbs from amputation. He was on a respirator, and the sucking and releasing of the ventilation machine it was attached to was the only sound for several minutes. Sheila looked at the man solemnly, and took his remaining hand gently into her own as tears began to stream down her face.

"Daddy?" she said. "Daddy, can you hear me? It's me, Sheila. I know I really should have come before now, but I was scared. I was scared to see you like this, to see for myself how much you’ve lost of the big strong daddy you used to be, and know that it's all my fault."

As she cried, Sheila began to remember why she never went drinking at the cemetery anymore. It had happened 4 years ago, when she was 16. She and her ex-boyfriend Todd were there with half their class, having their own private little after prom party, they were all drunker than shit. Sheila had remembered her Prom Night curfew and dragged Todd off to his car, and asked to be driven home, too drunk to think of how drunk Todd was.

They swerved all over the roads, until they pulled up near Todd's house. She kept trying to
convince him to get her home, but he was just laughing and grabbing at her hair.

"Come on Sheila!" he said laughing. "One blowjob before I take you home. Just suck my dick for a minute until I blow and then I'll get you home, okay?"

Sheila was too drunk too know any better. She undid his pants and started going down on him, until she noticed he was babbling for her to stop.

"SHIT!" he shouted. "Sheila stop! Your fuckin' Dad is standing in front of my car with a fucking baseball bat! Get off my dick and hide!"

Sheila wasn't able to understand most of it because he was babbling. She thought he was saying something closer to "Who's Your Daddy", and kept going. Scared of getting beaten up by Sheila's Dad, who was a county sheriff, Todd panicked and started violently trying to push Sheila off of him, forgetting the motor was still running. When he finally pushed her off she fell forward and her arm pinned down the gas.

Todd's car had lurched forward quickly and knocked Sheila's father backward violently. As Sheila kept trying to get up while Todd was pushing her down in a panic, she kept hitting and releasing the gas pedal by mistake, and Todd's car repeatedly smashed into her father, who was pinned now against the front grill of his own car.

When Sheila finally managed to get past Todd she was covered in cuts and bruises from his panicking fists and feet, and she got out of the car dazed. She finally saw her father, a mangled mess against his car. She screamed and passed out.

Todd, who was 18, told the DA everything, and agreed to a plea for involuntary vehicular manslaughter in exchange for Sheila not being charged as an accessory. He was sentenced to 3 years in prison, and was found dead in the prison shower after only a month, having been shanked for trying to resist being...well, Sheila preferred not to think of it.

She sat with her father for a few minutes, quietly stroking his hand and crying silently.

"I forgive you," she heard a meek voice say.

She looked up to find her father's head had turned towards her. He still looked so frail and weak, but in his eyes she could still see her real Daddy, the big handsome lawman she used to treasure.

"Todd," he whispered weakly, "came to me before he was sentenced, and told me everything. He didn't want me to hate you, swore up and down you'd never have been hitting the gas if he wasn't so freaked out. Said that you blamed yourself for everything, and that he had made sure I wouldn't lose you like you had lost me."

"But Daddy, I..." she started, the tears choking her voice. "I never should have been drunk. I was a stupid kid. I should have told him no and just walked home from his place. It was my fault."

"You're right about part of that," he said. "You WERE a stupid kid to be getting that drunk, but you were a kid. That's the kind of stupid crap kids do. You didn't do this on purpose, and I forgive you."

Sheila fell into her father's one arm crying, which he meekly put around her.

"I was starting to think you'd never make it here," he said. "Your mother was always so hopeful you'd stop blaming yourself someday and come see me before...well, before you got old."

Sheila knew what he had meant to say and cried harder. She knew had had meant 'before it was
too late and I was dead'. She'd heard the doctors talking. It was only by his own sheer willpower her father was still clinging to life, and somewhere inside she knew he was holding on waiting for her to come.

She held his hand and whispered "I love you Daddy". Then she noticed she didn't hear anything. She looked up, and saw the respirator had stopped. The heart monitor was turned off, and her father was still. She dried her tears and actually smiled. She knew he wasn't in pain anymore, that he could finally let go because she had finally come.

She kissed his forehead and pulled the sheet over his head. As she turned to leave, she saw that the Keg-Monster had been sitting there quietly in the dark. It's head, if you could truly call it such, was pointed at her, but it just sat there breathing, and for some reason she felt no fear.

Feeling her business there done, Sheila left the hospital and calmly walked to the cemetery.

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"Which brings us back to this moment," the old man said suddenly.

Sheila looked up at him from the pile of drawings and actually smiled. She had realized why she was in the nightmare.

"I was supposed to forgive myself, wasn't I?" she asked. The old man smiled.

"That's only part of it I'm afraid," he said, in an almost relieved tone of voice. "Your trial was unintentional. You live in Silent Hill. You're native. The natives are supposed to go away when the nightmare starts, and come back when it's over. This nightmare passes in but a few seconds, and when it ends, the Townspeople will know nothing of it's passing, save you."

"Why me?" she asked.

"Because of who you used to be," he replied, "...Alice."

Sheila wasn't confused by the name. She was starting to remember.

"So I'm through the Looking Glass again," she said. "What happened to it Hatter? What happened to the Wonderland I knew? This place used to be a secret paradise of silly childish madness."

The elderly gentleman smiled.

"You happened my dear," he replied. "You came to us, to our little pocket dimension, and introduced us to the idea that we were perhaps not well in the head. You told a talking cat he should not speak, a deck of cards they should not walk, and an insect he should not smoke. You convinced a rabbit to care little for the time, a fat queen that the only 'off head' she should be concerned with was her own, and above all else, taught a silly old man that rebirth was far more important than Unbirthdays."

Sheila smiled sadly.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It was another life. I'm a different person now. In that life I was a repressed spoiled little British girl, full of silly Victorian notions about what was proper, and determined to inflict them upon you all as they had been inflicted upon me. I never meant to cause...this."

"You didn't cause it," he suggested, "So much as you released it. We were always supposed to be the nightmare Alice. We were just too silly to care. When we were your nightmare, we were forced to accept that we had a purpose. We exist to punish those who punish themselves, and to
free them if they can forgive. Every so often an anomaly finds it's way into the nightmare, as you have done twice. Cheryl's adopted father was one. He was never supposed to be here. He simply got dragged into it because Cheryl was Allessa, and Allessa belonged here. So he found himself in the nightmare."

"After you left the first time, the realm began to decay to the state it's in now. Most of us went mad for real, and committed suicide. Myself, one of the Captain's of the Card Guard, and a handful of little creatures are all that survived. Everything else that exists here is temporary. Things created by your own mind, or the mind of whoever the nightmare surrounds."

"Mr. Sunderland was afraid of hospitals, so he created the patient demons. He was resentful of how his wife's sewing hobby entertained her more than he did, so he created the mannequins. Diamond there," he gestured to Pyramid Head, "became Pyramid Head to add some control to the nightmare, to give something for James to focus on avoiding."

"You created your own demons. That's what Silent Hill does. If you're in Silent Hill when it's in the nightmare state, it searches your head and creates tangible evidence of what eats at your soul. The stripper creatures are representative of your disgust with what your mother does to support you. The cats represent an early trauma you don't even recall from this life. When you were a child your father's cat killed your pet mouse before you could stop it."

"The bear creature," he began, before she interrupted him.

"I know where the bear creature comes from," she said. "I was ten when we discovered a wounded bear on our property up in West Hill. It had gotten it's face caught in a bear trap, and my father shot it to end it's suffering. It traumatized me. I had nightmares for months."

Sheila sat quietly by the desk staring at the beer keg monster's picture. She knew this image was based around that one last night of drinking that had cost her her father and her self-respect, but she was beginning to realize it was something more.

"Excuse me a moment?" she said. "Not at all," the Hatter replied cheerfully.

Sheila stepped outside the shack. The Keg-Monster was sitting there, quietly, right beside a gravestone. Sheila didn't even have to read the stone to know whose grave it was. She knelt down on the grave, beside the Keg-Monster, and undid the latches around it's neck to release it's head from the keg. The creature sat up straight, freed from the weight, and looked at her sadly.

"I'm sorry Sheila," it said. "I'm so sorry. It was my fault, not yours. I'm the one who kept pushing you down, I'm the one who asked you for a blowjob when I should have been getting you home, and I'm the one who got us both drunk in the first place."

Sheila leaned forward and kissed the shattered image of what used to be her boyfriend. Then she wiped his tears away and gazed into his eyes. She noticed he was starting to change. His skin was reforming, his bulk was shrinking, the broken beer bottles fell out of his skin and the wounds they left healed, and after a moment, it was just Todd, naked and shivering.

"It was a stupid teenage accident," Sheila told him. "My father never blamed us. We blamed ourselves, but it's time to stop Todd. You have to let go of the guilt. You can't stay here anymore, like this. It's time to let the guilt go and move on."

Todd looked at her, and smiled weakly. He began to softly glow, and fade from existence. He was free to go to his afterlife, and before he faded completely he kissed Sheila goodbye.

"Thank you..." was the last thing he said before he faded completely.
Sheila walked back to the Hatter's shack and closed the door behind her. She stood calmly in front of him and waited.

"Whenever you're ready," she said. The Hatter smiled.

"I came here some two centuries ago," he said. "I brought Diamond and the creatures with me through my own dreams, and settled here. The small village founded here was the perfect place to park the pocket dimension, as I thought no one would need the nightmare here. I could retire and never need do this again. For about 120 years I was right, until the 20's. That's when some poor fool stumbled into the nightmare. He'd raped and killed 2 small children with an axe, but no one knew it was him, and the madness opened the Nightmare again. Having been out of practice for so long, the best I could do was push him out of the nightmare to confess."

"They executed him, and Silent Hill had it's first true stain of madness. I knew I had to go back to work again, and have not rested a day since."

The Hatter sighed heavily. He hadn't been a 'Mad' Hatter in a long time. He was simply weary.

"Three centuries is a long time Alice," he said. "Too long a time to be surrounded by other people's madness and guilt. But I cannot escape it, not on my own."

"It was you, wasn't it Hatter?" she asked. "You're the one who brought me here."

"I had to Alice," he said in a harsh tone. "You're the only one who can end this. End MY nightmare. When I realized who you were in your prior lives, I knew only you could help me. I knew the Madness of Wonderland had tainted you. It left a stain on your soul that will never be clean, and you could stop the nightmare, at least for me."

Sheila looked at him solemnly, and felt no need for words. She took the gun from her pocket and shot the Hatter point blank between his eyes. His body jerked about for a moment before slumping into death, and she tossed the gun on the desk. Pyramid Head removed his head to reveal a worn face, and he moved towards her.

"The nightmare never truly ends you know," he said in a hoarse English accent. "It just finds new creators to shape it."

"Sorry Diamond," she said, "But I don't believe I'll be going through the Looking Glass a third time."

Diamond nodded his head solemnly as air raid sirens began to blare in the distance, piercing mechanical screams that seemed to make the air blur. Sheila and Diamond nodded to each other as everything surrounding her faded into darkness, and the sirens were slowly replaced with lighthearted screams.

The roller coaster pulled to a stop, and Sheila's brother was giggling beside her. His shining 5 year old eyes looked up at her happily, and he said he was going to ask their mother if he could go again. Sheila smiled at him and mussed his hair, and walked behind him quietly.

As her mother gave him more tickets to ride, she noticed how different her daughter seemed.

"Something wrong sweetie?" she asked. "You look so somber."

"Nothing at all," Sheila replied. "Just suddenly feeling a little old to be on the rides."

Sheila's mother cocked an eyebrow at her, but let it go. She hoped perhaps her Daughter was finally letting go of the past.
As they drove home later that day, little Micheal playing with his carnival prizes, Sheila was quiet until they were driving past Heaven's Night.

"Mom?" she asked. "Let's go visit dad."

The End

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End Notes

If anyone is wondering why I went to Alice in Wonderland, it's because Silent Hill just seems like Wonderland rotted and died.

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