

Find what you love
And let it kill you.
H. C. Bukowski

Sia Wales
Don't Forget Me

“I always think that somewhere there is a road that can somehow bring us together again. I always think of him at my side, every step I take, but hidden from me, blocked by something or someone. This somehow comforts me. I keep hoping that all of this has a meaning, but now my life without him seems senseless,” sighed Stella to herself as she ran down the road, *“I’ll Be Waiting”* by Lenny Kravitz, blasting down the headphones from the iPod she clasped tightly in her hand.

A black Bentley Continental slid past her. It slowed down, almost imperceptibly, and Stella couldn’t help but ask herself why the man driving such a car would look at her with such interest through the darkened windows.

Stella glanced at him out of the corner of her eyes and saw his features perfectly in the dim light. The man stared at her and threw a breathtaking smile her way. But his eyes remained impassive, emotionless. He suddenly pressed hard on the accelerator, making the engine hum, and was out of sight in an instant.

He was the very essence of male beauty, so seductive, he hardly seemed human... His face was sculpted, squared jaws, penetrating eyes, a straight nose, irresistible lips. He was wearing a shirt and a dark, classic jacket. His hair fell neatly, but attractively onto his face.

Vuk Wolf

As daylight faded and the sky turned pearly gray, a girl named Stella Whitely finished up her usual 5-mile jog and headed to where she'd left her car on South Border Road in her home town of Medford, about six miles north-west of Boston.

Stella was 28, she helped manage The Pats, the bar her father owned decked out in the colors of the New England Patriots in tribute to the team, and had just embarked on a Master's degree in Public Relations at Boston University.

Running was Stella's way of escaping life's demands. It freed her mind, let her get back in touch with her real self. The buzz of adrenalin and the rhythmic thrum of her feet as they pounded the unbroken line of the road that rushed to meet her loosened the tension. She could almost hear it slither away, the silence broken only by a gritty hiss as the odd car sped by.

Winded after driving herself so hard, she stopped, let her body flop to her knees then straightened up in a glorious stretch, her eyes drawn to the soft rays of light dancing through the thick canopy of trees that rose majestically above her. A final sprint took her to the gunmetal-gray Corvette, a recent gift from its previous owner, her father, Jeff.

On her way home, she called her father: he was fine, working on some solar panel investment project in New York state. She called her mother as soon as she hung up: she was brimming with enthusiasm about the new documentary she was shooting in Anchorage on the behavior of wolves.

Her parents had divorced a few years back. Jeff Whitely, her free-spirited father, was an investor, a job that kept him travelling the length and breadth of America, always on the trail of some business deal or other. Her mother, Monica Balti, whose parents were Italian and whose looks she had inherited, worked as a cameraman, which

meant that she too was often away shooting a documentary in some remote corner of the world.

Jeff and Monica had met in New York. The fruit of their relationship was Stella, an unplanned but much-loved addition. She grew up in Italy, moving to her father's house in Medford only a few years back, when she began studying at Boston University. There she met Jason Rees. Stella pulled the car into the driveway of the house, rooting around in her bag for the keys as she made her way to the front door. She was exhausted. She was used to having the house all to herself, and thought that this was the case as she entered and pulled the door closed behind her. She didn't know how wrong she was.

Setting her university notes and purse down on the hall table, Stella went to the kitchen, thirsting for a glass of water, and then ran upstairs to the bathroom to shower, yanking off her sweat-drenched t-shirt and throwing it blindly into her room as she passed the door. "Wow thanks, Stella!" purred a familiar voice. "Such a warm welcome, I'm astonished!" A warm but husky voice emerged from the dim room, lit only by the bedside lamp.

Stella's heart skipped a beat as she instantly put a face to the husky voice that enveloped her: Vuk Wolf was a guy she'd met just under a year ago. He was doing the same Master's course and did the occasional odd job in Medford to earn a buck or two. He had a home in Boston, but more often than not he crashed in the backroom of The Pats, or slept over at hers in the guest room, cuddled up with her on the sofa or, on rare occasions, in her bed.

After catching the t-shirt mid-air, Vuk mocked a rakish pose as he settled back on the bed with Stella's dad's semi-acoustic guitar in his hands. Stella played along, delivering her usual quip "Vuk, really! And to think I thought this was my room!" His messed up hair fell onto his face, and Stella's breath was almost taken away by the gaze from his intense green eyes.

“You know that ain’t so, baby...” A sassy, self-confident look crossed his face, his lips parted in his usual wily smile. This was not the first time Stella had come home without realizing that Vuk had entered through the kitchen door or her bedroom window, which overlooked the branches of a tree.

She grabbed a pearl gray towel from the bathroom, wrapping it around her, sarong-style.

She heard Vuk begin to strum the guitar. She appeared at the doorway of her room and, noticing the wide open window, realized he must have climbed up the tree to get in. He was his usual wild-eyed kid self, but in those clothes he looked more like a rebel rock star. He was kitted out in a black leather jacket, his dark jeans falling seductively low on the waist, his t-shirt slung on in his usual carefree manner.

“Come on, sugar, lose the towel, it’s not the first time I’ve seen you in your bra...” He raised his penetrating eyes from the guitar strings, and in an instant, they were aflame with yellow streaks, intensifying his gaze.

He was sat on the bed, engrossed by the song he was playing, *Good Riddance (Time Of Your Life)* by *Green Day*. His head was bent forward, hair cascading onto his forehead as he concentrated on the chords his fingers were forming. He began to sing, losing himself in the rhythm of the song. Stella leaned against the doorway and listened intently. His warm, husky voice washed over her like molten chocolate, velvety smooth.

The bedside lamp illuminated him from behind, throwing a half-light onto his face, which was as sweet and soulful as the song. The contrasting light and shade accentuated his burly shoulders and a few tufts of hair. He appeared to be lost in his own world, on a backlit stage, oblivious to his audience.

Stella quietly approached him, almost hypnotized by the melancholy

notes, as Vuk continued to pluck the guitar strings. His playing was sublime, and Stella was spellbound as the notes and his husky voice enveloped her body. She bit her lip as her head lowered to follow the movement of his fingers over the strings. She was imagining them caressing her body with the same passion, when Vuk closed the song drawing out the final note. His hand stretched out to find her leg, and he pushed the guitar aside to draw Stella toward him. He embraced her legs, making her fall onto the bed. He lay his head on her, running his fingers through her long brown tresses, brushing back a few wisps that were falling onto her face.

“Play something else for me, Vuk,” Stella sighed softly.

“Kinda demanding, ain’t you, Stella?” he quipped. His sly smile just accentuated his sassy gaze. His fingers caressed one of the guitar strings, his eyes never leaving the girl.

Stella blushed and her lips curved into a slow smile. Vuk pulled the guitar onto his legs with one hand and he began to strum the song he was writing for her, a sublime and moving piece. The notes enveloped Stella’s entire body, as Vuk’s fingers worked the strings as if he were stroking her soft skin.

Stella’s eyes closed, letting the music awaken all her senses. Vuk’s face was as melancholic as the song and Stella knew why: she was deeply attracted to Vuk, but there was only one obstacle keeping them apart; the thought of a boy that he didn’t even know, but one that still had a big place in her heart: Jason Rees, her ex. Her relationship with him had been sheer perfection, but was now as far off and unreachable as it had been flawless. He may be out of sight, but he was far from being out of mind, despite Vuk having done everything in his power to wipe away all thoughts of him from Stella’s mind. But the memory of Jason was so intense, so palpable, it could never just slip away like water off her silky skin.

Vuk strummed the final chords, ending the as yet unfinished melody with a long note. The song came to a close too soon, leaving Stella aching for more. He brushed his fingers through her hair and brought them to rest at the sides of her face. His warm thumb stroked her lips and Stella reopened her eyes.

“Well, kiddo?” He looked deep into her eyes as he held her face.

“That was beautiful,” she replied, nibbling her lower lip.

Vuk shifted forward to kiss her, sighing, wanting to taste every part of her. Stella blossomed under his touch and Vuk kissed her eagerly, but tenderly. He sucked on her lip and thrust his tongue deep into her mouth. Stella threw her arms around his neck, running her fingers through his luscious hair. All other thoughts were obscured as she lost herself in the moment, but then she pulled away, eyes half-closed, and sat on the bed. She blushed, as the irresistible thought of Jason returned to her mind. She tried to turn her brown eyes away from Vuk’s penetrating gaze but it was as if a magnetic force was keeping them locked to his.

Suddenly, his eyes blazed intensely, crackling silently with yellow sparks.

“God, your eyes, it’s like they’re giving off their very own light,” she whispered, nibbling her lip. They shone like the sun, they took her breath away, and a burning desire ripped through her belly.

“From the way you’re looking at them, they must be powerfully bewitching,” he murmured, his eyes never wavering from hers as he rose slowly from the bed to narrow the distance between them.

“Oh my, they’d have that effect on anyone ...” gasped Stella.

Consumed with passion, Vuk held onto her, holding her body close to his. He was gorgeous: broad shoulders, muscular arms, slim hips, sensual, brooding green eyes that shone golden-yellow when his mood changed. Hair tumbling into his face, his features were

squared, like those of a wolf. Indeed, Vuk was a werewolf... “Could be, Stella...but who gives a damn about anyone else, the effect they have on you is the only thing I care about...” his voice hoarse, his eyes lost in hers. He nibbled her ear, bringing his mouth up to gently bite her cheek. He brushed her hair away from her face to kiss her neck, her bare shoulders, breathing in her enchanting perfume.

“Vuk, why are you here?” She felt her whole body quiver, and she blushed again as she lowered her gaze. His hands tightened on her face as he raised it to bring her eyes level to his.

“Do I need a reason to come see you?” His fingers brushed her cheek and he ran his lips over hers. All of a sudden, he got up from the bed, backed away from her without once tearing his eyes from hers, then leapt out of the open window.

“Vuk!” Alarmed, Stella jumped to the window to see him in the garden below. But, suddenly, he bounded from the roof onto the windowsill. He closed his eyes, and when he reopened them the intense green was once again blazing with golden hues.

“So you were worried about me...” He lifted her chin with his hand, looking at her with dark but tender eyes. He bent to kiss her lips before throwing himself backward into the garden. He landed on his feet and ran off down the road, once again taking on the air of a little kid.

Stella turned back to her room and imagined Vuk on the bed, looking at her with his playful eyes and that wily but breathtaking smile. Her heart thumped in her chest and an intense desire once again burned deep inside of her.

“Now I do need a cold shower,” she sighed as she moved away from the window and, thrown by the waves of warmth flooding her body, she stumbled into the bathroom.