



Run Zombie, Run

By Cassie Laelyn

Air burst from my lungs, heaviness squeezed my chest until my ribs buckled under the pressure. I bent over at the waist, bracing my hands on my thighs, trying to suck in vital oxygen.

Sweat trickled down my temple, no doubt smearing the layers of makeup, despite the chill dancing along my spine.

I couldn't do this.

My fingernails dug into my jeans, holding on for dear life as I silently counted to ten, pleading for my heart rate to steady. I wasn't sure whether I'd pass out or vomit. Chances were fifty-fifty.

Closing my eyes, I willed for calm, one second at a time.

When the panic drained into the earth below my feet, I straightened. Shadows surrounded me, fighting a silent battle with the flaming torches and lit jack-o'-lanterns scattered between towering headstones, ancient crypts, and downright creepy burial sites.

Shouts echoed from somewhere behind me. No, not shouts, more like sickening groans.

Zombies.

They were gaining on me.

But I couldn't bring myself to flee. I thought I could come back here, do this again, but...

Crippling pain tore through my heart, and I clawed at my chest.

He would've wanted this...

Run in his memory...

This was his favorite time of the year...

What about me?

I was the one who had to keep living. The one who organized this stupid zombie run exactly twelve months after he disappeared.

I was the one who lost him.

I needed to get out of the race. Wait somewhere quiet to catch my breath until the siren sounded, ending the game. Then, I'd force a brave face at the finish line and say a few words in his honor.

If I could freaking hold it together long enough.

Peering left and right, I spotted the O'Hare family crypt at the end of a narrow path, surrounded by misty fog.

That pressure returned to my chest, tenfold.

Tyler hid in there last year. It was the first place the authorities looked after we noticed he hadn't made it back.

He wasn't there.

All they found was his damn baseball cap.

Maybe inside that crypt, I'd feel closer to him, if only for a few minutes. Maybe it would help me feel a little less crappy about doing this stupid run without him. As though I wasn't disrespecting his memory by upholding the town's annual event.

God, I miss him.

Several pairs of boots crunched the gravel path behind me, and I took off. I sprinted to the crypt and shouldered open the door. Once in, I slammed my back against the closed door and waited for my eyes to adjust to the darkness.

No wonder he hid here last year. Thick stone walls drowned out all sounds of the game outside. I could almost pretend I was somewhere else, somewhere with him. I imagined his rich cypress scent lingering in the air, his rough hands sweeping along my jaw, his tender lips pressing against mine as he claimed my body and soul.

A silent sob quaked through me as the memories arose.

I sank to the cool stone floor, tears burning in my eyes.

This was a stupid idea.

Leaning to one side, I pulled out my cell phone. Fourteen minutes left of the zombie run. Fourteen minutes until I could walk out of this cemetery and never come back.

After a few moments, I peeled myself off the ground and used the light from my phone to explore the crypt. Picture frames lined the walls, I presumed of the O'Hare family buried in here. Further along was an antique oval mirror. Though, instead of reflecting the inside of the crypt, beyond the glass was a...room?

A guy huddled in the far corner.

I leaned in, getting a better look—

His head snapped my way.

I screamed, stumbling back from the glass. My pulse raced, whooshing in my ears.

The guy stood, tentatively at first. When his gaze locked on me, he raced to the mirror

and slammed his palms on the glass.

I opened my mouth to scream, but nothing came out.

Raven black hair, piercing blue eyes.

Tyler.

Tyler was *inside* the mirror. How was that even possible?

He slammed his fist on the glass again, shouting at me, though I heard nothing.

I stared through the mirror at Tyler, as shock, panic and terror ceased my limbs.

Somehow, my brain snapped into action. I tore my hands along the stone wall searching for an opening, a secret door, *anything* to free him.

Nothing.

I clawed at the coffin lids, trying to slide them off, until blood trickled down my hands. They wouldn't budge.

My breath heaved in and out.

I peered back at Tyler, lifting my palm to place it on the glass over his.

I love you, he mouthed.

"Help me." Tears streamed down my cheeks. "Tell me how to free you."

Leave, he mouthed.

"What? No," I screeched. "I'm not leaving without you."

Tyler braced both palms on the glass and leaned closer. His eyes flashed black.

RUN! he shouted at me.

His gaze lowered to the floor as his shoulders shuddered. A prickle scraped along my spine.

Heart lodged firmly in my throat, I backed away.

A swirling fog curled through the mirror, entering the crypt. In seconds, it consumed the entrance, engulfing the door until it no longer existed.

My only way out...gone.

I backed against the opposite wall.

The ominous fog thickened, sliding along the floor, looming above me, surrounding me from every direction. Long, ghostly fingers reached through the darkness, locking my limbs in place.

I screamed again and again, praying someone outside would hear me.

They wouldn't.

Right before the fog swallowed me whole, my gaze drifted to Tyler. His eyes morphed into black soulless pits. His hand reached through the glass, beckoning me to the mirror.

Join me, he mouthed.

The End!

Run Zombie, Run was first published as part of the Wild At Heart PNR Flash Fiction writing group. The theme for October was Spooky Romance.

Join my FB Reader Group ([Cassie's Log Cabin](#)) to read my next flash fiction first!

Run Zombie, Run © 2020 Cassie Laelyn. All rights reserved.