

*This story was written in response to a Daily Themes assignment to "create a character by using a dominant or structural metaphor".*

A cemetery is both living and dead. On the outside it is peaceful and living and beautiful. It is usually neatly and exactly trimmed and arranged. It bears markers, rather than scars, of all of the deaths that lie within it. But dead bodies are the reason for its existence. Marie was like a typical cemetery. She was neither old nor young but that indeterminate age which comes between. She had wrinkles finely etched in her fair skin from laughing and smiling and wondering and thinking and crying and frowning and wincing and all the other emotions that move the face. But these emotions, while they played on her surface, did not reach Marie any more as she went on living and doing her job and coming home to her new apartment and taking care of her body and her looks and talking to her friends. Her inside was taken up with the memories of her life before. Before the fire. Before the loss. Before the deaths. Before the "new start" that was really a thin layer of soil placed over her memories. Then she had been as happy or sad as anyone else. Then she had had a husband who she loved quietly, three children beautiful to their mother's eye, a mangy dog of indeterminate heritage, a squawking blue parakeet and a checkered guinea pig. Then she had had a house filled with the personalities of all of those who lived within. There had been photo albums and ticket stubs and clothes left from the sixties and seventies and eighties and bronzed baby shoes and the children's toys and first hair clippings and baby teeth and report cards and the love letters that her husband had sent her and her engagement ring and the silly cards he bought her for their anniversary. There had been all of the things both that they had strived to own and that they had acquired randomly. There had been all of the things that they had saved because they might have been useful. In short, there had been everything and everyone who made up her life. When it burned nothing except for a few charred remains survived to remind her of any of it. The only things that lingered were her own memories. She did not dare discard any of them or acquire new ones which would nudge out the others for fear of letting her loved ones perish from memory. So, like the bodies in a cemetery, Marie's memories were in immutable rows in her mind and they would never be disinterred, only buried again with Marie.

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