

The first crash of thunder silenced the crowd, like a conductor's baton freezing an orchestra mid-note. Jagged lightning twitched across the sky, illuminating thirteen thousand spellbound faces in unison. Eva felt her heart hammering against her ribcage as the metallic taste of fear coated her tongue like a copper coin. Another streak of lightning forked the dark silhouetted sky. It illuminated the stadium like a photographer's flash, casting harsh shadows beneath wide eyes and parted lips. Rain pelted down to the grass, as if it were performing a death march, each contact a countdown to the unyielding vocations of sin...

Eva's breath came in short, sharp gasps, that choked on the acrid-drunk raindrops. She clutched her ticket until its edges crumpled between her white knuckled fingers. The air crackled with electricity, with anticipation. What secrets did this tempest herald?

Droplets drummed a syncopated rhythm against the metal railings as Eva descended toward the pitch, each step conveying the burden of loss and longing. The stadium's floodlights sputtered and surged, illuminating her path in shattered fragments. Three years ago, to this day, they had sat together in this very stadium. His voice resonated in her mind, a whisper against the storm's growl: "When thunder speaks, listen carefully." The centre of the pitch gleamed, a brunette mirror reflecting the fractured sky. While thousands huddled beneath shelter, Eva stood exposed to the elements' fury.

She unfolded the ticket fully, revealing coordinates hidden beneath the crease. Her heart quickened with recognition. The storm's voice started to crescendo around her like an orchestra reaching its finale. She knelt and pressed her palm against the sodden grass. Here, beneath this precise spot, something awaited her—something her father had known she would one day be ready to find. Her fingers excavated the softened earth; mud blemished her manicured nails. What secret could be worth this eccentric pilgrimage?

The rain's steady patter provided percussion for her racing thoughts. Six inches down, her fingertips grazed against something solid. A thrill of anticipation rippled through her body like a brush through a crystal lake as she unearthed a diminished metal box, its surface inscribed with her initials. The storm above raged with uncontrolled ferocity, while Eva's movements became meticulous, precise. The box's lid protested with a tarnished groan. Inside lay a compass, glistening like a captured star. Eva's breath paused as she recognised her father's prized possession — the very instrument that had guided him through myriad explorations. Attached was a waterproof note: "True north isn't always where the indicator points." Her fingers trembled as she caressed the frigid metal. The storm began to subside, yet within Eva's chest, a new tempest stirred. She clutched the compass to her heart, tears mingling with raindrops on her cheeks.

And as she ascended the steps of the stadium, the now-flawless day simply bore a smile and whispered of its latest secrets it would divulge.

