

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 upturned faces, all spellbound by the storm. 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, choking on the acrid raindrops. She clutched her ticket until its edges crumpled between her white knuckled fingers. The air crackled with charged electricity. 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 brown mirror reflecting the fractured sky. While thousands huddled beneath shelter, Eva stood exposed to the elements' fury.

She unfolded the ticket fully, remembering her father's cryptic words about hidden messages, and discovered coordinates 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. Eva unearthed a tarnished 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 blemished 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.

As she ascended the stadium steps, clutching the compass to her chest, the now-clear day seemed to smile, promising to reveal more secrets in the days ahead.