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*B* L A C K  
*F* E A T H E R S



# **Black Feathers**

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# I

## *Faith*

My heart was in my throat and I feared he might hear it.

I kept my head lowered, but I could hear his every step towards me echoing. He was getting increasingly closer.

I could almost feel the warmth of his presence. It was as if the air around me had changed, becoming more dense and burning.

Finally, the sound of his footsteps ceased.

He was here, and the moment had arrived. *That* moment. Just what I had been expecting for a year.

I tried to inhale but felt my lungs contract, as if afraid to breathe the same air as the newcomer.

I swallowed hard and finally found the courage to look up and lose myself in his stunning green eyes, clouded by a powerful, dark yearning.

I stifled a gasp when I realised, that he too was staring at me.

And the way he stared at me... the way I had always longed for.

I felt completely lost, trapped by those eyes nailing and hypnotizing me.

This time I couldn't look away at the fourth second, like I always did.

No, this time I just stood there, my heart exploding in my chest and my hands clenched behind my back, unable to move.

When his scent reached my lungs, I felt like I lost contact with reality.

He had never been that close to me and at that moment all it would have taken was a slightly deeper breath to brush his shirt with my chest.

I was breathless and waited.

Motionless.

Unable to move a muscle or even breathe or think.

I was intoxicated by that forbidden closeness that frightened me and that I longed for at the same time, ever since my heart had begun to beat for him many years before.

Slowly he reached out his arm and brushed my cheek with the back of his hand.

I had to make a considerable effort not to rub myself against him like a cat

looking for a cuddle.

I forced myself to remain still.

I didn't know why, but something was screaming at me that I had better not move or run away, something that made me clench my sweaty palms around a dagger I had hidden behind my back.

I felt the blade between my fingers.

I had no idea why I was holding that weapon, but I was very certain that he absolutely must not know.

I squeezed my fingers even harder until they hurt, I felt the blood drip onto the golden hilt and fall to the ground, but I felt no pain.

The closeness of the one I had longed for all my life distracted me completely, and when I saw him leaning over me, eliminating the distance between us, my mind became completely blank.

I felt myself magnetized and unknowingly swayed towards him until I felt his lips against mine.

A kiss.

That was all I desired.

I let his mouth taste me and then opened it to him.

«Faith,» he whispered, before entwining his fingers in my hair and pulling me towards him as if he wanted to suck me in.

I let myself completely surrender to that unknown happiness that I had always diffidently kept away from me.

Another step and our bodies adhered perfectly, like two halves of one perfect whole.

«Patrick,» I murmured softly, intoxicated by his scent so masculine and sensual, as he took possession of my mouth again.

Transported by that pleasure that made me tense and languish, I leaned into him and began to respond with increasing passion and voracity to that long-awaited kiss.

His arms clasped me to him and I felt my breasts push against his broad, hard chest, his right leg making space between mine.

I wanted to embrace him and touch him too but I couldn't decide to let go of the dagger.

Our breaths mingled, our lips began a sensual and erotic battle that excited me to death, his hands sliding along my blond hair, loose on my back, causing hot, electric shivers all over my body, but when I felt him

approaching the dagger, I was startled and suddenly a deafening noise broke the spell.

«Patrick, no!» I moaned, as he pulled away from me.

«Faith, you didn't have to do that!» he raged instantly, looking at me with an almost vicious hatred.

«Patrick, I...», I tried to say, though I didn't even know what. I only wished he would stop and return to kissing me, but the noise was getting louder and louder, and no matter how much I screamed his name, I felt I had now lost him.

«Pattifox!», I shouted desperately one last time, calling him as I used to, but he suddenly disappeared like a haze in the sun.

Suddenly everything changed.

I woke up.

I blinked my eyes repeatedly, looking for Patrick, but I found myself in my room, in my bed, and in front of me was my mother's rapturous face staring at me with her big green eyes, already made up with abundant eyeliner and golden eye shadow.

«Pattifox, huh? You dreamed of him, didn't you?» she squeaked excitedly, going to turn off my alarm clock.

*That's what that sound was in the dream! Damn alarm clock!*

«No,» I huffed irritated by my mother's intrusiveness. «How many times do I have to tell you I don't want you coming into my room without knocking?»

«Number one: I'm your mother, Faith! Number two: I knocked, but you were asleep! Number three: I had come to turn off that infernal alarm clock you insist on using to get up in the morning. Number four: how was Pattifox? I heard you calling him. It's amazing that you still dream about him even though it's been so many years since you went to school together. You were only ten years old and...»

«Mother! That's my business. Mine was just a dream,» I downplayed what was an annual date I'd had since the age of ten, when Patrick had given me

a brief, gentle fleeting kiss on the mouth before I'd run away in embarrassment.

Too bad I was so young and stupid back then.

Today, like hell I would have run away! On the contrary!

«I wonder what happened to that child... I don't even remember him anymore. Did you see him again after primary school?»

«No,» I lied again. If only she had known that two hours later I would have had dear Patrick himself three metres away, two desks behind me, she would never have left me alone again.

«In my opinion, it is because of this Pattifox that you are still a virgin.»

«Mother!» I scolded her shocked.

«Faith, by your age I had already done everything, whereas you haven't even kissed a boy. A real boy, I mean, not a baby.»

«I'm not like you,» I noted with mild disappointment emanating from my voice.

«And that's exactly what I cannot explain. It's certainly not because of your physical appearance, because I made you well. My genes were passed on correctly. Faith, you are beautiful,» she told me softly, though soon afterwards she began to grumble. «Of course if you dressed a little better and started putting on your make-up carefully...»

«I'm not interested in such things.»

«However, you do have beautiful skin, no doubt about it,» she continued without considering me, starting to rummage through my wardrobe and pulling out the most low-cut, short, colourful and trashy clothes I owned. All gifts from her, of course. «Maybe your problem lies in the look. You

have so many great clothes, look, but you insist on wearing those colourless obscenities.»

«They are not colourless. They are black and white.»

«Exactly, colourless. You're as boring as a printed book without pictures.»

«I like books.»

«Boring, too. Not to mention they take up a lot of space.»

«Tell me the truth, you adopted me, didn't you?»

«No, darling. You are my daughter. When I gave birth to you, I had to get stitches because of your big head and...»

«Mom, please, I'm going to throw up now.»

«You'd better get ready. The bus is coming in half an hour and you haven't had breakfast yet.»

Without wasting any time, I jumped out of bed and ran to take a quick shower and get dressed in black skinny jeans and a white T-shirt with black *Keep Calm and Carry On* written on it.

Only the red All-Stars gave me a splash of colour. Just the way I liked it.

I hurried back to my room and, noticing my mother intent on following her Pilates video course in the living room, I fled towards my secret pantry, hidden behind books, and grabbed two dark chocolate and hazelnut bars.

I ate them voraciously, hoping not to get caught.

Then I slipped the empty wrapper into the pocket of my jeans and went out.

«Faith,» my mother called back, seeing me running towards the exit. «Your breakfast! I made you the herbal draining tea you like so much with two slices of pineapple! Today is our anti-cellulite detox day!»

«I'm sorry, but I have to go or I'll miss the bus. See you tonight,» I waved her off, happy to have skipped one of her usual absurd and disgusting breakfasts.

When I reached the bus stop, I emptied my pockets of evidence of my betrayal of my mother's sacred detox day and waited.

After five minutes the public transport arrived.

I got on and immediately went to be near Spencer.

«S,» I called to alert her of my arrival and to clear the space next to her, which she always occupied with her backpack until my stop.

«Faith, I'm in deep shit,» she blurted instantly, without looking up from her history notes.

«Didn't you study?»

«I've been hypnotized in front of the TV watching reruns of season five of

*Gossip Girl.*»

«S, if you don't make up the grade from last time, your parents will ground you once more and we won't be able to see each other for a long time,» I reminded her.

«I know, please don't remind me. I'm already agitated on my own,» she quickly snapped, turning back to her studies.

I sat down next to her and left her alone, even though I really wanted to tell her about my dream right away.

Spencer was the only friend I had and although she was terrible at history, when it came to *my stories* she always remembered everything and knew that every year I had that dream.

She was the only one I could confide in and feel safe from gossip, unlike my mother who, having spent my childhood rummaging through my secret diaries and prying into my business, would then use that information as new gossip to tell the clients at the beauty parlour where she worked or as an ice-breaker when she was nervous in front of someone.

Because of her, I had blown my adolescence as a paranoid little girl, always looking for some new hiding place for my secret diaries or investigating how much she knew about my business.

Luckily, three years earlier, Spencer had moved with her family to Columbus and finally, after so many years of loneliness, I had found a friend.

The memory of that feeling of isolation brought a knot to my throat for a moment.

How had I gone from a sociable child full of friends to an insecure, lonely, introverted teenager?

I didn't know.

In primary school, I was a little earthquake. I played and studied with everyone.

Patrick was my best friend, and we were always together, but then he had to change foster families and was forced to move to another town.

I still remember the day he left school.

He had come up to me and kissed me in front of all our companions.

I had been so embarrassed and had pushed him away, then ran away like a coward.

I couldn't remember the reason for the way I behaved. I had been stupid, foolish, childish, immature and frightened by that heart that had started



beating so hard I could feel it in my throat. Moreover, I was angry because at the time I had not yet realised that the decision to leave was not his fault. I had only ever seen Patrick again in high school after more than three years apart.

He had returned to Columbus with a new, very wealthy family, but he was no longer the same.

I wasn't the same either. After his departure, I had isolated myself. I had stopped going out and spent hours painting at home alone.

And now, after four years, we were in the last year of high school, but there had never been an exchange of greetings or anything between us.

Nothing.

I had tried to approach him at first, but he had treated me coldly, telling me he didn't know me.

I had felt so humiliated and hurt that after that episode as a result I had not dared to speak to him again.

However, I continued to watch him from a distance and followed him until I fell in love with him.

*Three seconds.* That was the time limit I gave myself before averting my gaze, so as not to risk being caught or arouse suspicion.

Three short but intense seconds in which I could lose myself in admiring the blond curls of his hair that fell to the sides of his face, his slightly tanned skin, his ever perfect face, his green eyes with amber tones that lit up his gaze in a seductive and mesmerising way.

On lucky days, I could even lose myself in his perfume and aftershave, which I had discovered was from the *Calvin Klein* line, after spending weeks in the perfume department of the mall.

I had even bought it but had never dared to wear it to school.

I only wore it at night when I went to sleep and longed to dream about him.

And then there were the super-lucky days, when he would show up shirtless, maybe after a basketball practice.

The intense physical activity to obtain a prestigious position at *Columbia University* the following year had transformed his body into a machine of

perfectly sculpted muscles, endowed with feline agility with which he moved and eluded his opponents during games.

He was the best, and I wasn't surprised two years earlier when he was named team captain.

He had deserved it.

Too bad all that popularity had brought with it floods of girls ready to bed him, triggering my jealousy nestled in the depths of my soul.

Fortunately, after all those years I had become good at hiding my feelings and feigning indifference.

But at what price?

I didn't want to think about it.

It was too painful.

## II

### *Faith*

We had just entered *St-George High School* when my mother texted me on my mobile phone: «You forgot to put on red nail polish to match your filthy gym shoes. I always have to remind you of everything! xoxoxo Mum.»

Always the same old story.

Why couldn't she limit her beautician's advice to her clients instead of torturing me?

Without answering, I turned off my phone and walked towards the history room, where I found Patrick surrounded by cheerleaders and other basketball players discussing the upcoming away game.

As usual, I didn't dare lay eyes on him for more than three seconds.

I didn't want anyone to notice my interest in him.

Besides, after years, it only took me a few moments to notice his slightly wavy blond hair surrounding his face with that ever so slightly mysterious and shadowy air, beneath the bravado and arrogance he often displayed in front of others.

Character-wise Patrick had changed a lot since primary school, but physically he was still good looking and even more handsome.

As usual, he was surrounded by his two best friends and basketball buddies, Kyle and Red, and the trio of the coolest cheerleaders in school.

Not one single guy would do anything to attract the attention of Regina, Cheyenne and Mila.

A rumour was going around that Regina and Patrick were having an affair, but that their constant cheating led to temporary break-ups lasting a few weeks.

Ignored by everyone (as always), I entered the classroom and walked towards my desk, followed by Spencer.

I hid my mobile phone in my rucksack so that it wouldn't end up in clutches of Professor Greyton, as he was in the habit of confiscating mobile phones

and, as punishment for chatting or phoning during his class hours, he enjoyed reading aloud in class the text messages they contained.

As such, Mary Brosbee had literally lost face the previous year, as everyone had learned that she had slept with her 12th grade cousin Alice's boyfriend.

«Let's see who am I questioning today,» the professor announced, entering the classroom and drawing the attention of everyone present.

With their hearts in their throats, everyone stared at the teacher's index finger scrolling up and down the list.

Spencer looked like she was about to faint.

Everyone was anxious except me, since I had been questioned just four days before, and Patrick. He was never worried about interrogations, as if any teacher would have the audacity to call him to the blackboard without first making sure he had studied.

«Matt Doregan and Susan Farton,» Greyton proclaimed, pointing his gaze wickedly at the two unfortunates of the day.

«To everyone else, I strongly recommend following the questions and taking notes. Those, on the other hand, who think they already know everything and can afford half an hour of sleep or idle chatter, can come here with Doregan and Farton. I'll be happy to ask them a few questions,»

warned the teacher who hated that his students might consider the time he devoted to questions as entertainment.

We all opened the book to the last chapter we had covered in class and on which the questioning was taking place. With pencil in hand, we began to pretend to take notes with an air of boredom.

«I had a dream of him again,» I wrote in the margin of the book. I gave Spencer sitting next to me an imperceptible nudge and, without taking my eyes off the book, indicated for her to read my message.

«Who?» she replied beside my note.

«Patrick,» I wrote in large letters.

Spencer smiled happily at me.

«You guys kissed again this time?»

With pleasure, I noticed that she never forgot what I was telling her.

«Yes! It was wonderful as always!», I quickly wrote excitedly, edging the message with stylised little men and hearts.

«Too bad it's only a dream!», Spencer replied.

It was true, but that was enough for me for today.

We couldn't write any more, as both Susan and Matt admitted they hadn't studied and the professor immediately interrupted the questioning to resume the Cold War lecture.

However, I was in no mood to listen to him, so I filled the page with little hearts with the initials P.S., Patrick Starfox, inside.

From time to time I cast a few glances towards him, who was standing slightly to the left behind me and a little over two metres away.

On the third glance, I realised that he was also staring at me.

He was looking at me with an indecipherable gaze.

I hinted at a smile, but he remained unperturbed in his breathtaking beauty, totally indifferent as if I were invisible in his eyes.

I held back a huff of disappointment.

With my heart beating wildly, I returned my gaze to the history book and allowed myself to be overwhelmed by the memory of that morning's dream, my only refuge of love that Patrick could never ruin with his icy aloofness.

So I spent the whole lesson daydreaming, far from what school reality held in store for me: zero boys, zero heart-stopping excitement, zero

adventures....

Luckily it was Saturday that day, the day when classes were only held in the morning, so in the afternoon, at the mall, I was distracted by Spencer looking for the DVD box set of the latest season of *Gossip Girl*, my best friend's obsession.

## *Patrick*

That day, the electricity that ran through my whole body every time she laid eyes on me was more frequent than usual.

Was it possible she knew what had happened that night?

*No, it's impossible.*

*And yet...*

I shook my head nervously.

Thinking about her didn't make me feel good. Those faint but intense electrostatic discharges, which managed to penetrate that dense dark cloud that constantly enveloped me, were always able to strike me to my soul or what was left of it.

It was a strange feeling, capable of unsettling me, disconnecting me from reality, making me feel alive and luminous.

I would never have admitted to craving those moments like air.

I would never have accepted the fact that, although years had passed, she still managed to have that effect on me, destabilising me.

It was that very thing that upset me so much: she made me feel alive, made the beating of my heart rumble in my ears.

I shouldn't have, but the truth was that I longed for those electric shocks with the same intensity as trying to breathe after being underwater too long.

Those were the only moments when I felt the heaviness and density of the black shadow surrounding my lost soul.

Her eyes on me were like a glimpse of light and clear, clean air.

They were moments lasting a mere three seconds and I savoured them all, enjoying them thoroughly, even though I had never reciprocated by looking

at her in return.

There was no need because I could *feel* her inside me.

Fortunately, by then I had learnt to maintain a certain detachment, at least in appearance, and no one could ever have read on my face the turmoil stirring my insides.

That day, in particular, perhaps due to the circumstances, that electricity had become so intense that I violated rule number one: never look her in the eye.

I shouldn't have, I knew that very well.

Losing myself in those honey-tinged brown eyes was one of the things I had sworn never to do.

However, nothing managed to stop me, and when I saw her hint of a smile and a greeting, I had to make a huge effort to remain impassive and remember who I had in front of me: she who would soon pay for all the evil I had received.

It was she who had given origin and form to every cell of the darkness that surrounded my heart.

My soul was now lost, but when the time was right, I would commit myself so that hers would be dragged down with mine.

For now, I could be content, enjoying the solitude I had thrown her into, making a clean slate around her.

I breathed deeply, enjoying the result of my work, slightly disturbed by the presence of Spencer, the only person who had escaped my domination, probably because she had not been present eight years before when everything had started.

However, I had decided to leave her alone. I had more to think about than Faith and her friend.

There was also *him*.

And I couldn't control that, only destroy it.

I was just waiting for the right opportunity.

### III

#### *Faith*

That evening, when I got home, I found myself in the middle of my mother's *Pre-Date Delirium* with *Mr. Big*.

«Faith, I don't know what to wear! Help me!»

«No way! We have different tastes and you criticise my every choice.»

«You're right, but I'm desperate. It's not like I can give an impression of being a slob. Mister Big is taking me to a fancy club tonight.»

«Deal with it.»

«Faith! I am your mother! It's your sacred duty to help your poor, lonely mother find a man before she ends up in a nursing home full of old people with seborrhea.»

«The lengths you go to! Meanwhile, I would like to know who this Mr Big is. Since you are not Carrie Bradshaw and this is not *Sex and The City*, I would appreciate it immensely if you would stop calling him that and tell me his name,» I blurted out furiously. I still hadn't forgiven her for having only found out about her affair three weeks earlier, when in fact that affair had already been going on for seven months.

«I kept it a secret to give him that sense of the forbidden that makes me so aroused,» she had justified herself in the face of my disappointment as if



she were a teenager struggling with her first crush to keep a secret from mum and dad.

It had been pointless arguing with her.

«Simon,» my mother huffed in reply, bringing me back to the present.

«And does he have a last name, this Simon?», I continued irritated.

«Randolph. So many questions, Faith! You really are a busybody!»

«A busybody me? Are you kidding me? Shall we talk about how many times I caught you going through my secret diaries and reading my business?», I exploded.

«I did it to protect you.»

«From what?»

«From yourself. You never told me anything and I had feared you had started doing drugs or...»

«At eight years old?»

«Don't judge me and help me!» she quickly tried to change the subject, as her stubborn vitriolic climbing wasn't working.

«Put on the black satin dress with the lace hem,» I relented.

«But is it possible you can only recommend black stuff? Faith, you have issues. This dark side of you worries me. Is there something you want to tell me? You know you can confide in me. I always tell you everything.»

«Cut it out!», I shouted exhausted, fleeing to my room in front of the computer.

«I get it, you're just jealous because I have a boyfriend and you don't,» my mother slipped in, entering my room without knocking.

«Absolutely not,» I lied. In reality, I was shocked that my mother had a richer and more stimulating love life than I did.

«So you're jealous for fear of having the attention taken away from you and turned to him,» she tried again.

«You're wrong. I'm happy, but I wish at least this time it would be the right one. You have terrible taste in men.»

«That's not true. It's you who are too selective and rigid.»

«Do you think I could like this Simon?»

«Why do you ask?»

«Maybe because you talk little about him to 'increase your sense of the forbidden' and you haven't introduced me to him yet?»

«I just want him to be the one before I let you meet him, that's all.»

«OK, then be safe and remember to take your parachute with you,» I

reminded her as I always did.

«For falls from the seventh heaven of love?»

«Exactly.»

«My God, how did I raise such a cynical daughter!» she grumbled before kissing me and rushing to her appointment, dressed in the black dress I had recommended.

The next morning I got up at six o'clock, my favourite time.

It was dawn and the sky was still slightly dark.

My mother had only returned four hours earlier and was sleeping, so I dressed in my usual jogging suit and went for a run.

Strolling through the empty, silent, semi-dark streets on a Sunday was the most relaxing part of the week.

Those two hours I devoted to exercise every week were the only time I could disconnect from my life.

But not only that.

That was the only time I could see Patrick outside of school.

The only time when I was no longer an invisible schoolmate, but someone worthy of at least saying hello.

As usual, I started with a brisk walk, then a light jog and a final sprint in the last two kilometres.

When I arrived at *Wildwood Park* it was almost seven in the morning.

Exhausted from the long run, I stretched out on the same bench I always used which was now my regular stop every time I arrived at my destination.

I recovered my breath and waited.

At seven o'clock, like a Swiss watch, Patrick arrived with his usual headphones in his ears and his shirt all sweaty from the long run.

Unlike me, when he arrived at the park he did not stop for a break but always walked straight ahead of me.

I waved to him, as I knew he had music playing loudly in his ears and would never hear me.

He, as always, answered me with a short «hello».

And there ended my romantic, heart-stopping scene of the week!

That was it.

No candlelit dinners or movie nights with him groping me in the back of the theatre.

No, that was all I had: a greeting and then my eyes on his back before I lost

his image among the trees in the park.

I huffed in distress at my inability to get anything more out of life.

I was tired of telling myself that I was already lucky to have that 'hello' since I had started jogging two years earlier and met Patrick that one day.

Only the hands of fate had made it so that in that instant he lost his iPod, so I found myself chasing after him to give it back.

It had been very quick, but I had managed to catch up with him and return it to him.

I had tried to break the ice, but he had replied with an incomprehensible mumble followed by a quick and aseptic 'thank you', then grabbed the iPod out of my hand with such a quick snap that I couldn't even feel the warmth of his skin on mine.

At the next time, the 'hello' had come, but it had quickly become clear that this was a time for sport and solitude, not for chatting with yours truly, Miss Invisibility. And I could forget that things would change between us at school.

How many times had I found myself wanting to shout at him, to let him know I existed, that maybe we could share something like the music on his iPod, but I had never succeeded. Every time, a lump would form in my throat and I would stand paralysed staring at him, regretting the missed opportunity. However, the way he always treated me was unmistakable: Patrick didn't really get me. He wasn't interested in me at all and had no intention of interacting with me.

Any chance of becoming friends again was closed to me. Forever.

I had lost him years before, and that knowledge made me suffer greatly.

I had thought several times about leaving that park and going to *Greystone Park*, which was larger and always full of people, but the mere idea of never seeing Patrick again, who by some will of fate was jogging at the same time as me, depressed me too much.

No, I'd rather suffer like a poor fool than never see him again and lose that small, weak and silly bond that had been created between us in the park on a Sunday morning, both of us dressed in our simple overalls and sweating after such physical exertion.

By now I was not even ashamed of my always unkempt appearance. I had realised over time that I could be dressed in rags or in a haute couture

Chanel suit, but it made no difference to him. I always remained a nobody in his eyes.

I didn't know how long I was immersed in my memories, but I revived as soon as I saw Patrick walking back.

He walked past me. He seemed surprised to see me again. Normally, I always returned home after seeing him pass.

He nodded to me as a greeting and continued on.

Prompted by my thoughts, I started to follow him at a safe distance.

Unfortunately, however, he was much faster and better trained than me, so as we started to enter the chicest part of town, I found myself stopping to catch my breath.

I had never found out where he lived, but I was too tired at the time to find out, so I set off for home.

I was several kilometres away and, when I arrived, I was almost in tears from the blisters on my feet and the pain in my legs.

«Where have you been?» my mother immediately pounced on me, putting a spinach, celery and apple juice in my hand.

«I lost track of time,» I justified myself.

«You could have warned me. I woke up and you weren't there. I thought you'd been kidnapped.»

«How tragic you are!»

«You know I still haven't recovered since you took me to the cinema to see *Split*. It's your fault.»

«No, it's Spencer's fault for getting grounded by her parents the day before and you felt like you had to take her place as if I asked you to.»

«You never take me to the movies,» she began to whine like a wayward child.

«Why don't you ask your Mr Big?»

«You're right! I'll go ask him right now,» she recovered enthusiastically, grabbing her mobile phone and running to her room to phone him. The

same adolescent attitude I should have had, but instead I always got the part of a mature and responsible person.

## *Patrick*

*Destiny exists, but always be careful what you wish for because he may listen to you and change his course to realise your dream. However, this does not always lead to what you really desire deep inside.*

That was one of the first teachings of my guide when I started my transformation process.

Every Sunday morning when I arrived at *Wildwood Park*, those words always came back to me.

I met Faith there punctually and wondered each time if fate had changed its course at the behest of one of us.

I would never have admitted even to myself that I had at least sometimes thought about how much I wanted to form a bond with her.

However, that had formed without searching for it.

It only took that small, insignificant oversight at the right time and in the right place to bring me into contact with her.

Every time, I always ended up wondering why I gave so much thought to it.

The truth was that I couldn't get enough of that moment.

She was so beautiful that I didn't even notice those horrible jogging suits she always wore.

Faith couldn't perceive the electric shock that ran through me whenever I was in her presence and the one I received in the park when I returned, even if for a measly millisecond, her gaze and response to her greeting: it was so strong and intense that it felt like a pure adrenaline shot.

Only my strong determination had helped me not to stop or dwell on those eyes that were always sweet and excited.

I had repeatedly read in that look the desire to talk to me, to stop my run or to follow me, but I had always systematically ignored it, accelerating my run as if I were running away from her and from everything that made me feel her presence.

When I passed her in the park, I always dragged those feelings over me. It was like being covered in a magic powder that stuck to me and wouldn't let

go.

Even my mentor had noticed this with extreme disappointment.

That is why I decided to lengthen my run instead of going straight home, despite the tiredness and pain in my legs.

Only when I no longer felt that electrostatic tickle on my skin and in my stomach did I return home.

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