

Ed

remembered

those painful

times, when he

thought that he

might never kiss

Gaia Moore

Explaining

Reuniting

Gaia Moore turned on Old Oak Street and anticipated the moment that she had built up all the way to Cherry Hill, New Jersey. There was no turning back now, and even if she had the guts to shift to reverse and get back on Route 41, she didn't want to. This was what she wanted to do; this was something she needed to do, because if she didn't re-connect with her father then there was no way life could ever even get close to normal. The street started to get dirty, and before you knew it was no longer a road but a path, she had driven into a forest full of two feet-apart trees. She had a GPS system in her car, but her GPS was misleading her, she had driven for two miles now and she had reached her location, there was supposed to be a house in front of her but there wasn't, instead the path ended by the closing in of trees.

Gaia took a moment to think, this was a perfect place for her father to lay low, the wilderness. As far as she could remember her father wasn't the type to camp and go hunting, so she didn't know why he was hiding out in the woods. But she kept thinking and concluded that her father had to be around here somewhere if agent Rodriguez said so, obviously she had to hike the rest of the way until she found something at least. The closing of the trees was no accident, those trees were fifty years old and obviously somebody had built a house nearby. If someone had built a house nearby they obviously wanted to be left alone, there was no way for anyone to receive mail, or for a mail man to even come by, or for cable or electric lines to come by.

She figured she had to park her car there and she walk the rest of the way, she glanced at her backseat and grabbed a first-aid pack and slung it over her shoulder, she realized that the shoes she was wearing were not meant to be used for hiking. They were cop shoes, they had a small heel, if she had any intentions of running, sprinting, chasing, or physical activity, the shoes will allow it.

Of course only city cops would wear them so level ground was necessary for the correct function to work, they were not intended for uneven dirt. Gaia turned around and looked at her car, this was it, she was either going or leaving, but as she turned her head something caught her eye, there was a line under her car, as if there were a straight crack in the ground. She dropped her backpack and walked over to it, it was firm, but as she tapped the ground and stomped she realized that there was something under the ground. Before she knew what she was doing she got in her car and moved the car back until she could see the crack on the ground.

She examined a little sprout of grass and pulled, the hatch was too heavy for her to open it all the way back, there has to be a way for a single person to do it. So as she looked around she spotted two perfectly crafted sticks that would easily hold the hatch open, so she grabbed one and pushed the hatch up and tucked the stick under a perfect match of a hole. She grabbed the other stick and placed it under its own corresponding hole, finally she looked into the hole, it was very dark but as she put one foot inside a light turned on and she saw an F-150 planted inside.

So this was simply a garage, if her father ever needed to go out he would simply jump in here. This was no secret lair, just a garage, she would have preferred if this was the secret lair so she could sit back and relax. Instead she walked out and closed the hatch, knowing that a hike was still ahead.

She grabbed the back pack again and began to walk; there was nothing but trees, trees and more trees. She had a brief thought the movie *The Blair Witch Project*, it certainly was fitting, but she knew that movie had been a fake, even if for whatever reason the events that took place were actually real, she didn't believe in magic, she wasn't even sure she believed in god, regardless, **she didn't feel fear**. The sun was going to go down soon, half an hour at least...

Before she knew it half an hour came and went, and she was walking in near dusk.

She looked in her backpack and had to decide between a flashlight, and night-vision goggles, since she had always been the gadget type, she chose the goggles. She did like being inconspicuous, unexpected, pretty much invisible. She knew that she must look a little funny, wearing a back pack in her business suit, while wearing night-vision goggles to boot. She began to think of taking off her shoes and walking barefoot before she saw bright white lights in her goggles; she slipped them off and found herself staring into a small cabin, it had a chimney with smoke coming out.

She stopped, now or never.

“Freeze.” It was her father's voice.

“Dad?” She asked, knowing quite clearly it was him.

“Gaia!” Her dad sounded surprised and she turned to see him, he was standing in blue jeans and a red sweater, but with a gun in his hands, and even though it was dark she could still see her father's blue eyes staring at her, with a startled but happy expression.

She stepped forward and hugged him pushing the gun aside, it was the right thing to do, she had grown up a lot and she was no longer angry at her feelings, she now realized that she missed her father and she needed to express it. Then her father wrapped his arms around her and they stood there in the dark, in a forest hugging each other.

“Wait,” Her father drew back, “What was the name of the mouse you had as a pet?”

Gaia blinked before saying, “Jonathon.” He cracked a small smile and pulled her in for another hug.

“I've missed you so much,” She found herself saying.

“I've missed you too,” her father said as he kissed her forehead.

“I thought you were—you know,” Her father said in an attempt of an apology.

“No, it's okay,” She said to him and looked up at him.

“Come on, come inside,” Her father said and they both walked into the cabin.

It was homey, surprisingly modern but it would remind anyone of home.

“You, you look like a cop,” Her father said with a smile.

“Thanks,” She said and smiled back.

“I didn’t expect you,” Her father said and then frowned, “Of course there’s no way I would have been able to expect you, but all the same I’m glad you’re here.”

“Thanks Dad, I just, I needed someone, I’m on vacation right now,” She said to him.

“Let’s go into the kitchen, I’ll make some hot chocolate while we talk,” Her father said and they hurried into his warm kitchen.

“So tell me, how’s the FBI treating you? I get the feeling you’ve managed to solve a big case which has promoted you to an agent,” Her father said with a laugh. But even though her father was trying to sound cheery, she knew that there was a lot to make up for.

“Well yes, I solved a huge case actually,” She said, “But it wasn’t without mistakes, I still managed to screw up... I put someone else’s life at risk and in return for my recklessness and my irresponsibility, that person is dead.”

“I don’t think I fell in love, but I found myself intimate with someone, and I let my feelings get involved with what I was doing.” Before Gaia knew it she spilled every detail about the case, about how she had felt betrayed by Catherine, and how she had gotten Will involved with everything. She told him about how she had disobeyed orders and about how she had risked not only her life, but many people at once.

“Gaia,” Her father stopped her rambling.

“Gaia, there’s nothing I can say that will make you feel better. There’s no experience I can share that will make things right, but I will help you face reality, we make our choices, and we must live with them,” Her father said and looked at her straight in the eyes. She nodded and stared at her hands, he was right; she had to live with her decisions even if she did feel like complete shit, it was something she had to endure.

They sat for a while in silence, and they both knew that she had realized what life held, and what it would bring. The silence was a little comforting, because both of them were in complete understanding. Gaia found it inevitable, she began to realize that her father’s destiny was also hers; she had been born without a fear gene which would be an advantage in her life.

“Dad, I came to you because ironically, you’re the best person in the world that could possibly understand what I’m going through,” She stopped to take a deep breath. “But for my whole life you were the last I would ever think of, but now that I have a better perspective of life, thanks.”

“I know Gaia,” Her father said with a small smile. “Don’t you wish I would have been a computer salesman instead?” Her father’s eyes twinkled and he laughed. “Maybe if Oliver and I would have grown up to be something else, we would have a normal life. But I think that we were destined to do this, I think I was destined to be born a twin, I think I was destined to work at the CIA, and I also think that I was destined to have a daughter that could not feel fear. And I think that like me, you know that this job is the only thing that will feel right.”

They both paused again, back when they had encounters; they had been uncomfortable and full of awkward silences, but at that very moment they felt natural, maybe this was what the FBI meant about normal life. Maybe this was what Americans all around the country did; they just sit together because it’s comfortable.

“So how did you end up here?” She asked her dad gesturing towards the kitchen.

“Well I went on a mission which I kind of messed up in,” He said with a grin, “Since your graduation I had been working on it, and to try to explain to you all about it would be really boring Gaia.” Her dad teased her in respond to her curious expression.

“Someday you’ll be doing top secret missions too Gaia, and you’ll come across some of my unfinished business,” and as her dad said this, Gaia felt like a strange anticipation to a future inheritance.

“Anyways this place suits me well, there’s no telephone lines or cable, but that’s okay cause I’ve got all the goods I need right here,” Her dad pointed to a bookshelf, among the collection she managed to spy out Moby Dick, her dad's favorite.

“Since you’re here I take that Rodriguez has given the okay,” her dad said mostly to himself. “This means we can leave and take off for the Bahamas.”

“The Bahamas?” She shook her head, “I kind of wanted to visit New York.... Well I’ve wanted to visit New York; I haven’t been there since.... I left.”

“Definitely, we’ll get on the road as soon as possible,” Her dad said, “Or we can get a private plane and get there in an hour.” Her father added with a smile.

Guy-uh

Bailey was worried, for the first time since she and Ed started dating she felt like something was wrong in the relationship.

Ed had called her a different name during sex, she was sure of it; she had heard him call her Gaia while they were both in the act of the most intimate expression. She always thought they were making love, she had never called it sex before, but Ed had called her something the night before and it sure as hell wasn't Bailey... and she didn't feel like calling it love under that circumstance.

Ed was a sentimental man, which was one of the main reasons why she fell in love with him.

"Maybe it was just your imagination," Claire suggested next to her, but Bailey knew what she had heard; there was no doubt that Ed had said someone's name. "On the bright side at least he said the L word," Claire added.

"I don't know we were in the moment when he said it. He said it after he called me 'Gaia'... odds are that even if he did mean it, it wasn't directed at me," She said in a teary voice.

"Guy-uh? That sounds more like a physical expression, how are you sure he's referencing a girl?" Claire asked.

Bailey didn't respond to her, sure, it was an odd name, she had never heard it before but she was sure about what she heard.

"Well at least tell me how he performed last night," Claire asked her with a mischievous grin on her face.

Bailey blushed and smiled at Claire, "It was great of course.... Maybe better than ever, he's like a sex machine. He could just lay there without moving, and I'll do him anyway and know that I'll still have a good time. He just, pumps me up," Bailey said dreamily. It was true; for once she could talk about her sex life because her boyfriend was a sex star.

She remembered feeling Ed's strong arms plant her firmly, and she loved how Ed always grunted and moaned when they were together. Feeling his supple hard body was part of why their sex was getting better, according to Ed years after he became crippled he lost a majority of his leg muscle and gained much more muscle weight on to his arms. But now that he was skateboarding more and using his arms less, approximately three and a half years after his surgery, he had built almost all of the muscle he lost back and managed to build a super body. Ed wasn't a hunk, but he certainly wasn't a **skinny skater boy** anymore.

"It's getting pretty late, it's almost nine, we should go back to the dorm," Claire noted after a while.

“You’re right, let’s get out of here, but you should probably go ahead, I’m going to try and get a hold of Eddy,” She said and waved goodbye to Claire.

Bailey loved boys; she had grown up in Ocean City of course, which was a huge vacationing spot during the summer, heaven all year round, except for hurricanes sometimes. She packed her things into her heavy backpack and flipped open her phone and speed dialed Ed’s number, he always picked up in his house, sometimes and very rarely his mother picked up but it didn’t bug her anyway.

“Hey,” Ed said into the phone.

“Hey babe,” Bailey responded.

“What’s up?” He asked.

Nothing to Fear

“Hey can I come over?” Bailey asked him, Ed felt a little confused; they had spent the night together the night before because Ed had specifically known that he needed to focus on homework.

“Um, I’m kind of doing home—”

“Yeah I know, I know Eddy, but we need to talk,” Bailey said to him quickly, Ed felt a little butterfly inside his stomach.

“Um, yeah, sure,” Ed said cheerily, but he knew something was wrong, why the hell did she want to see him now if they had seen each other the night before?

“Okay, I’ll be over soon,” And with that Bailey hung up the phone.

Ed sat on his bed a little confused; he and Bailey had never had a talk before. Bailey was not the type of girl to fuss which was another reason why he was fond of her; you didn’t find a girlfriend like that every day. Did she find out that Gaia called him?

No way, he thought, there’s no way Bailey could be some super spy or something. No he doubted that, but why would Bailey want to talk to him? She didn’t even know about Gaia, or any of the wild adventures that he had ever been involved in. Ed felt a little guilty about not telling her the specifics about Gaia, or how important she had been to him, and Ed had no intentions of telling her. Gaia had been an epic time in his life, it had been the great story that he would tell his grandchild one day, but until then he was not ready to talk about it.

He jumped a little to hear the knock down the hallway; Bailey had been on her way, if not already near his place when she called him.

Ed stood up and walked out of his room; lucky for them his parents went out with his sister to talk to some lawyers, but all the same he was feeling a little nervous.

“Hey Ed,” Bailey said to him as he opened the door, she strode inside and began to take off her jacket. He knew already that a mighty big conversation might be looming over the horizon.

“Hey B, what’s going on?” He asked her with a raised eyebrow, he sat next to her on the couch.

“Well, see I needed to talk to you about something,” Bailey said to him, Ed could tell that she was a little worried herself.

“Okay, go ahead,” He said to her, he wanted to let her know that whatever she wanted to say she could, there was nothing to worry about.

“Okay,” Bailey agreed but she stood up and walked around nervously around the coffee table.

“Whatever Bailey, nothing to fear,” He assured her, and added a reassuring smile.

“Okay Ed, it’s just, the thing is that yesterday night, you told me something,” Bailey said to him, and he almost smiled, she was referring to the fact that he told her that he loved her. That had to be it, that’s why she was so nervous, she just wanted to make sure that he meant it. “And Ed—you, I don’t even know where to start, the thing is that—I’m worried, because—Agh!”

“Calm down, it’s okay Bailey, I remember what happened last night, and you don’t have anything to worry about, because I do love you,” He stood up and walked over to her, he about 5 inches taller than her, and she smiled for a second. But then the smile faltered, this was not what she was worried about; the revelation of his love was not what was bothering her.

“Ed, you called me Gaia last night while we were making love,” Bailey said to him. Ed almost opened his mouth to deny he had ever said such a thing, but half a second later he was dumbstruck. He had called her Gaia, and Bailey had caught him in the act.

The silence stretched long enough to reveal the truth in his eyes, and he knew that Bailey recognized the admission of guilt... she knew that she had caught him.

“What?” Bailey almost screamed, her pretty blue eyes had formed two small wrinkles in between.

“Bailey—” He was caught in words, he wasn’t sure what to say, he could either keep denying it, which was stupid because they both knew he was caught or apologize and possibly-maybe-explain. He almost rolled his eyes, there goes the whole grandpa story he was planning on.

“Bailey I’m so sorry,” He managed to let out.

“So you imagined I was another girl while you were doing me!” Bailey’s words cut through him like a knife.

“No! Of course not, I know who I was with, it just slipped out, and I didn’t even know I had said it!” He said defensively, but that was not the right thing to say, he needed to apologize.

“That doesn’t change the fact that when we were together you unconsciously said another girl’s name!” Bailey uttered, his heart broke for her, because her tears were falling fast and quick. “So who is she Ed? Who’s this Gaia huh?”

“Well, I—I was referring to another girl,” He stuttered and placed his face in his hands, he let himself collapse on to the sofa, time to come clean was coming soon he thought.

“I never told you something, or of someone.” He said quietly, it was so quiet in the apartment that he could hear Bailey’s quiet sobs, and he felt like her tears were just more examples to add to the list of why he was such an asshole.

“Don’t stop,” Bailey whispered and sat on the other sofa.

“I, I’m not sure I can talk about this,” He said quietly, his own thoughts were penetrating against him, they didn’t want to be reveal, too much pain to recall....

“Ed, don’t you think that this is the least you can do?” Bailey asked him, she had a determined tone and he knew that he owed her at least the truth.

“Well, I never told you for a reason Bailey, Gaia was a big part of my life....” He turned to look into Bailey’s eyes, she wanted to know....

“Well, it all started when I was still in high school, when I was a senior, I met a girl during the year. A girl named Gaia Moore—she was, well—do you want me to be honest?” He asked her, he could only recall his experience with Gaia Moore in one way, and to talk about her in any other way was something that he didn’t know how to do....

“Was she your girlfriend?” Bailey asked him.

“Well, she was more than that, she was my best friend—she was the only girl I ever wanted to understand. Like I said, she was new to school, I wasn’t new to girls, I’ve had previous meetings with other girls. But Gaia Moore was different, when I first met her, she insulted me, and this might sound weird but that day I fell in love with her.... It’s an understatement but, I felt like she was the only real girl around. Every day after that I talked to her, she was the type of girl that you just knew was hiding something and you really wanted to get to know that girl, and you wanted to know why she hurt so much.... So after a while we became best friends, and I wanted

her so bad, I wanted her to see the guy, not the wheelchair guy that I was....” Ed remembered those painful times, when he thought that **he might never kiss Gaia Moore....** “Well Gaia and I went through hurtles, our friendship was tested, you can say that Gaia was tested all the time. All I wanted to do was help her.... I loved Gaia; I loved her before she even looked at me in that way. We put up with more than I could ever explain, in fact I believe that it all led up to us, possibly, I can’t say that the highlight of her life would be me, I doubt that, Gaia is an exciting girl. She is a woman who’s out of this world... but when she lets you see her, then you see more of the beautiful woman inside her.... Finally when we got together, it didn’t last long, I caught her cheating on me, or I didn’t, I thought I had. But I didn’t, I had stopped talking to her for a long time, and I felt brain dead throughout that time. Then without warning she came to me, gave me a hug, and left New York City forever....I found out the next day in the paper that her ex-boyfriend Jake Montone died that night she left, I’m not sure what happened, even though I have an idea..... According to the newspaper Jake died from a shot to the chest, and Gaia was always followed by dangerous people, everyone wanted to keep people from getting to close to her all the time.”

Ed looked at Bailey and hoped for a sign of understanding, but he saw an expression on her face that he had never seen before. It came across as something like anger and a little impatience; he thought for a second that she was going to roll her eyes.

“Ed, don’t you think that this is the type of think that you should tell me?” Bailey asked him, he wasn’t sure if she was mad or glad.

“But I wasn’t ready to talk about it,” Ed said defensively, he was only trying to be honest.

“Yes Ed, but don’t you think that if you would have told me we wouldn’t have to go through this? What happened when we had the truth talk? When we were supposed to let the truth all out huh? When were you planning on telling me this, obviously this girl meant a lot to you and the fact that your ex is a psycho murderer—”

“She’s not a murderer! I never said that, and you never knew her!” He shouted, he suddenly found himself on his feet and he could feel a surge of anger running through him. “This is why I didn’t tell you, because you wouldn’t understand, and partly this was a part of my life that was so private and pure, it meant more to me than anything, **she** meant more to me than anything, she meant more to me than my own two legs!”

Bailey paused for two deadly seconds before she said “well basically it sounds like you were obsessed with a girl who always ignored you—”

“There’s more to it than that! It’s not just like you think—I can’t just explain in half an hour, because there was more to her, Gaia—” But he stopped himself, he couldn’t tell Bailey, she obviously didn’t understand, telling her more would jeopardize Gaia’s identity, her secrets, and Gaia didn’t have much, except herself. If he went around and told things like that to just anybody, he shook his head, Bailey wasn’t just anybody. But he had always planned on keeping Gaia secret, even if she wasn’t around to appreciate his trustworthiness.

“No, this conversation stops here, you obviously don’t understand, and I won’t say anymore because I don’t want to talk about this anymore, get out,” Ed did not mean to say ‘get out,’ but it slipped out, he had obviously expressed that he didn’t want to talk about it and she didn’t get it, he folded his arms and stared into Bailey’s eyes. Bailey was furious, her cheeks were pink and her light blue eyes were narrowed.

“Okay Ed, see ya around,” Bailey said testily, he wasn’t sure what to do, but just as quick as he blinked she grabbed her coat, ran to the door and slammed her way out.

The whole scene had been cold, obviously Bailey didn’t understand, he took a deep breath and felt himself relax. They would talk about this sooner or later... But not tonight, he walked back to his room and collapsed on top of his homework, and drifted into dreams, which ironically, Gaia was in.