

# ***The Heart of All Hearts***

**By**

**Andrew Wolter**

A brisk wind made its way through the sea of tombstones known as Shady Palms Cemetery. Surely, the dead within the necropolis didn't mind. However, within the dark shadows of towering palm trees, the gelid air chilled the flesh of two young men who vowed their love to one another.

My heart belongs to you, Jared proclaimed as he peered into Anson's delectable chocolate eyes. You are my everything.

Anson felt his cheeks go warm, and knew he was blushing. Thanks, baby.

He pulled Jared close enough so that there was but a few inches between their torsos. His mouth met with Jared's quivering lips. Before Anson knew what was happening, Jared's tongue darted into his mouth and the flesh of their chests collided with a desperate friction that heated their skin.

Jared pulled back. I mean it, his frantic high-pitched tone announced. I've never felt this way about anybody, even him. I love you. Do you love me?

Anson's smile stretched across his almond-colored face, accenting his high cheekbones. His grin was like that of an accomplished composer who'd discovered the ideal sharp note to an eerie sonata. Of course I do, Jared.

With that, both Anson and Jared embraced in a kiss that could have lasted an eternity. Their tongues danced like that of jilted lovers. Anson experienced Jared's anticipation of needing him from the quickened beats of Jared's heart. Within Anson's chest, he felt the tickly sensation like that of butterflies. However, Anson recognized that

insatiable feeling; he acknowledged the tingling vibrations within his chest emit. It was as if something was scratching from the inside and wanted to get out.

\*\*\*

Yes, he had no doubt that Jared loved him with all his heart because Anson knew about him. However, Anson never knew his name. In fact, he had neither seen Jared nor his ex-lover two weeks before this evening.

It was a night similar to that in which he now held Jared. The chilling breeze caused the ginger hairs upon his lithe arms to stand on end. The inky darkness of midnight enveloped his surroundings and muted the sounds of the city. A hunger raged in Anson that night, a ravenous appetite that could only be satiated by doing what he did best: follow his heart.

Anson's heart guided him to Shady Palms Cemetery. He walked without intention, past stone cherubs with paused smirks and mausoleums that appeared as gray dollhouses. It was as if an unseen force had escorted him to a particular tombstone, an otherwise insignificant grave.

As Anson towered above the freshly packed earth, fleeting images infused his vision. This always happened when his heart forced him to halt.

Two men; one who wanted to love and another who would not let him. Mysterious kisses lacking passion...one smiling in disdain as the other shed tears in a lonely bed...a driver backing his truck over his alleged lover...screams of terror as the tires mashed the viscera of the victim. A freak accident.

\*\*\*

Jared pulled back from the kiss as if just realizing Anson's response. You didn't say it. Jared's hazel eyes pierced with unyielding anticipation.

Say what Anson flinched from the pinpricks within his chest.

You didn't say I love you.

Its not necessary that I find love. It is only important that you experience such a powerful sentiment.

Jared pulled back from Anson with eyes bulged in amazement. His parched lips curled back from the unimaginable sight of what emerged from Anson's glistening chest. Jared gawked at the twelve red spots that formed a bleeding circle near the left center of Anson's pectorals. The dots pushed opened, expelling a dozen wormy pink vines that weightlessly slithered toward Jared. Anson closed his eyes, exhaling as the living tendrils buoyantly retreated into a synched wave attached to the mysteries of his innards. Before Jared had a chance to object to the nightmare becoming, before he had a chance to scream, he felt the army of vines perforate the area of his own chest. They suckled like leeches, digging deep toward a heart hammering with fear.

I must reclaim my heart as you lay to rest, Anson calmly spoke. He turned, knowing there were many others who had yet to experience this remarkable emotion.

As Jared fell back to his grave, in between the brief segue of conscious mind to blackened void, he had finally known love. Even if it was never in life.