



MR. FINKLE'S GRAVE ERROR

KIM IVERSON

Mr. Finkle's Grave Error
By
Kim Iverson

Other Titles By Kim Iverson

Always Consequences

Anora

The Culling Cycle

Dark Moon Dynasty Universe

Dark Illusions Series

Dark Illusions: The Beginning – Extended Edition

Dark Illusions: The Next Chapter – Extended Edition

Dark Illusions: The Final Chapter – Extended Edition

Enchanting The Moon Series

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DOGS. THEY COULD DRIVE A PERSON BATTY. More so when said person wanted to relax on her day off. Charlie Neilson leaned back on the couch and watched Loki pacing the floor between the kitchen and the living room. The black Doberman was adamant. He had to go out. Now.

“Loki, you just went out an hour ago. What is with you?” He stopped in the entryway, near the stairs. She sighed when he let out his infamous drawn out whine. A whine that she was certain at this point, he knew took her nerves out of their comfort zone and into a dangerous territory of no patience. A sound that normally allowed him to get his way.

She stared at her dog, debating the odds that he’d allow her to relax. It was a beautiful Sunday morning. She’d been working all week fielding calls for her boss at the law firm, and what she really wanted was to just have a few hours of becoming one with the couch. Some silence. Some peace.

The feet padding along the wooden floor behind her had other ideas. *Flop flop flop* they went back and forth. *Flop flop flop* they went again on her nerves of anything *but* steel. Another long drawn out whine that sounded like *moooooommmm*, and she grumbled beneath her breath. She jammed the bookmark into her book she was reading—trying to—then tossed it to the other side of the couch. The clock over the stovetop said eleven fifty-nine in the morning.

His nubby little tail wagged back and forth. She narrowed her eyes at him. “You are not my friend right now, mister.” Once more he wagged his nub tail and spun in a circle, then bounced up and down on his front feet. “Don’t wag that nub at me like you’re winning,” she tried to scold him and failed.

Loki rushed to the front door, nearly colliding with the large fern. Charlie winced, hoping they didn’t topple together. Cleaning up an entryway full of dirt and leaves on top of everything else was not in her plans. Loki deftly scrambled and gathered himself at the last minute. Only to slide into place in front of the door like a baseball player shooting for home.

Grabbing the leash from beside the door amped up Loki’s energy, but with a stern look from her, he sat down and let her leash him. Not that the short tail wasn’t still twitching back and forth like crazy. So much that his backside was jiggling. Once outside, she let him lead her around the neighborhood. She figured once he had his walk, he’d go lay in his comfy bed near the fireplace, and she’d get her peaceful Sunday after all.

In the distance, children laughed in their backyard, a few birds chortled, and the rumble of a car engine came and went. Faint, but there. She offered a smile to the older gentleman who lived on the corner, and who was out working on his old pickup truck. He merely nodded in return and went back to work.

It was once they were headed back up the street to her home that things went weird on Charlie. The wind stirred something into her eyes because it was suddenly very hazy. *Or I’m even more tired than I thought.*

When her head grew dizzy, she stopped in front of her house. The cement walkway and asphalt neighborhood road blurred. She closed her eyes. Loki stopped beside her. She felt him lean against her leg. When Charlie reopened her eyes, she started.

Where once stood her very modern Craftsman Style home now stood a cobblestone path, lined with hedges and roses. Her eyes bugged. She waved off a fly. Small quaint cottages surrounded the one in front of her with adorable emerald lawns and tiny beaten paths of dirt up to front doors.

There was no longer the laughter of children, let alone a car engine. Though she did think she heard a horse neigh. Now, since she lived in the suburbs, she knew she had to be imagining that—*oh*. Something crowed nearby. *Was that a rooster? There are no chickens allowed in the city, let alone roosters.*

She blinked. Time spun crazily around her. Last thing she was conscious of, she was standing in front of her house, but this . . . this wasn't *her* house. She had the odd idea that what she knew as her house, wasn't it either. A weird memory seeped in of her having left her house, but it was glass and metal. That too was wrong. She hated such cold exteriors and interiors. Her home was filled with wood and glass, plants and books. Not the metallic stuff invading her mind. Or the digital work surface of an alien desk.

Now she was even more confused as thoughts of a life that wasn't hers came to mind. Things of which hadn't been invented yet. At least . . . that she knew. Holograms of phone calls she'd never made. Instant meals she'd never cooked. Artificial Intelligence drivers that were part of the vehicle they drove.

And yet here she stood in this weird little fairytale neighborhood with *no* memory of this place whatsoever. Squeezing Loki's leather leash, she made sure that was real. He sensed her unease and checked on her. Charlie rubbed her thumb over the braided handle.

A white-haired elderly lady Charlie didn't recognize came from the house next door, which should've been her neighbor who was a younger woman. She spied Loki watching her with a steady eye, ready to hand out far too many licks, and the gentle folds of her face suddenly went pale. Her eyes widened and a finger jutted out of plump hand to target Loki.

"Demon!" she shrieked. "It's a demon!" She shuffled back into her small cottage and slammed the wooden door with a bang.

Charlie twitched. "Geez. I know that steady stare of yours freaks some out, but man."

Charlie took in the little home in front of her and tried to work it out. She tapped her sneaker on the ground, thinking she was imagining things. Maybe she'd passed out. But the ground was solid. She pinched herself. Nope. Wide awake.

"Oh dear," a soft spoken voice came from behind her.

She spun around to find a short male with gray hair, standing behind her and Loki. Loki let out a warning rumble. Charlie shushed him.

The older looking fellow rubbed his forehead, pinched the bridge of his nose. “I made a grave mistake, didn’t I? My old bladder didn’t hold, and I needed a break. It was only for five minutes. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.” He shook his head at himself.

“Uh, hi,” said Charlie. “Who are you?” The rooster crowed in the distance, reaffirming her stance there was one.

The checkered vest he wore was tugged, the dark tie adjusted, and his crisp white shirt flattened as he straightened up. “Peter. My name is Peter Finkle.” He wrapped an arm around his waist and gave her a slight bow. “And . . . I am currently in charge of the reprogramming.” He breathed out as if the whole world had just toppled over on itself. “There’s been a grave error.” He bobbed on his feet. “I’m sure to be fired now,” he whined.

Charlie motioned with her hands to act as a shrug. Loki stepped closer to sniff the fellow, and though he wasn’t much taller than Loki stood, he simply stood there, letting the dog check him out. “What on earth are you going on about?” she said.

Peter’s face puckered. “Your dog sensed the change coming, didn’t he? Some can,” he explained as he wagged his finger at the dog. Peter cleared his throat, focusing on her. “You see, every ten years we go through a reprogramming. Every ten years we adjust the timelines. Either someone is sent forward in time, or behind, or left where they are. Depends really on where they’d fit best. How best they fit the program. And you . . . you were *not* meant to be sent backward. You were to be sent *forward* in time.”

Loki licked the man’s hand and abruptly twitched and sneezed. The man went to pat the dog’s head and Loki stepped back, again letting out a warning growl. “Sorry pup. Little static electricity. There’s a little charge left on these old bones.”

Charlie’s mind whirled. “Wait, so you’re telling me the entire *world* is reprogrammed every ten years, and people are sent back, or forward in *time*?” She showed him her palms as if she could turn everything back. “I remember my house, my life, but . . . things are jumbling. Weird. I have another life I can remember. Then I’m here and—”

Peter nodded solemnly as he cut her off. “I am truly and sincerely sorry, miss. I thought I could take a bathroom break. I came back to hear an alarm and it pinpointed *you* stepping out of events, and into the wrong time.” He eyed Loki who wagged his nubby little tail as if he knew full well what he’d done. “Everything was flowing well, I began the program switch.” He stuck his hands into the small pockets of the vest and took in the little neighborhood. “And you were reprogrammed.” He frowned as he turned back. “Problem being? You stepped out of the house. So now you still hold old and new memories.”

Her mind hurt. Charlie tried to take it all in. What he was saying was that she was meant to go forward in time. “You’re telling me you reprogram our minds too? So these weird ideas in my head about a glass and metal home, is where I’m meant to go, what I remember of my home, is where I came from. But . . . I don’t know anything about this place.” She pointed behind her. “That woman freaked out seeing my dog.”

Peter eyed Loki, the dog’s nose was to the ground, following a beetle. “Yes. These dogs haven’t become common yet. I imagine that gave her a right start.” He pointed to the cottage she stood in front of. “This is your home. I can’t reset the program, can’t change your timeline. You’ve gotta wait for the next ten year adjustment, and hope *they* believe you and Loki should go to the next timeline. Or you’re shifted to where you were supposed to go in the first place. Really depends. I’ll be gone by then.”

Charlie huffed. “You messed my life up and *I’m* supposed to be okay with it? I know nothing about this place. I don’t even know where I am!”

“As I said, my sincerest apologies.”

She remembered his comment when Loki reacted to him. “What did you mean by the charge?”

Peter’s wiry eyebrows rose. “Part of our . . . er . . . ability to reprogram is the energy we can create. We’re not human. We’re . . . different.”

“You think you can freakin’ control us like little puppets? Like we’re your toys?”

“Human beings have been controlled since the beginning of time by us. To make their lives easier, to help them do good for this planet. What makes you believe that’s wrong?” He actually seemed to believe there was nothing wrong with it. With his little slightly indifferent shrug, she lost her patience.

Charlie huffed and shook her head. “You’re insane. What if I don’t agree to this? Put me back. You programmed it, undo what you screwed up. Couldn’t hold it for a few minutes?”

Suddenly, Peter’s face took on a quality which reeked of anything but joviality. Or gentility. His image glitched, his words became hard. “With that attitude, you can be assured, I will not help you. This is your home. Congrats. Maybe next time you’ll resist taking your dog out when instinct says stay put.” He clucked his tongue. “I’m not losing my job over you, missy. Not when I’m so close to retirement. You being here, knowing nothing? Won’t register as a reprogramming error. So . . . good luck, I’ll ensure the rest disappears. Can’t have you going around chatting about my error, or speaking of this, now can I?”

And with that, he turned staticky and glitched out. Charlie stared after him, her jaw hanging open. She snapped it shut and turned toward the cottage. Well, good luck. She planned to remember all of it, and she would tell everyone, whether she was believed or not.

Memories of that so-called future home, and even the place she came from slowly struggled to come back. *No, dammit. This isn't happening!* A rooster crowed in the distance, followed by the lone caw of a crow. The small area she stood and her current life had zero in her mind. She tried hard to remember what she was doing. No memories. No thoughts. Nothing whatsoever, and she was forgetting where she came from, who she'd been.

Things began to go black in her mind. *Why am I standing here?*

She stared at Loki. That's all she knew. Loki. Also her name. Charlie. Charlie Neilson.

Charlie took in the little cottage in front of her. Took in the neighborhood around her. A random bird sang in the gentle silence of the warm day. "Where are we, Loki?" Loki tugged her toward the little cottage. "Home?" Yes, this was her home. That came to her.

Martha came outside from next door. "Hey Charlie," she called out, rubbing floury hands on her pink apron. "Was your walk all right, dear?" The scent of vanilla and deliciously gooey chocolate wafted behind her and over to Charlie. The Forester's rooster crowed in the distance. Martha paused, noticing the confusion. "Oh my. Sweetheart, did you forget things again?"

Charlie nodded. "I think so."

Martha waved her over. "Come on, dear. I'll fill ya in over some milk and cookies."

About The Story

Author Note

May 28, 2019 –

This story came about from two different causes. The first and biggest, was that I needed a new story to send into my Creative Writing Course. It was the final exam and they wanted something original, thankfully no word count limits, and to see the first draft and the final version.

I was also taking a short story course by Holly Lisle called, *How to Write Short Stories*. One of her methods to come up with ideas ended up spurring this idea of, “girl goes on walk, loses home.” I won’t go into the details, but I picked the idea apart and it gave me this short story. Since it’s a freebie, you’re welcome to send to a friend, or even list the link on your site if you have one and enjoy it. Or even if you don’t enjoy it and wanna poke fun at me, lol. That’s cool too.

If you’ve read it and enjoyed it, I’d love for you to send me a message and tell me so. I enjoy so much when a reader enjoys something I wrote and lets me know their thoughts. Stop by anytime – kimberlysueiverson.com – and send me a hello through my contact page.

About Kim Iverson

In this place, you're expecting a brilliant smudge of text. Well, I'm just a woman, pursuing my dreams, hoping to live my life however I was meant to. I prefer to do things out of the box, which means for here too. No longer fitting into "what's right," or "how it's done," I'm leaving that behind.

So from me to you, I hope that my books allow you the same escape reading provided me as a kid. It brings me such happiness to take care of others around me so I'll be good if all I ever achieve is to put a smile on someone's face and show them kindness. To know I've loved courageously and shown the world that it's okay to be yourself.

If you'd love to stop in and get to know me, come by my site - kimberlysueiverson.com. You'll find me on social networks linked from there too. I post daily questions, far too many pictures of my dogs, gardening, crochet projects, castles and antique things I love, and just try to brighten your day as much as mine. If that means being goofy, well, that's me.

Some of my favorite writers are: Stephen King, Dean Koontz, George R.R. Martin, Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, James Patterson, Michael Crichton, Anne Rice, and Keri Arthur to name a few. I only just now discovered the love of J.K. Rowling (I know, I'm late to that party!) so I'm throwing her in there too.

It's lovely to meet you. My door is always open so come on by and hang with me anytime on my social networks or website (aka my porch).

Facebook – facebook.com/iversonks

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