

# Directions to Mourning's Deep

BY SCOTT WILLIAM CARTER

**L**ike me, you suffered a tragedy too great to bear. You lost a father or a mother or a brother or a spouse. You loved and you lost, and how it haunts you, stays with you, only you know. If this is the first time you have experienced such loss, if you feel as though hope has fled and will never return, then listen. My words are for the virgins of sorrow.

There is a bar known as Mourning's Deep. In this bar is a man who can give you hope again.

Here is how you get there:

Get in your car and drive downtown. You can do it in this city or another, it does not matter. Simply drive to where the tallest buildings block the sun. It must be a cool and shadowy place, and if it is grimy and grungy like so many of our biggest cities, all the better. If vagrants scrounge the dumpsters, if ravenous dogs fight over leftovers from a Chinese restaurant, if businessmen in limos drive past, their faces obscured by smoked glass, this is preferred. But it is not necessary.

Any city of decent size will do.

With your mind firmly on the person you lost, circle the block five times, then turn and go five times the other way. If it is a one-way street, do it anyway, and ignore the blaring horns. Find the darkest alley between two buildings and put your car in reverse. With your eyes closed, and they must be closed, back into it for five seconds. One Mississippi . . . Two Mississippi . . . Do not open your eyes! If you give in to temptation, you will have to start over.

I see that you do not believe me. You think this is nonsense. But I ask you, have you ever done it?

When you open your eyes, and if you have done as I said, you will see a plain metal door set in a red brick wall. There will be no sign, but the name of the place has been scratched on the door with a knife:

Mourning's Deep.

Leave the car running. You will find the door unlocked. Go inside. It will be smoky and dim, as all such bars are, and a somber tune will be playing from the jukebox. Pay no attention to the figures in tattered black cloaks at the mahogany bar. If they look at you, do not look back!

Walk quickly past the pool table, and do not be alarmed if the pool balls are moving of their own accord. Push through the swinging doors to the room in the back.

Only a faint orange glow from the fireplace will guide your way. You will see him, a slim, shadowy figure in the corner, sitting at a small, round table. He will be wearing a cloak like the others, but his will be gray, not black, and out of his sleeves will come fingers yellowed and dry like old newspaper. He will be the only one in this room. He may have a beer in front of him or he may not, but he won't drink while you are there. Do not put wood on the fire! It must be kept dark so you can't see him.

Sit at the table. Tell him of your suffering, tell him of this first, deep loss that threatens to destroy you, and do not to look at him. When you are done, put your hand on the table, palm upward. The wood, stained with years of spilt beer, may stick to your skin, but leave it there. If you are honest, if you hold nothing back, he may chance to reach out and touch you. His fingers will be as cold as the ocean's deep. The touch will last only a moment, but you may feel light-headed. This will pass.

When he pulls his hand away, rise and walk out of the bar. The cloaked figures will not look at you, for you have nothing for them now.

Go through the door back to your car. Leave the alley. Merge with traffic and drive where you must.

Soon you will be able to think of the person you lost and feel nothing. You will be able to look at the events from afar, dispassionately, as if they happened to someone else. You will have hope again. It will not take long. An hour perhaps.

Finally, and this is of utmost importance, you must never go back. No matter who you love and lose the rest of your days, do not return to Mourning's Deep. If you do, if you burden him with your agony once again, he will touch you, but this time all you forgot will come rushing back, and it will be worse than before. And if you plead with him, if you beg, if you cry out for him to have mercy, he will only laugh and call for the cloaked ones to throw you on the street. Once outside, the door will be gone, and you may search the rest of your days in all the cities of the world, and you will never find it.

So do not give into temptation. Be satisfied he gave you hope again. If you go back, you may lose it forever, and spend eternity looking for it.

I would know. ©