

Everything was different this time. I held a crumpled piece of paper in between my fingers. I kept rolling it out and rolling it back up into a ball. I didn't even know why I was fiddling with it. Maybe because it was something to keep my mind off of everything. My ball of paper fell through my fingers and rolled across the floor. I glanced around the ground briefly, not really caring if it was lost. I saw that it had rolled underneath the waiting room chair that my sister Lydia occupied. I figured it wasn't worth the effort to retrieve it. I glanced around the room at the other family members, trying to find something else to occupy my mind.

My grandparents were helping Elena with mathwork. My uncle was talking to Lydia about some cool engineering she had made earlier in the week. My littlest three sisters all had glowing tablets that illuminated their faces in the dim light. I focused on that. The fact that the light was dimmed. It had been brighter a minute ago. I glanced at the clock on the wall. 7:47. Last I had looked it had been 6:39. It had been brighter quite a while ago. Out the window it was getting darker. The sky where I could see was navy-blue. I got up and moved over to the window.

"You alright?" Nana looked up at me with concern. "Your dad will be here soon."

"No, I'm fine," I lied. "I just want to watch the sunset."

"Okay," she nodded, before returning to Elena's schoolwork.

The art on the opposite side of the sky was a pale pink with streaks of gold and violet. It was gorgeous, but I barely noticed. My mind was occupied with other thoughts. *All you'll feel is grief when you go in there. Everything will only be worse because you went in there.* I tried to correct that thinking.

*It's the only chance you have to meet him.* Part of my mind scolded.

The other half of my mind didn't argue back in words but rather sent me back memories of my sisters' birthdays. Matching tee shirts and excitement. This was nothing like meeting him. It was more like a calling-hours or a funeral. Memories again flooded my mind. Black dresses and sad expressions but also talking about good times had with the deceased. *But we never got to meet him.* I looked around the room again. This wasn't a funeral either. My sisters and I were still in our school clothes. My little sisters' expressions were ones of blank technological stares. Elena was so focused on her math, her face was scrunched up into a scowl. Lydia was smiling as she spoke, but she also had sadness in her eyes. The adults were good at hiding emotion. This seemed to be nothing that I had ever experienced before. That wasn't very comforting.

The door opened, getting all of us to turn. A nurse came out, followed by Dad.

"The girls can come in now," Dad announced. "They'll only allow two kids at a time though."

"Can I go?" Carys asked, looking up from the screen. "I want to see Mommy."

*I want to see Corbin.* I didn't dare say it aloud. *He wouldn't be there. It would only be his body.*

"Who else wants to go?" Dad said, a gentle tone in his voice. "Taking in all of the little girls at once is probably not the best for Mom right now. I'll take one of the olders in with a little."

"I'd rather not right now," Lydia said in a soft voice.

Her face had turned a scarlet red. She only turned red when she felt strong emotions. She felt the same way I did.

"I have three more questions to finish," Elena faked a smile and her voice revealed utter lying.

"I'll go in next round."

She didn't want to go either.

"Abby, do you want to go in to see him?" Dad asked.

I nodded.

Mom was in a hospital gown and had all of the normal equipment surrounding her. For a moment I was convinced everything was normal. Then I noticed Mom's red eyes, the almost empty tissue box and the crumpled tissues in her hand.

"Mommy," Carys rushed over to hug her.

I stood awkwardly in the doorway. Beside Mom's bed was the normal baby bed. I stared at the crocheted blankets, wondering if there was anything in them.

"Do you want to see him?" Mom asked.

My mind was silent as I nodded. I moved closer to the blankets. Dad pulled them away slightly to reveal a tiny little form. His skin was bright red and almost jello-like. His eyes were closed. He didn't have a nose but instead had a tiny beak-like mouth. His hands and feet had fingers and toes. They were webbed, but they still seemed perfect. He even had eyelashes and brows.

"Do you want to hold your brother?" Dad asked.

I nodded. My mind was too in awe of how perfect he was to argue. Dad carefully lifted the blankets up, as if holding an alive baby instead of a premature one with no heartbeat. The crochet blanket was softer than I had expected. I was grateful for the barrier between him and my hands. He looked so fragile.

"Can I hold him?" Carys requested, now with a serious expression.

Dad turned to me for some reason. I just nodded, unable to speak. He carefully took him from me. Mom's hand gently touched my arm. I turned and found a tissue being offered to me. I hadn't noticed the tears streaming down my face. These tears, though some were sad, were also of joy. Joy that I had such a perfect brother for the while he was on this earth.