

A young girl holds her mother's free hand with both of her little ones. The mother and daughter's blond hair contrast against their black outfits. The flowers the mother is holding shouldn't be the only bright objects on this spring day. They remind me of when I first came here with my mother to bury my little sister.

I sit and watch in silence on top of the cemetery hill as the woman places a bouquet of flowers on top of a newly dug grave. The grave signifies where the husband is buried. The headstone reads, "Beloved husband and father." The sun beats down on my face and the scent of freshly cut grass fills my nostrils. To me it is not a gloomy day at all, but for them I cannot say the same. It is past my time for grieving, but theirs has just begun.

The young girl and her mother stay for about a half an hour or so, and I watch mesmerized by how the little girl does not seem to get impatient. Before they leave the girl kisses the headstone and whispers something that only the wind is able to pick up. "I'll see you soon daddy."

I look back down at my sister's headstone and start to shake my head. Nothing was ever perfect between us, and my yelling at her never helped. When I visit her every Saturday I swear that if she were still here things would be different than they were. Honestly though, I know deep down that if she were still alive everything would be the same. We would still be fighting, and taking each other's things, and I wouldn't be sitting there thinking about how much I miss her being here.

I come here every Saturday to try to clear my mind, but most of the time I can't help but think that my sister is a permanent resident here because of me. It's hard not to torture myself over these thoughts, but it is impossible not to.

I twirl some grass through my fingers and cringe as the memories come flooding back to me.

Magazine in hand, I'm lying on my bed while trying to help my younger sister get ready for her first big high school party. Riley was twirling in front of the mirror with my junior year prom dress on. I let a giggle escape my lips. She looked so ridiculous in the dress. It was a good color on her, its nice rosy pink color suited her skin tone perfectly; it's just that she wasn't able to keep the dress up because her hips and chest were way too small for her own good.

She stopped looking at herself in the mirror and turned to face me, "What's so funny?" She asks.

"Riley... the dress is too big."

She stared at me as if I had said something crazy. "You're kidding right?"

Looking back down at the magazine I didn't answer.

"You're just jealous because I got invited to the party and you didn't." If she were still eight she would have been sticking her tongue out at me. She knew I was right though. What she didn't know was that I was invited to the party. I was actually invited to the party way before she was, but knowing she was eventually going to be invited I declined the invite. I wanted her to have her first high school party experience without her protective older sister hovering and watching her every move.

I asked her if she would like to try on my freshman winter formal dress. She gave one last look in the mirror and nodded. Smiling to myself I walked to the back of my closet and grab my old Blue and white winter formal dress. My favorite dress ever.

When i walked out she had the biggest grin on her delicate face. She sprinted over and snatched the dress out of my hands, tearing the straps in the process. She automatically covered her mouth with her hands and started sputtering out useless apologies.

"Oh my gosh. I'm so sorry Amy." Her apologies meant nothing to me. Anger took over and it was so forceful at first I couldn't move or say anything. After a couple seconds what she did finally sets in.

"What did you just do?" It barely came out as a whisper. That's how Amy knew I was mad.

"Amy, I'm serious, I didn't mean..."

I didn't let her finish before I say, "Get out of my room." When she didn't move I continue with, "Get out right now you careless rat! Don't you have anything better to do than having me help you get ready? If you're so popular why didn't you just have one of your stuck up, snooty friends help you? You could have spent your own damn money on a dress instead of ruining one of mine!"

Before she left she stared at me with her big blue does eyes. She mumbled a quick, "I said I was sorry." Then she's out of my room.

I sighed and sat on my bed cradling the dress in my arms. The dress meant so much to me.

My grandmother and I had been out shopping for my first high school dance. We had been looking all day for a dress when finally we stopped into an old thrift store. It was a beautiful dress and I was so surprised nobody had taken it already I had felt like it was meant to be mine.

It was white on the top and light blue on the bottom. There were a few fake crystals lining the top edge. It was a spaghetti strap and was hanging in the way back, left there, forgotten. It was left there for me, and only me.

I saw it and immediately knew it was going to fit, but my grandma mad me try it on anyways. Just like I thought, it was a perfect match, lining my curves unbelievably. The light blue brought out my eyes and I felt so beautiful. It was the first time in long time where I actually felt good about myself.

My grandma purchased it for me and I am forever grateful. She never had the chance to see me where it though. A week before the dance she was bed ridden and not too long after the dance she died of a severe stroke. I was heartbroken and the only personal momentous was a charm bracelet she had given me and that dress she bought for me that day.

This is why the dress meant so much to me, and Riley knew it. Yeah, I shouldn't have been so harsh on her, she didn't mean to break it and it wasn't that difficult to sew it back together, but at that moment in time nothing felt better than being mad.

Folding the dress in my lap I heard a knock on the door. I opened it and find Riley wearing her homecoming dress.

"I'm heading out, Susan is picking me up."

Still being mad at her, all I could do was give her a slight nod. My mom was away on a business trip; she didn't even know I was letting Riley go to this party. Riley closes the door gently. I listened intently waiting for the sound of the rent door to open and close. Once I knew she was gone I picked up my cell and called Jason.

Jason was my boyfriend of two years. Everybody claimed we were going to marry each other. I on the other hand was doubtful. Yeah, he's everything a girl could dream of, he just wasn't the one. You know, the guy you look at and can just feel you are supposed to be together? I didn't have that with Jason. Yeah he was charming, smart, athletic, handsome, basically perfect, but he was too close too perfect. He never felt real half the time.

I hear a quick shuffling through the other line before Jason answered with a, "Hello?"

"Hey, you wanna come over? Nobody is home tonight."

I could practically hear him smiling through the phone. "Yeah, I'll be over in a bout ten minutes."

After we hung up I texted Riley to tell her she had to call me ever hour to make sure she was okay. She didn't reply, but I assumed she would obey; she always did.

Ten minutes later I heard the doorbell ring. *Right on queue*. I thought to myself. I let him in and we headed upstairs to my room. I didn't feel like doing anything special that night so I popped in a movie and we laid down on my bed. I curl up into his arms, but it wasn't enough to keep me awake. I fell asleep within the first ten minutes of the movie.

I don't wake up until I hear the house phone ringing downstairs. I hopped off my bed so fast it gave me a headache. Jason was passed out n the other sided the bed. I didn't have time to think about it so I sprinted down to the telephone.

"Hello?" I say into the phone.

"Hi, is there a Kate Wagner home?" the lady on the receiver asked.

"No there is not, she won't be available this weekend, may I ask whose calling?"

"Yes, this is Bethany Hopkins from St. Mary's hospital. I'm afraid there has been an accident involving Riley Wagner and a couple of her friends. They were traveling down interstate 20 when a car blindsided them. I need a family member to come be with Riley at this time."

Shock is the only thing I feel at that moment. Sadness and anger didn't have time to take hold, because I was not completely sure what was going on. I don't know how to react. I didn't say anything not the phone because my mind was still trying to process what was going on. I don't answer until I hear the tenth, "Hello?" coming from the other line.

"I'll be right there."

"Thank you, please come soon. Emergency room, room number 301." Then she hangs up.

I stood there with the phone in my hands a couple more minutes, trying to grasp what was going on. After it settled in I printed up stairs to Jason and tapped him on the shoulder.

He rolled over to face me and opened his eyes. "What time isn't?" He asked.

"It doesn't matter. Riley is in the hospital, will you please come with me?"

Automatically he jumped off my bed and ran downstairs without even asking any questions. He had his shoes on and keys in his hands before I could even meet him to the front door.

"Is that a yes?"

He wraps me in his arms and whispers, "Of course I'll go with you, she's like slightly sister to me."

Tears stain my cheeks, as I pulled out of his hug. "Thank you."

I opened the door and a chill settled over me. It was freezing out and I didn't have a jacket. Jason looked at me and asked me if I wanted to wait inside while he warmed up the truck. I didn't answer and instead got into the passenger's seat. A few seconds after I shut my door he opened his. The car started up and we sat there a couple seconds while he asked me where to go, then we were off.

The car ride seemed to take forever, even though the hospital was only fifteen minutes away. When we got there, Jason dropped me off at the front of the ER entrance while he went and parked the car. It took me a couple of seconds to compel myself to go inside.

There was a security guard and an elderly lady sitting behind the front desk. I tried to walk through the double doors but she stopped me.

The security guard walked over to me and said, "Miss, you need to sign in if you have an emergency."

"I'm just here to see my sister."

He gave a small smile. "You still have to sign in miss." He put a hand on my back and led me over to the lady at the front desk.

She shoved a clipboard under my nose, just as Jason walked in. He came over and put an arm around my waist.

"You two are both family members correct?"

Jason and I glanced at each other; I couldn't speak so Jason answered for me. "Yes, we are both here to see our sister."

She gave us a hard look and Jason dropped his arm from around my waist. She smiled, she knew we weren't really brother and sister, but she let us sign in anyways.

"Riley Wagner? Oh yes, very tragic." She mumbled to herself. "Okay, follow me please." she looked at the security guard and said, "Rodger, watch the front desk."

We entered through the double doors into a bright, white hallway. We passed many doors and it took us through many hallways until we were standing in front of a door with the number 301 etched into a brass plate. "This room is closer to the ambulance entrance. We couldn't take her far. She needs an oxygen tam and her IV is feeding her many fluids."

Giving her a blank stare, I asked, "Aren't you just the lady who stands at the front desk? How do you know all this information?"

She frowned. "She is in a critical state right now. She isn't conscious and she probably won't be for the remainder of her time here. I can't explain much to you. The doctors just wanted me to know some things so I could inform you when you arrived. I'm not supposed to leave my post and you aren't supposed to see her, but wanted you have a chance to say goodbye, just in case."

She looked at me and gave me a pat on the back then walked away; leaving Jason and I standing in front of room 301 by ourselves. I leaned my back into him and he wrapped his arms around my waist. I stood there a couple more seconds, but heard footsteps so I opened the door and walked inside.

At first I couldn't see anything; I only heard a lot of beeping, then, because it was dark inside, I realized that there was a curtain hanging from one wall to the next. Walking over to it, I grabbed Jason's hand. He gave it a tight squeeze before I pushed the curtain back. As soon as the curtain was no longer there I wanted to scream. Tears slipped down my cheek repeatedly without any control.

The bed was a normal hospital bed, but everything else there I had never had to deal with. Riley was lying on the bed, except the person there didn't resemble Riley at all. Her head was wrapped in gauze and you could see the blood it was trying to keep contained. IVs were bringing liquids into her arm and there was a heart rate monitor next to her. An oxygen mask was strapped to her face, all sorts of tubes and cables were attached to her and it was a scary sight to see.

Letting go of Jason's hands I walked over to Riley and caressed her cheek. She had deep gashes everywhere, and I couldn't see what was under the blanket. As soon as I touched her the heart monitor beeped faster, showing her heart was also beating faster. I didn't know if it was a good thing or not. Riley's eyes are closed but before I'm able to sit down I hear the door open.

A tall Asian woman is standing in the doorway with a pen and clipboard in her hands. She hadn't looked up to see Jason and me yet, but when she eventually did there wasn't a friendly look on her face.

"What are you doing in here?" She asks.

Tears were still rolling down my face and it was hard to speak. "We're here to see my sister." I try explaining.

She didn't let her scowl subside. "You are not supposed to be in here."

Confused I say, "A lady called me and told me I needed to come down here, my sister obviously needs somebody here with her."

"You still aren't supposed to be in here." She repeated.

I went over to her and look her directly in the eyes. "I am not going to leave her."

Unexpectedly the heart rate monitor started blaring. The doctor, I presume, pushed past me and ran directly to the bed. She placed a stethoscope on Riley's chest and yelled, "Her heart rate is spiking, I need you to press the red button on the wall over there."

Barely knowing what she is talking about I just stood there. Jason was the hero and pressed it for me. I had totally forgotten he was there. A minute later a couple of doctors, or nurses, came running in through the door. They paid no attention to Jason or me and ran over to help inject things into Riley's IV.

Riley's heart rate slowed, but I was still in a shocked state. The doctors looked at me with sadness in their eyes, no more hostility. "You need to say your goodbyes. Riley has a lot of internal bleeding and I'm afraid she won't make it past six a.m." The Asian doctor says.

"What are you talking about she looks almost fine."

"On the outside yes, on the inside she's anything but. She has several shattered ribs and some of the particles were blown into some of her organs. They are bleeding uncontrollably and we cannot have an

emergency surgery, not only because her heart rate is out of control, but we also don't have permission from a guardian. Even if we did have permission we aren't able to pinpoint the exact location, it might not even help if we do the surgery. She's too far along."

"I give you permission! Does that count? She needs to be fixed. I need to take her home. I need to help her!"

The doctor put her hands on my shoulders. "We aren't even supposed to be taking care of her right now without a parent's signature. We could be in serious trouble. With emergencies it does work a little bit differently, but we weren't supposed to inject her with anything, even if it's just vitamin rich water. She can't tell us yes, and a parent can't tell us yes."

I was frantic and I didn't know what to say. The words, "Well, I give you permission!" came out again.

"You have no say. You are not her legal guardian and you are not over the age of eighteen."

"I turn eighteen next week! Have you even tried to call my mother?"

"We have." A frown crossed her face, "She hasn't answered the phone."

Nobody said anything for a couple of seconds. Unnoticeably the other doctors had slipped out of the room, so it was just the Asian doctor, whose nametag read "Doctor Lisa Chang," Jason and me, with Riley still unconscious on the bed.

"I'll leave you three alone for a minute." Doctor Chang tells us. I start panicking; I asked if she'll be close by, because I didn't want Riley to be alone if anything goes wrong.

"Don't worry; I'll be right outside the door."

When Doctor Chang shut the door Jason and I both walked over to where Riley was laying. I press my lips to an area where there was uninjured skin. "Hey Riles, I'm here now."

There was no response from Riley. "I'm so sorry Riley, for everything." I started to sob uncontrollably. "Riley I love you so much. You need to know that."

There was still no movement from her, but I swear a slight mumble escaped her lips. "Riley?" Still, there was no answer from her.

"Riley please. I love you, please wake up." After I said this, the heart monitor shows her heart is slowing down. Doctor Chang rushed into the room.

While rushing around the room and grabbing different items Doctor Chang says, "I need you to get out of here."

I didn't get out and I didn't do anything but scream, "Riley!"

"I said get out." With that Jason took my arm and pulled out the door. The other doctors filed past and locked the door once she was in there.

I pounded and pounded on the door trying to get them to let me in, but they didn't budge. I doubted they could have even heard me, but I tried anyways. A nurse walked down the hallway and told us we needed to wait in the waiting room. Everything was blurry and I didn't know what I was doing. My body was moving, but my mind wasn't with it.

By the time we get to the waiting room there was already light outside. I could see it through the windows. Thirty minutes passed, and then an hour passed. I ended up falling asleep in Jason's arms. The last I looked at him I could tell her was crying, I had never seen him cry before. He was trying to be strong for me, but it wasn't working.

When I woke up Jason's parents were sitting in the chairs opposite of us. Almost everything was silent, the only sound were footsteps coming from one of the hallways. Doctor Chang popped up seemingly from nowhere. When I saw her I practically jumped out of my seat. "How is she?" I asked.

A pure look of sorrow swept over her. "I'm so sorry."

Without thinking I rushed over to her and punched her in the face. Jason was right behind me and grabbed my arms and held me in a tight squeeze. I fought him, at first, but eventually I gave up and started sobbing into his chest. He held me there for what seemed like hours.

I hop out of my trance and stare back across the cemetery. Everything is still bright and happy, even if a drop of sadness is awakened, for the moment, inside me. Eventually everybody learns that these things happen and there is nothing we can do about it. We don't have to like it, but we do have to accept it.