

On A Sunday Morning

I watched my sister die.

That's the thought that weighs on my mind in every second of every day. I watched her die. Which is why I don't talk about this.

I can't talk about this.

So I'll probably toss this in the wood stove when I'm done. But I need to say it. All of it, as it happened, as I remember. My shrink says that maybe if I write it all out as if I'm telling someone then I'll be able to start putting it behind me. Because believe me, years are not enough.

My sister was beautiful. It didn't matter what she looked like or how she was dressed. She radiated every positive quality people are attracted to, and attracted they were. I never heard a single word against her.

Maybe that's because I wasn't listening. Maybe people didn't see her the way I do. But I don't really care. Fiona was-- and always will be-- my idol, and nothing anyone says has the power to change that.

Anyways, we had a routine. I would wake her up after I showered every morning; she'd make us breakfast as our parents left for work. Once she'd gotten her license when she turned sixteen, she drove us to school. On the weekends we'd go to a Sunday morning matinee at the little theatre in town. It didn't matter if it was the same movie two or even three weeks in a row (they only showed two movies at a time anyways). It didn't matter if it was a children's movie or if it was the worst movie we'd seen yet. It only mattered that we were together.

So it was a Sunday morning that we left. It would be a few weeks before I came back to our little corner house with the overgrown lawn and the dead flowers that our mother could never quite salvage. Fiona would never come back.

"Where are my keys? Bea-- where are my keys?!" There was excitement in her voice, as there always was. Even a hunt for lost keys was an adventure in Fiona's eyes.

"I dunno!" I said with laughter; Fiona always inspired my laughter.

"Hey." We both looked up to the second floor landing. "Take mine." Dad tossed his keys down to her, looking down at us with eyes like ours. I see so much of her in him now-- and in myself.

We rushed out the door with a last look at the clock in the kitchen. Rain was beginning to fall as she started the car. We had fifteen minutes to get to the theatre twenty minutes away. But Fiona drove carefully.

"Do you want to see whatever just came out," she said as we started the corner on Brey's Hill, "or do you want t--"

The lights were bright under the overcast sky. I screamed. Fiona didn't have the chance.

The sound of the crunching metal was louder than anything I'd ever heard.

I don't know how long I lost consciousness. A few minutes, maybe. When I came to I could feel the blood still flowing freely down my face. The windshield was shattered. The car was bent and twisted almost beyond recognition.

I could see Fiona's face; there was blood in her fair hair. She was barely

breathing.

Fiona stared straight ahead as rain poured down on us through the gaps in the wreckage.

“Fi. Fiona. Fiona!” My voice was pleading even to my own ears. She took one more shallow breath. And then none. There was suddenly no light in her fairy-blue eyes.

I think I screamed; I still don’t know. The world faded out and away.

I woke up one more time however much later; paramedics were loading me into the ambulance. I couldn’t turn my head, but even so I got a glimpse of the pavement pooled with rain, blood, and oil. And of more paramedics zipping my sister into a shapeless black back.

I slipped into a coma for six hours that Sunday. I woke up dazed and confused almost four days later. I don’t remember much of Fiona’s funeral, just that we placed cherry blossoms on her casket and that the mica chips in her dark headstone shone like little stars. She would have loved it, under different circumstances.

There was no open casket viewing. I never asked why, I never wanted to know why, but I’d seen her in the car. I knew why.

The man who killed my sister traded her life-- and his own, for that matter-- for a text message. There were so many court dates, so many tiny things that changed in our lives. The grass that was in a perpetual state of “carefully maintained disorder”, as my dad called it, kept growing. The flowers wilted completely. The door to Fiona’s room closed and stayed closed. The cross disappeared from my mother’s neck.

And I’m left trying to pick up the pieces that my life was shattered into that Sunday morning.