

Years 11 & 12

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Year 12, Dale Christian College

### **My Sister**

I saw spirits dancing on the wall. They were an eclectic range of colours, red, blue, white, and black. They swirled through the room, like blown dandelions blithely dancing in the sky, between doors and walls. The sound of faint beeping from the machines to my right fed me solace. Like a metronome, one right after the other. Beep, beep, beep. The spirits, the light and dark ones would peer into the bed where she lay and furrow their eyebrows, quizzically contemplating the situation of paramount importance as my hope hung expectantly in the room. My breaths were hollow and lifeless, mingled with the aroma of disinfectant and cleaning solution. The spirits were deciding, that much I knew. They were deciding whether she would live or die, whether they would carry her soul into the unknown, or whether we would both return home that afternoon.

She looked at me and I could taste her worry, it was sour and heavy. Her shoulders dropped like a plant starved of water, her face was grieved and sorrowful. My younger sister, I wanted to hold her hand, alleviate her pain, quash her worry, and shoulder her burden, but I couldn't.

I was the only person in the bright and practical room with its generic furnishings. Nurses, doctors, and patients whizzed past, determination enmeshed with their sanity on their countenances, and the lives in their hands. I would see the spirits following them, either the dark one or the light one, never both, but wherever the dark one went screams of loss and bereavement followed.

Over the years, my duty as an older sister had become more important, I had grown to be her protector and I lamented when she was first diagnosed. Since then, we had become as thick as thieves, insanely close despite our over 9-year age gap. I recalled earlier today, as I had my head down, shoved into my books, and enveloped in some analysis of sorts. The indefatigable strength to work for one last year propelled me as I wished to finally finish high school. It was my last year, and with my youthful naivete, I wanted it to count but when I heard the ambulance siren, my ambitions disappeared, and I just knew.

For any normal kid that fainted during recess, they would take them to the nurse's office and call it a heatstroke and be done with it. For a kid like my sister who had battled

cancer, fainting on the monkey bars meant so much more. I shook with anticipation and every doctor that walked by fueled my impatience.

“Has it come back or not?” I mumbled under my breath.

*Just concentrate on her beeping*, I told myself.

“Sayra, will you read me a story?”

Her sweet, delicate words cut through the clouds of my worry.

“Of course,” I replied.

She pointed excitedly to her school bag in the corner of the room.

I read a chapter of her current favorite book, *My Little Pony Adventures*, and just before starting chapter three, I saw the dark-colored spirit following behind a doctor whose sadness seemed to percolate through the hospital walls. He walked closer, closer to our door. I saw him through the clear glass, and I held my breath. As I waited, water flooded my palms, and my countenance drooped noticeably. He stopped in front of our door. I closed my eyes and threatened them to not relinquish their tears. I left my body and pretended that I was one of the spirits, floating around aimlessly, unburdened. I pretended that I was merely a lifeless amoeba, without feeling, and in my disassociation, I could not hear my sister’s worried gasps or the rapid increase in the beeping.

I held my breath and clenched tightly at the edges of the book, fighting past images of my emaciated sister in the all too familiar hospital beds, lethargic and discouraged from medications and tests.

He stopped at our door.

Raised his hand to open our door.

He looked at his blue clipboard.

Then, like a cruel joke, he turned around and opened the door of the room opposite ours. We both closed our ears and minds to the screams that erupted from the room opposite ours.

Temporary relief flooded my personage, but in my quiescence, I had neglected my sister and my fears had only ignited hers and now they crackled and burnt.

“It’s alright.”

“I know, I’m alright. I don’t even feel that sick.”

Her face betrayed her true thoughts, the trepidation was vivid on her face. I could see every fear, apprehension, and worry displayed on her face, and it consumed me.

I took her hands in mine and stared deeply into her eyes, so she could feel the emphasis of my words.

“You will be okay, I promise.”

It was one thing they told us not to do, make promises. Don't give false hope they instructed, it's out of your hands.

Not this time, this time I will rip the sickness from her body with my own hands if need be.

I resumed chapter three, hoping to distract her. Twilight had just made her friends a strawberry pie which had inconveniently become missing just when the party started and the ponies were frantically looking for it, tripping over hay bales and bookcases to do so. The absurdity of it all even began to elicit small and shy smiles from her in the rigid, unfeeling hospital room.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

The heart monitor kept on beeping steadily for another hour as my voice oscillated from accent to accent, from high-pitched funny voices, to low, whispered jokes and my sister's laughter filled the room.

We saw another doctor approach our door, and I knew before she looked down at her blue clipboard to double check the room number, before she knocked gently on the door, before she opened the door and beamed to the two young girls reading about a strawberry pie hunt. I knew because the spirit following her was the light one, it glided over her head and kissed the forehead of my sister. Its effulgence not only brightened the room, it transformed her life. I knew from that kiss, that gift, that the cancer had not returned, I knew from that kiss that my sister would never again be taken hostage by cells that attacked her blood.

"We ran the tests, guys, simply just a bout of heat stroke."

I took a breath, perhaps for the first time since hearing the ambulance, and the air tasted sweet and mingled with joy and disinfectant solution.

I looked at my sister and smiled warmly as if to transfer her some of my jubilation. She didn't need it. The light twinkled and danced across her eyes as if the stars in the sky were dancing and singing and celebrating. I felt the warm touch of her hand in mine, the single sense of her joy that climbed into my heart like flowers climbing a trellis.

I didn't hear the beeping anymore. I heard heartbeats and I saw the spirits dancing, gyrating with joy like the aurora borealis in our hospital room.

"I'll go grab your parents," she said, smiling and exiting the room.

This time we still heard screams, but they were proclamations of happiness, joy, and gratitude.