

The night was dark and drizzling and the sky was freckled with little stars. There were no clouds but there must have been, recently, since stuff was wet all around. I could see how wet it was from the window of my room, when I looked. I could see the car parked on our side was red and shiny with wet. If I stood, which I did, I could even see our above ground pool was empty but wet at the bottom with water that puddled in two big spots. And I stood, and I saw the puddles, and I wondered if these were the details anyone wanted to read about.

Were it up to me, if I was honest, there'd be none.

Except that wouldn't be a book, my sister says.

My sister *said*, just now.

She sat on the edge of my bed below the sword over the bed, and read this first chunk back to me.

She asked what the red car was all about. Did the car belong to somebody, she said, as if I knew whose car it was. Could be the deaf babysitter mom said was supposed to show up tonight, but didn't. Leaving us all alone to write a memoir on a dark and rainy night.

What does the car represent?

The mind reels. I flopped back in my desk chair like I was dead and defeated and with only the tips of my toes I turned the chair until she lined up with my eyes. It was just a stupid detail, I said. It's what she said I had to have. There was a red car so I said so. Then I sat up and huffed and took my laptop back and asked how I was supposed to know what details to include from the rest I shouldn't? Probably there were fifty thousand details of any given moment. I can't even choose Chinese if the menu's long. I can't even pick a movie; I fall asleep scrolling stuff. How the frick should I know what stupid bits I see out the window to type about?

And she said I had good points and tried not to cry and left the room like that, and what was I typing. Nothing.

Fine whatever, she didn't.

I don't care. She didn't cry. Okay yes, I want to write a good memoir. Okay no, good memoirs don't lie about their sister. That's why I apologized.

That's why I corrected myself, which is the same thing.

An unreliable narrator for a memoir makes no sense.

She didn't cry, it turns out, but I wished she would. What really she did was make me change stuff and sit there miserable and crossing her arms. Yes she did. Yes she did so. I don't care.

She denies this but it's staying in the book because it's true to my perspective. From my POV that's what happened, what I saw, so just leave it.

And then again, there was something odd now that I thought about it, about that red car being there. I mean maybe it was filler, or maybe it wasn't. Could be, it was foreshadowing something significant. Like who even parks a red car on our road in the middle of a rainy night? Maybe that's who made the sound downstairs before, the sound that turned both our heads. Maybe grown ups that drink left their car out front to sneak up to the house and break into the kitchen and that's why we heard the smash before.

She got up and locked my bedroom door and stepped back from the door with scared steps. Small hesitant steps I perceived to be scared, considering the context of a stranger in the house.

Then came another sound, like to prove my memoir right. A sharp and deliberate one, issued from the kitchen just downstairs, the familiar sharp utterance of a wood chair turned across the wood floor, and my sister gasped. And just like that, the red car wasn't filler, and my memoir wasn't junk, after all. She turned and looked at me typing and had her hands up to her face and frowned like seriously, someone is in the house. And looking at me, her eyes became serious indeed at the next sound of a hand clasping over the handrail at the bottom of the narrow stairs just outside. Followed by the first and familiar step that always followed that sound. And willing herself to be brave, my sister called out the name of our mom, our mother. She steeled herself and barked it.

And even I stopped typing to anticipate a response.

But none came, unless you count the slow and creeping next steps up the narrow stairs outside my bedroom door. Which I do not. And my sister shuddered with rattling wrists and gestured like how could I be typing at a time like this, as if standing there holding her face with shaking hands was a better I want to say preoccupation?

Then the steps stopped maybe half way up the stairs and there came a terrible slapping sound, a hand against the wall. And a sharp rapping of knuckles.

And at last, making my sister look faint, a terrible haunted moanings. I am not making this up. This is a memoir. There came some long drawn out ghost moans. The sort of moans a ghost would make if a ghost were real and wanting our attention, creeping up our stairs.

It made all the nerves or the little hairs on the back of my neck stand up. A shiver all the way up my back.

And my sister screamed—not so much out of horror feelings so much as to bait a response. She screamed and looked at me and listened, like an experiment, her eyes shooting here and there about the room to somehow hear better. The way you'd wait for your echo in a cave.

Except from the quiet that followed came only further quicker steps up the narrow stairs, and my sister's scared face dropped. Like she was a robot. And like a robot she turned and took one big step up onto my bed in her pink pyjamas and three more steps across the bedding to the wall where she drew my sword from the mount. The sword Dad gave me for intruders and practice but told Mom was just decorative so she'd let me keep it. A real, actual sword my mom believed could not be removed from the mount.

(Because I lied, which is a lesser crime in some countries than reading memoirs without permission.)

With shaky legs my sister lowered herself from the bed. She crossed the room and squared off with the door. And she did this just in time for the visitor to arrive. I had heard the creak of the penultimate step, the creakiest second-to-last step, and then the creak of the landing. And with only a locked door between them, the stranger and my sister squared off.

And the sword trembled.

And the door rattled.

I'm just going to say what happens in order.

There came an audible breathing against the door.

A knocking against the door.

My sister said she had a sword, to the door, and tapped the door to prove it, the sword as shaky as her voice was.

And the door tapped back.

Before more ghostly moaning.

And finally, this is the last thing, to my sister's private horror, the door pushed inward. The door my sister locked began to open.

I can say now looking back that probably she'd locked the door but didn't shut it properly. Not the first time this has happened.

The door pushed open while my sister shook so hard her hips were shaking, raising the sword up high and shouting that she had the sword. And shouting that she'd use the sword.

But the door opened just the same, and my little sister swung the sword down into the deaf woman's forehead where it sunk in enough to stick. Because it's a real sword. And the woman stumbled backward and dropped to the ground and looked up and around like a unicorn whose corn had a hilt. And looked around crosseyed like she couldn't see it but wanted to. And my sister with both hands to her face again screamed but more like she'd made a big mistake.

And then there was blood. I remember like it was yesterday, because it just happened. The blood came fast and significant. All bright and red like a fire truck on a long, dark road. Red like really red blood was red. Like the car out front had foreshadowed, among a row of trees whose own four shadows cast longly down the road by lamps whose cones of light were abuzz with insects, probably. And in the pool the puddles were, two of them, just as me and my sister were two. And the stars twinkled the puddles' eyes. Not really. And the moon hung with a roundness you'd expect. And everything was quiet now that the ambulance had taken the woman away.