

Silence

"Are you comfortable?" asks the doctor. The bright lights are all fixed on my face.

"Yes," I reply, my voice dripping with despair. That was a lie. It's hard to be comfortable.

"I'm sorry that it had to come to this."

I feel my eyes slowly.

I open them again and I'm greeted by a speckled midnight sky. The stars stare down upon where I lay. The soft grass holds my body afloat in the vast sea of prairieland. Fireflies zip around the skies, and grasshoppers sing their songs on the fields.

I sit up and look around. I am completely alone, and that's how I like it. I crave the silence. Silence to me is as the stars to the night sky; the stars are nothing without darkness, and I am nothing without silence.

Standing up, I feel the grass tickle my toes. I start to walk until I see a dim glow in the distance. This stops me in my tracks, as I thought I was the only person out here. I continue forward and start to see the outline of a small house. Why is there a house in the middle of my prairies, I think to myself.

I knock on the door and a woman answers.

"Who are you?" she asks with a hint of fear in her voice. She is a middle-aged woman with chocolate hair with hints of light gray. Time is starting to etch itself into her skin, and she looks worn and tired from age. But in the midst of this, her eyes still glitter youthfully in the light. I can't help but stare in awe of their beauty.

"Did you hear me? Who are you?" she says with more urgency.

I think for a second. *Who am I?* Then I reply.

"I don't know." From behind her, I see a young girl, eyes wide with fear, peering from behind the woman's leg. She has the same brilliant eyes that the woman has. She looks familiar, but I don't know where I would know her from.

"Do you really not know?" she says with disbelief.

"Have we met?" I say suddenly, still staring at the girl. The woman catches where I am staring and gestures for the girl to go in the other room.

"No, we haven't. Leave." She starts to close the door until grab the door handle.

"No wait. Please. I thought I was alone here, but now I've found you. Can I please come in?" The woman bites her lip with a conflicted look upon her face. After a moment, she answers.

“Fine.”

I step into the house and feel a rush of warmth and comfort. This house has a natural, homey feel to it, with its lumber floorboards and stone slab fireplace. You can hear a low, reassuring hum from the lights. There are dolls strewn about the living room and kitchen. Drawings of the woman and the girl are on the refrigerator, along with magnetic letters. A grand clock sits above the couch, but the hour and minute hands aren't moving. I stare at that clock for a second, but then the woman clears her throat and I look over. She gestures for me to sit at a table. I walk over and sit in a chair. It creaks when I make the slightest movements.

“My name is Jane. The girl you saw is my daughter, April,” she begins slowly, with a slight tightness in her voice. “What are you doing here?”

“I don't know. I was walking through the prairies and saw the glow of your house.” I pause. “Are you sure we haven't met before?” She gives me another look of skepticism. I know she isn't taking me seriously.

“I'm positive that we haven't met before. When are you going to leave?”

I can't stop thinking about her daughter and how familiar she looked.

“Can I talk to your daughter?” I spout suddenly. She gives me another look of disbelief. She sits there and thinks.

“You really don't remember?” She watches me as she leaves the room to retrieve her daughter. When Jane returns, her daughter is following with wide innocent eyes and her small hands wrapped around her mother's hand.

“Hi April”, I say with a small smile and tenderness in my voice.

“Hi,” she replies shyly. Her voice triggers something in me and I know what to ask.

“Can I ask you a question?” I ask. She nods.

“Do you have a daddy?” She shakes her head.

“Where is your daddy?”

“He did bad things. He is gone now. We will never see him again.”

“What was his name?”

The woman jumps in with an irritated voice. "I think that's enough. I shouldn't have let you talk to her. She is a young girl. Her father traumatized her and I. That's it. It's time for you to leave."

I sigh. "It was nice to meet you, April." Somehow, I know that I will never see her again. I reach out to shake her hand. She takes my hand. As I pull my hand back, my eyes glisten and a tear runs down my face. The woman looks at me incredulously.

"Goodbye," I say with a tight throat. I walk out, knowing that I will never see them again.

When I reach the top of a rolling hill, I look back.

The house is gone. I breakdown. Tears flood down my face.

"I will never see them again!" I scream into the inky sky. My screams turn into whispers. My whispers turn into silence.

I lay down and close my eyes.

I open them and am blinded by bright lights. My senses are shaken and I try and sit up, but there is a strap holding me down. I feel the cold metal I am laying on burn my skin.

"He's...he's awake," says an astonished voice.

"Can you hear me?" says another voice.

I open my mouth to speak but all that comes out is a dry cough.

I try again.

"Where am I?" I say in a raspy voice.

"Do you not remember?" Asks the voice. My eyes start to adjust and I see the outline of a man.

"Let me go back," I whisper.

"Do you know why you're here?" He asks again.

"No. Let me go back," I whisper again with tears forming in my eyes.

"You are responsible for the murder of your wife and daughter," he says slowly. "Do you remember Jane and April?"

The memories rush back and a sense of dizziness and nausea overtakes me. I remember everything. I remember my wife and daughter. I remember being drunk. I remember the screaming. I remember wanting silence.

"I'm so sorry," I whisper with a shuddering voice. My whisper turns into a scream.

"I WILL NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN!"

"Increase the dosage," I hear the doctor urgently say to the other doctor.

"I WILL NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN!" I continue to scream, tears running out of my eyes. In the edges of my vision, the doctor flicks a needle and inserts it into an IV.

My screams fade with my vision.

I am left with silence.