

My mother held me close as she whisked me away through the twisted forest path enshrouded by the pine trees above us, Our embrace sealed in blood, the flame still yet flickering within me giving her the strength to push beyond the barrier of trees to freedom. She had lost all but one child tonight, She refused to lose this one.

The light of mercy beamed onto us, pulling to a halt a white truck manned by what could only be god himself, an aged man full of compassion. Me and my mother were pulled into the bed of his truck to transport us to safety. My mother went to lay me down so she may rest-It is then I saw the Stranger, A monster with blood seeped deep into its clothes, desperation in each step towards us-its eyes crazed with fear and worry. The words it spoke will forever be burned into my mind.

"HONEY YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! I HAVE TO! YOU'RE GONNA KILL US ALL! LOVE! COME BACK YOU HAVE TO TRUST ME! THEY ALL NEED TO DIE!"

She didn't care for what it had to say, My Mother's eyes never left me, her voice breaking the harsh wind and the rumbling of the truck with hope and comfort...I couldn't keep my eyes open any longer, The only thing I knew was that she was here...brushing my hair with her trembling hand humming 'Somewhere over the rainbow'. and that's all I needed to know.

I was spared that night and brought back from the brink, and almost as if it never happened life continued, as if my sisters weren't dead. As if I didn't almost die. Things just...had to continue? Life couldn't wait just a moment? No. Never.

The kids at school didn't deserve the hate they experienced. They didn't deserve my anger. I had refused to be friends with any of them and actively attacked any kid who was willing. My mother tried to defend me, and my actions despite me being the one in the wrong, refusing to see me as anything but the light in her life. This trend continued for years, the older I got the angrier I was. No friends really besides The local church leader 'Father Jeremiah' and his son Patrick who despite all of my pushback never relented on saying that I am a good person on the wrong path, I hated that statement, The phrase "wrong path" was a slap in the face, What is the 'wrong path' how do you choose your path. It's just **your path**, there is no changing it-this is what I believed with every fiber of my being.

As the world moved on, my mother settled in this new life despite the hardships. I could not. I would not. I refused. My Mother would keep trying though, never giving up on me, even at my lowest points. She was always there to brush my hair, to hum to me. To tell me that I must strive for a happier life, to take **control** of it.

I never went to college, straight to the work force doing fast food jobs to help in supporting my mother in the day to day despite her own protests...but my Uncle offered to try and get me a well paying job at the Penitentiary he works at being a 'Correctional officer', A Government job. I jumped at the opportunity for better pay and more benefits.

I served myself, and was finally settling into a life. I had control over, working towards getting my own apartment so I could move in with this guy I was sweet about, yes my mother contested I should still got to College first before any of that, I was going to choose my own life if I could...From there I started visiting Father Jeremiah more and Patrick, asking for forgiveness after being the little shit I was..

The world moved on as it always does.

Marriage. Adoption. Love. Growth.

This is the life I wanted to live.

**But we cannot control the path we walk**

The door was locked, the house was a beautiful shade of **blue** with a White Truck in the driveway. I knocked a few times to be respectful, shifting the heavy bag that was hoisted over my shoulder. No response—An anomaly. My mother always answered.

'Ma?! It's Paul? Ya Awake!?'

No response. The hair on my neck stood up as I leaned down grabbing the fake rock to take out the emergency key. And opening the door. I call out again into the void.

Mom? I'm coming in!-I got some groceries I bought for ya?...Ma?

I headed straight to her bedroom to see if she was sleeping. Not here, I walked to the bathrooms. Each room searched, fear bit at the edges of my mind.

The only room that was left was mine. The room that had nursed me until I was ready to fly.

Ma?

I stepped in, my hand pressed up against the light switch, too afraid to pull it I instead stepped forward walking towards the slump-her features slowly coming into vision. The room smelled of iron. The box I now found myself in felt cramped and suffocating, as if the weight of the world was held here...in this tiny room.

I kneeled down to look at her pale skin...her eyes closed shut. My hand touches the carpet-wet-I pull my hand back looking at it...it was thicker than water stuck to my hand...blood-As if the revelation revealed all...my vision adjusted to the seeping dark, now seeing what this truly is...she was dead, blood had seeped from her wrists,, my heart quickened feeling like it was going to burst-Panic-Tears-What was I supposed to do...

Paul wrapped his arms around his mother, brushing her hair softly as if to avoid shattering her...He began singing quietly to himself. His body trembling as his mind-fails to truly process what has happened here.

"Someday I'll wish upon a star, Wake up where the clouds are far behind me, Where trouble melts like lemon drops, High above the chimney tops, that's where you'll find me, oh Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly, And the dream that you dare to, oh, why, oh, why can't I, I?"