

Remembrance

When you came home, you were wearing familiar jeans and a black sweater. For some reason, I expected a hospital gown. I guess the hospital must've made you give it back. A bandage was wrapped around your head, and your once long black hair was gone. I could see the new hair growth coming out of the top of your skull, like that of a marine. Mom said you might not remember anything, and we should just be grateful that you could still walk and talk.

When you looked at me, I could tell from the look on your face that sixteen years of memories were gone. You walked through the cherry wood front door and past the white couch where we used to play humpty dumpty and fall backwards onto the soft leather. The look on your face belonged to someone who was lost. Mom pointed you towards the kitchen and sat you down behind the granite countertop. Without a word, Mom prepared your favorite omelette, the one you used to prepare for yourself. She filled it with Canadian bacon, mushrooms, green onion, and string cheese. I sat down across from you and tried not to stare while you ate. *Don't put too much stress on her, Mom had said. Don't overstimulate. It will be difficult for her to make sense of things for a while. We'll be working on structure and consistency.*

I wondered what you were thinking. What wild thoughts might be lurking in that damaged space. Were you planning to run away and find a different world where you could recall your past life? Were you afraid? Were you angry? Was part of you remembering anything at all? Although you were the one who was going through the trauma, I couldn't help but feel sorry for myself. You hadn't lost me. But I had lost someone who understood. I had lost the person who could remember the goldfish incident, the person who knew about my secret crush on Martha Stewart, the only individual on earth who knew of my irrational fear of watermelon seeds.

Instead of inhaling the omelette like you normally would, you picked at it and eyed it with concern and perhaps frustration. Something in your eyes looked eclipsed—as if someone had extinguished a light inside of you. Mom poured you a glass of pink lemonade and handed it to you cautiously. You sat there as if petrified, staring into space like someone had removed your soul and left only your physical being behind. Before, you were unable to sit still and always fidgeted through meals. Yet here you sat, completely still, as if cut out from a photograph and placed in a world where you didn't belong.

The ticking clock in the background was the only sound to be heard. It was as if each tick represented each of our shared memories that had faded away. *Tick.* There went the time we sledded down a hill in the middle of a blizzard. Away went the laughter from watching the Youtube replays of the elementary school talent show together. Would you ever remember the time that we rode the bullet train in Shanghai? Or the time when we were bored and tried to slide across the hardwood floor in our socks? Would you ever remember your five gold medals in taekwondo? All the memories I recalled reminded me of how each thought was something you may never remember again.

The ticks soon blended together and the minutes drew on forever in that kitchen. At last, you rose and blindly drifted towards your bedroom. Mother offered no directions, yet you knew the location of the room where you had felt the most at home. A flicker of hope ignited—perhaps, deep deep down, you would remember the drawer where you used to store all your most treasured possessions: your first taekwondo medals, your leftover cast from the

time you broke your toe, and the diamond earring that had been passed down to you from three generations ago.

Curious, I followed you. No recognition glimmered across your face—instead, you stared wordlessly at the pale gold walls, the white dresser, the white bedspread. As you gazed at these items, I pondered your thoughts. Would you ever recall the backstories behind these trinkets in your room? Would you ever again feel the same rushing pride you had experienced after receiving that medal? Would you remember that exhilarating rush of accomplishment after you had successfully overcome your toe injury? And would you ever relive the love flowing through all of the hands who had touched the diamond before you?

Mom told me that it would be too much to hope for that you would ever remember those lost parts of your past again. I knew I would have to learn to accept that, and I was prepared to start over. Yet I would never forget the old you—the other you that lived a different life with me. The memories might have disappeared from your mind, yet they would never fade from mine. I would protect them.

You pointed toward the corner of your room. “What happened to my stuffed baby kangaroo?”

It took me a moment, but I remembered the kangaroo. It was a sandy color, and had a small white pouch at its stomach that you use to stuff ribbons into. The look on your face was as if someone had just killed it, and the sound of your voice was so familiar that it shocked me.

I responded quietly, “I can’t really remember.”

“Did someone steal it from me?”

“I think you grew out of it. You liked other things like books and tv shows.”

“Who has it now?”

“I’m not sure, but maybe we gave it to Cousin Michelle who was younger than you. We always gave her your old stuff.”

You were quietly gazing at the empty corner and absentmindedly tracing the crevices on the wall with your finger.

“Do you think I could ever get it back?”

“I don’t know, but we could try.”

And I knew we would try. We would call Cousin Michelle and anyone else we could think of. We would get on our hands and knees and dig through the old cardboard boxes in the basement. We would even hunt for the same kangaroo at every toy shop in town in the hopes of recovering something you once had before. And even now, when hope was harder to find than a pebble in the ocean, I knew it would not be a lost cause.