*It wasn’t his face, or his eyes, or any of that. He told us that a handshake had power and I found that was true.*

*The last thing I remember before the darkness was the blurred lights headed straight for us.*

Chapter 1

My eyelids feel heavy as I try to open them and then myself blinking against the harsh lights overhead. Moving my arms, I find them attached to wires of some kind and realize I must be in the hospital. Choking a bit trying to breathe through my mouth instead of the tube in my nose, I alert someone nearby that I have awoken. Due to the brightness of the lights, I am unable to tell who it is before they rush out of the run shouting for someone else. Too exhausted to stay awake, I close my eyes and drift back off.



The next time I wake, the lights have been dimmed somewhat and outside the window near my bed, the sky is a dark navy too saturated from buildings to let the stars shine through. Glancing around the room, I see a figure sitting awkwardly in the only chair available sleeping. It’s Charles, aka Charlie, my one and only annoying big brother who’s holding a book. Now that’s odd. Charlie never reads so long as he can avoid it.

Before I can find a way to rouse him, a nurse comes in a smile grows on her face seeing that my eyes are open and that I look lucid. She runs a few basic checks then tells me that she’ll go get the doctor and let him know I am up. I nod and as she leaves, I look back towards Charlie only to see him frowning at the ground. He changes to a grin when he lifts his eyes up to meet mine not knowing I’ve already seen the frown.

“Welcome back to the land of the living, Mare,” he tries to say enthusiastically.

“Didn’t I tell you to stop calling me that? You make me feel like a horse,” is my completely un-sarcastic reply.

“You didn’t always think that you know. And it’s much better than Mimi or something don’t you think?” followed by incessant blinking on his part. I hate when he does that.

“Is calling me Marian really that terrible?” I say with a pout on my face.

Thankfully, the nurse returns with the doctor before he has a chance to reply. As the doctor rechecks my vitals and does the follow the light dance, she explains that she is Dr. Farrows, a neurosurgeon, and that I underwent an extensive surgery after the accident. When I tilt my head sideways and pull my eyebrows together in confusion, she explains further that I was in a car accident, several months ago.

“There were complications during the surgery, so we will have to run a few more tests before we release you, but you should be out of here in a few days if nothing else happens.”

I want to ask about the complications, but my parents arrive and the doctor goes over to talk to them. Charlie turns to me and opens his mouth to say something, then closes it again and shakes his head. He passes me the book he was holding and then heads out leaving me to wonder what he was going to say. Picking up the book, I start to read.

Chapter 2

A few days and a dozen tests later, I am finally free of itchy, baggy hospital gowns. For some reason they didn’t want me in normal clothes, which made no sense. I shower and change in the bathroom, but am surprised by the reflection in the mirror. A new person is looking back at me. My hair is longer, thanks to technology; they didn’t have to go through the top of my head and instead went in with a scope through my nose, which sounds awful. It also appears that I have lost a little weight as the jeans Mom brought for me don’t fit as snuggly as previously and the t-shirt is a bit loose.

I let out a silent sigh and then exit the bathroom to face the critics. Mom makes her concerned face as her mouth pinches in like you would make to pretend to be a fish, money running through her mind. Dad is nowhere to be found and Charlie is covering his mouth trying not to laugh at me. I glare at him and he erupts into a fit of uncontrollable laughter and Mom smacks the back of his head. I let out a small snort at that. A nurse comes in to get the paperwork releasing me from Mom and then we are out the door.

Once outside, the sun shines down on my face and I realize that the last season I remember it being was winter. I ask what day it is and Charlie sadly replies with May 20th. I try to shake that off and get into the car ready to go home. The buildings of the city pass by quickly and fade out to fields starting to show the beginnings of corn and soybeans. We pass through several little towns until we finally reach ours and pull into the driveway.

The flowers are starting to bloom in front of the porch and the trees are nearly full of brand new leaves. It’s quiet right now with school still in session. The house itself is basically the same, a bit of mold growing around the edges of the windows and the birds are chirping and flittering from tree to tree. The steps are still creaky as I walk up to the door. I open the door to prepare myself for what might be different inside.

Inside not much has changed and I decide to head up the stairs to my room. Pausing at the doorway, I take a deep breath and enter in my domain. The first thing I notice it how neat everything is. Clearly someone decided to mess up my organized chaos. It shouldn’t take long to get things back to normal. I lie down on my bed and revel in its familiarity. It doesn’t take long for me to dose off it the first restful night since I regained consciousness.

Sometime later, I reawaken and see the day has escaped and dusk is setting in. I turn over to find a sandwich on my desk and I nibble at it and gaze around the room trying to recall what happened before the accident, but my head starts to hurt and I abandon the mental search and lie back down and soon fade back out. I dream of falling snowflakes and bright blue eyes.

Chapter 3

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