

## The Spinning Girl

It was pretty stupid actually. Sitting on the cold marble tiles with scattered flecks of gold, letting the hard floor dig in to her bones until her legs went numb. She looked up, noticing the gold from the floor was accented by the monogrammed gold thread of the towels and the shiny gold faucets without a smudge in sight. The deep maroon of the cotton towels added warmth to the large bathroom. A lone summer breeze-scented candle glowed in the corner. Amongst all this, here she was, staring directly down the toilet bowl at the hors d'oeuvres she had stress eaten coming back up. Her black painted fingernails were coated with her own saliva and the very tip of her index finger had already chipped. So much for looking classy at a funeral.

She stood up and smoothed her black dress over an already bruising tailbone. The large rectangular mirror was surrounded by light bulbs in a pattern of three different kinds to achieve just the right flattering glow. The murmuring voices and shuffling feet from outside the wooden door could be heard softening as she locked eyes with her own reflection and instead of looking away, she stared.

She traced her face with her eyes. It was so perfectly oval, like the little soaps in the fancy dishes next to the gold plated sink. She thought about how easily her face could be sketched down on paper and cut around the perimeter, curved edges that could be folded directly in half and sides that would line up seamlessly. Her eyes would meet there, too. Two golden-brown pools with just the right amount of green to be hazel lying atop each other, oozing into the other. She itched the tip of her rather large nose and it turned red.

The smallest dimple in her chin gave the mark of her family, and was the first distinguishing characteristic new friends would point out in her likeness to her mother. But despite the soft glow of the three different light bulbs, her skin was pale. Paler than it ever was

and she wondered if people who saw her could see the hints at a tanned past spent carefree in swimsuits in the sun. She pulled the sleeves of her fuzzy sweater over her hands, sweaty palms sticking to a cotton-blend. Her eyes darted to the door at the thought of someone from outside coming in, someone she would have to explain the redness of her mouth and the hoarseness of her voice to. It had been four months since her last purge and saying it out loud would only reinforce the guilt of a relapse. She had already avoided three separate run-ins with old best friends that she lost touch with in the past three years, but it wouldn't be long until someone found out her little habit had become worse.

She looked back at herself in the mirror to check her reflection once more, making sure she was ready to go out and face old classmates. Ready to face the death of a friendly teacher. Her eyes didn't catch the bright lights of the mirror enough to sparkle. Rather, they were slowly becoming less bloodshot and watery from the lack of oxygen and struggle. She breathed a sigh of relief, hand reaching out to wash with the oval pastel soaps. She stared for a long time at her face dim in the mirror, trying to feel a connection as she washed her hands in lightly scented suds. Margot followed herself in the mirror as she stepped back, reached for the soft towels to dry off her hands. She desperately wished she could feel something, anything.

Her eyes closed for a moment before being startled open by two loud knocks. She checked the toilet to make sure she had flushed for the fourth time, before straightening her dress, taking a deep breath, and popping three strong mints into her mouth. She could blame her eyes on crying, she decided, as she opened the door to yet another person dressed in black. Her eyes met with the old woman who knocked, and she received the familiar grin of a pity and sympathy. The woman wiped away the invisible tears on Margot's face with an, "Oh, honey... here keep the handkerchief, I have plenty."

Margot scanned the sea of formal black clothes to search for a seat amongst the set down funeral programs. Little black and white photos of a dead person filled the funeral parlor like confetti. She gripped the cotton cloth and excused herself politely.

How strange it was to be in a time warp out of nowhere – everyone from a meager past resurfacing like no time had passed when three years since graduation had gone by in the blink of an eye. And yet everything was different. For instance, Margot was twenty-six pounds lighter and dressed better. Her hair was three inches shorter, but her palms were just as sweaty.

The large room was cold – cold enough to keep the awkward shaped ice cubes afloat in the bright pink punch bowl. A crystal handle pushed the small heart-shaped ice around in a whirlpool every time someone got thirsty. This punch bowl sat next to a four tiered cake, covered entirely in black fondant with shiny black edible ribbons and a single figure sat atop it. A man with wiry grey fondant hair that stuck out in every direction that sat in a dark cherry rocking chair assumed to be carved by his small mitten hands. The only splash of color on this morbid cake was the addition of the bright red suspenders he wore every day of his life. Margot imagined him in a monocle and top hat and thought about asking if she could have the figure to take home. He often joked about wearing a monocle when Margot sat in his classroom at lunch, a calm place away from the food and skinny girls in the lunchroom reminding her of how hungry she was and how fat she felt.

Instead, she took a mental picture of the figurine and continued past adults she didn't know and classmates from high school she didn't want to know, avoiding eye contact with a practiced ease towards the table set against a wall of covered mirrors. She scooped up a small

glass of punch full of ice to munch on so no one would suspect she wasn't eating. Punch in hand, she looked for a chair near the fireplace to keep warm in a room that felt like death.

The slow melt of the ice cube in her mouth gave her something, anything, to concentrate on as she sat in a chair designated for a child, her knees pressed together. The game was to see how long a piece of ice could sit on her tongue before she would have to swallow the water, and she was good at it. Hours could pass while she sat with ice, trying to make the next one better than the last. The sound of crunching ice was one of giving up, and it hurt her sensitive teeth.

Luckily enough, Margot had let this particular ice cube sit on her tongue for a while because when she saw long legs and flowy gold hair walk in, she swallowed it whole. Her eyes began to water as she held back the loud, inevitable coughing.

Logan showed up late and all 109 pounds of her looked as good as ever, her bare legs surrounded by pairs covered in black tights. She lit up the entire funeral, a parlor room full of black chairs set up like church pews in rows behind a dark cherry coffin. She is all the sharp angles and honey blonde hair Margot remembered her being. She had a glow that only natural sunlight and good genes could deliver. She's as tall as Margot dreams of being and beams, an unselfish light that added some life into the funeral. She filled the whole room despite being so thin.

Logan was alone, but not for long. People flocked to her for comfort or to reminisce, and Margot focused on the ice in her mouth as someone walked in front of her, temporarily blocking her view as she glanced up to show a half-smile in acknowledgement to the man's "excuse me".

But when she looked back to Logan, she sighed. To call Logan pretty would be an insult. She's not even beautiful – she's otherworldly. Her hair bounces and moves, and she can toss it around and it still falls perfectly across her shoulders with a memorized ease. Her tanned skin

looks soft, such a stark contrast to Margot's own pale skin and dark hair and five foot two frame. Margot had once just wanted to know her name and what her favorite color is and her biggest fears. Then she had just wanted to hold her hand and kiss her until they fell asleep and spell out "I love you" on her forearm with her fingertips. She swallowed the cool melted ice cube, looking down to find the next piece she would put on her tongue to push away the thoughts of what had come next after the soft script of "I love you" stopped being enough.

Logan's eyes finally landed on Margot, and even from across an entire room Margot noticed the small mole sitting just on the right of the bridge of her nose. The same mark she had loved from the first time she saw it almost eighteen months ago. It's perfectly centered between the tip of her button nose to the beginning her eyebrow and it's still the cutest thing Margot has ever seen.

They hold eye contact for a second, but Margot quickly breaks it and gulps lamely, shoving the next piece of ice into her mouth to start another round of her game.

Death loomed over the room like a heavy fog, making everywhere look grey. Margot would have smiled if it wasn't inappropriate, the funeral having ended just under forty minutes ago. She would smile if she didn't want to cry. Eight months of healing all shot down the drain within ten minutes. And she would smile if she wasn't staring at the girl who broke her heart and never came back.

The ice in her mouth did little to preoccupy her thoughts from wondering if her hair was falling out of the bun she haphazardly threw it up into in order to puke earlier. Did she smell like puke? Did she eat enough mints? Was it obvious? Margot checked her knuckles, immediately scratching at the first two on her left hand to match the redness of her right. The small glass of

watery punch toppled but never quite fell as it rested on her knees. Margot pulled out her phone and looked at her face in the four inch screen full of smudges. Her mascara had held up despite the watery eyes which were slowly becoming less bloodshot as the minutes passed. Her lipstick was barely smudged on the corners and her cupid's bow was sharp as ever. But, the dark circles under her eyes were clear as day in between the make-up and sweaty finger smudges on this screen. She looked sickly tired and Margot tossed her phone back into her pocket, the watered down punch toppling to the floor.

“Shit.” She mumbled, quickly standing up and looking around for napkins. People were still slowly filing around to greet each other, some had already left to go home or to the house where they would gather in a less formal environment. Her old English teacher caught her eye. She was wearing a velvet floor length dress and Margot wondered how warm she must be in the thick fabric and tried to ignore her sudden negative thoughts about the teacher's plump body.

“Oh, Margot honey. Are you okay?” Her blue eyes matched the emotion of her furrowed brow and Margot wanted to crumble into her arms. She was one of the teachers who would sit in Mr. Red Suspenders' room for lunch with Margot and distract her from the hunger rumbling in her stomach.

“Oh yeah, I'm fine. I mean, as great as can be, given the circumstances...”

Ms. Simon reached her hand out to place on Margot's shoulder.

“Sorry, um, excuse me, but I don't want to stain the carpet.” Margot gestured down towards the pale pink pool of water creeping towards their feet. “I need to go get some napkins.” Margot one-armed hugged her and briskly ran off before Ms. Simon could point out that the floors were hardwood.

On the way to the napkins, Margot bumped into an old classmate, an annoying tennis player who was in college on a scholarship and had thin arms. The small talk was boring, Margot barely nodded along as the girl *Susan? Savannah? Stephanie?* rambled about Mr. Red Suspenders and his influence on her tennis career.

“He would’ve loved that cake.” Tennis Player said, eyes glancing behind her at the table. “He was always so quirky, and he loved cake,” She paused as if she was waiting for Margot to answer, but went on without giving her enough time to. “I’m glad this isn’t a run of the mill funeral... he would’ve hated that.” She squeezed Margot’s forearm as they nodded in moment of silence. She offered to give Margot a ride after to the park where they were going to set off fireworks in remembrance of Mr. Red Suspenders. “There will be root beer floats, his favorite!” She chided, and Margot shook her head. “I’m going to be... doing something else.” After puking once already, she couldn’t bear the thought of swallowing ice creamy sugar and carbs that would sit on her thighs forever, an unwanted reminder of momentary weakness. Margot walked away to get napkins, slightly annoyed that the girl didn’t even mention how much weight Margot had lost since high school, but somehow managed to mention Logan and how pretty she still looked.

Margot glanced around the room to find Logan, hands cold and wet from sopping up the spilled watered down punch. She watched her mingle, sharing a story with nearly everybody in the room. The way her eyes lit up when someone said something nice, and the way she mirrored their frowns when they said something sad. Her hands were always in the perfect place. On her hips, on their shoulder, on her chin to look contemplative, wrapping around someone’s hand, forearm, waist. She would pull them close to cry on her shoulder and somehow always procured

a tissue for them, a small smile when they thanked her with the grace of God. Margot threw the napkins into the trashcan with force.

The tiered cake on the table three feet away from her smelled good. Or at least she assumed it did, with all of the butter, sugar, flour, cocoa, calories, fat, and carbohydrates that went into making it. She slowly inhaled, glancing back to see if Logan was anywhere near before closing the distance between herself and the cake. The knife caught the sunlight filtering in from one of the three skylights, and hit Margot's eye just right. She could almost hear Logan's voice echoing around her, making her itch in her skin. The black handle of the knife was cold hard plastic and it fit into her hand perfectly. She began to count to five, trying to slow it all down and think rationally. She successfully made it to three, but the satisfaction of knife slicing through soft cake calmed her nerves even faster. Her left hand grasped the small sliver of cake she had sliced and stuffed it into her mouth. The sweet taste melting on her tongue quieted everything, and she closed her eyes with the knife still in hand.

The slow melt of fondant covered chocolate cake with a dark chocolate mousse filling made Margot feel light. Light enough to float away from it all, feet slowly coming unglued from the hardwood. She opened her eyes, slicing off another piece as she curled up in her huge black sweater and ate cake to drown out the sounds of the girl who left her and ruined the holidays.

“Margot?”

Her eyes shot open, body warm as it flooded with blood and her face went red. The sweet, warm scent of Logan overwhelmed the cake, vanilla and sand smothering the chocolate frosting and fondant.



*Fuck.* Margot was going to show Logan how far she had come, she had gained eleven pounds, she hadn't thrown up in nearly four months, and she had bettered herself. She was okay, today was just a fluke and she was doing good she swears.

"Hi..." Margot didn't know what to say. *You broke my heart, you bitch.* But it was too cheesy, too easy, and not true enough. She wiped at her mouth, crumbs of cake falling to the ground.

"You made it." She decided that was probably a good start.

"Margot, you look..." Margot shifted from one foot to the other, biting the inside of her cheek as Logan looked her up and down. *Terrible, sick, thin, fat? Covered in chocolate cake and shame?* "You look the same as when I left..." The knife in Margot's gut carved its way to her heart.

She could tell Logan wasn't sure what to do, or say, and it was a rare moment that Margot sat in. But the look on her face was the same look her mother gave her when she asked why she was sick with her third cold in one month, the only excuse Margot could think of for her sore throat. Margot felt her insides begin to churn.

She could smell the cigarette smoke on Logan, despite her put together appearance, and when her hair swished from side to side Margot would inhale. There were people crying, bustling around them but they were a boulder in the middle of a river, rapids passing but firmly solid in the ground. It was hard for Margot to even look at Logan, who looked back at her with the same twinkle in her eye but something was missing. Time had passed them by, and Margot felt okay. She had taped herself back together and actually done something about it. At first to win Logan back, but now it seemed to be purely selfish. The good kind of selfish. But another split-second of weakness, and she felt sad – every emotion rushing back to her as she swallowed

and felt how scratchy her throat was. She sighed, Logan sipped her punch before opening her mouth to speak.

“I have to go.” Margot blurted out, before Logan could say anything. She slipped away to that bathroom again, closed the door and leaned against it in a dramatic move straight out of a film. Her eyes closed and she felt the tide of it all rush back.

They had laid in the warm summer days, toes spread out and fingers interlocked. They had told each other everything and nothing, and Margot was grateful that with Logan, time didn't pass. It flowed from one minute to the next, no schedules. With Logan, there was no reminder of lunch time, dinner time, after school snack – it was here, it was now, and it felt like forever in a blink of an eye. Their smiles mirrored each other in size – too large for their faces, Margot's unsure. As spring turned to summer, mornings with Logan became hazy. They settled on dreamy beams of sunlight streaming in, heating up the already hot room. Yellow, yellow, yellow filled the room and Margot wiggled her toes, sheets tangled around her calves and watched the dust float in the air, wondering how it felt to be weightless. It could've been hours before Logan woke up, but when she did she made it look effortless. A few blinks and her eyes lit up, filling the room and making the sunlight look garish.

It had been the end of summer, Margot was still entirely covered up to hide her secrets against her chest. It was hot, scorching and yet her whole body catapulted into icy cold water the second Logan walked up to her.

“I've been wanting to do this for a while.” She murmured, and her hands rested on Margot's hips to pull her forward.

As soon as Logan's lips pressed to hers, Margot forgot any other feeling than those soft lips against hers and the fluttering in her stomach. Every atom in her was buzzing so loudly, louder than her heart pounding in every one of her pulse points and the hairs on her neck stood up.

Sometimes Margot would think about the kiss when she lay in bed at night, feeling sad and the memory would keep her warm. Sometimes she'd think about it as she stare out the window in the passenger seat of her car, staring at landscapes and it would make her touch her lips to still feel the spark.

And sometimes Margot would wish it never happened. Maybe so she could experience it for the first time all over again, or maybe so she would have never realized how serious it all was.

Summer became colder and the only thing that kept them warm was the sweet "I love you's" exchanged and hot chocolate for Logan, calorie free tea for Margot. Margot would watch Logan light a cigarette and groan at how utterly cliché these moments were. She would stare at Logan and couldn't help but feel that the flame of the lighter hit Logan's eyes in such a way that made them look like the sea reflecting a lighthouse, guiding a sailor safely to the harbor. The way her pink lips curled around the freckled tan end, with such ease and practice that Margot almost felt jealous of all the experience she'd had. Her fingers held the end like a model for the latest trendy brand of Marlboro. Her fingers were thin, just like the rest of her and Margot's stomach twisted. It was hard to get angry at someone she loved, but the way she could eat anything and be so carefree in her shorts and tank top made Margot's blood boil.

Logan had a wisdom to her inhalations, there was practice and poise. Her exhalations spelled out secrets in the sleepy smoke that Margot wanted to capture in a box so she could listen to the whispers when she felt lonely. Logan watched Margot watch her with a soft smile,

“Want to try?” She had asked. Her voice had sounded confident that the question was rhetorical.

“Sure.” Margot’s voice was way surer than her loud sped up heartbeat made her feel.

Logan’s eyes crinkled with her wide grin and Margot wished she looked that good when she smiled. Logan had handed her the cigarette, fingertips brushing against her own with a spark. Margot was terrible at smoking, but tried anyway – determination to master it taking over any rational thought at how bad it was.

“Maybe one day I will be as cool as you are.” She had said after another loud cough, passing the cigarette back to Logan.

“You already are, dummy.” Logan had said. Her voice was full of something sweet, but Margot couldn’t quite place her finger on what it was. After all the shared cigarettes that had followed, Margot would resist the urge to touch her own lips, trying to capture the tiny bit of Logan left on them.

But then Logan began to notice the things that Margot had hid. When she barely ate, pushing food around her plate and bringing an empty utensil to her lips. Or when she would eat way too much, shoveling in monstrous bites without even tasting them. It was after she smiled and cracked a joke about eating way too much that she would express a need to go to the bathroom, “I’ll catch up with you in a minute, let me brush and floss my teeth – my dad’s a dentist”. Logan didn’t want to bring it up, it seemed like a touchy subject and something Margot would rather not

discuss. But then she wanted to, because Margot would barely leave her house anymore and they would always spend nights in the dark and avoiding talking about food, weight, looks, celebrities, the latest diet fads. Until Margot couldn't stop talking about them. But Logan would try, and Margot would shut her out. What was once carefree became tear-filled fights until Margot stopped crying and Logan stopped trying.

It had been months of carefully stepping around the subject before Logan broke Margot into a million frail pieces of porcelain dust. Margot had held Logan's hand, and it was warm and soft just like the rest of her. But she had felt something off in the way the butterflies in her stomach timidly flapped their wings, as if they didn't want to disturb her. They did not want her to notice how loose Logan's fingers were, or that she hadn't said anything for the past few minutes.

The street had been strangely quiet. It was the last warm night of the year, thrown in between the gold leaves and visible breaths of October. There was an almost hot breeze flowing through the ends of Logan's hair, picking them up into the sky and slowly laying them back down to brush Margot's arm. Despite the heat, the strands had left goosebumps along her arm. It had been long enough in the silence, and something under her skin was crawling. She stopped walking, jolting Logan to stand still with her in the middle of the street at four am.

Margot's eyes locked with the grey eyes in front of her, the pair that caught the streetlamp three feet behind her and illuminated the whole street. Margot fought the urge to bite her lip, and instead broke the silence.

"Logan... Is everything okay?"

The way her eyes dimmed for a moment made the four inch height difference glaringly obvious to Margot. It was moments like this where she saw the girl who led an entire team to win

a track championship, convinced people daily to adopt dogs from shelters, and worried Margot's mother. The small mole on the left of her nose was visible in the streetlights' glow and Margot was reminded that this was Logan. And she was okay.

Logan sighed and the butterflies froze.

"I'm going to be honest, Got.... It's not. I'm not okay and I don't know how to say this but even just now, that look in your eyes... you're so frail Margot. I feel like I'm always holding a porcelain doll and I don't want to drop it because I know you'll shatter. Margot, I know you know that I love you. I know you do. But... but, I think it's so deep down that you've hidden it away because you're scared. I'm scared. You put all this power into my hands..."

Margot felt her squeeze her hand as she said this and her own hand ached with how hard she had been gripping Logan's.

"And I don't want it. I can't handle it. I can't handle you. I want to, I really do and I've been trying... really hard." Her voice cracked on the "really" and for the first time, Margot watched as her composure did too. A car drove by, headlights blinding Margot for a second and she blinked as she tried to focus on Logan's face once again.

"I'm tired of watching you slowly disappear, Got. You don't think I notice your voice is always hoarse, or that you keep the nails on your right hand shorter than your left, or that your first two knuckles are always red." Logan held her hand up, and even under the half moon, the stars, and the glowy yellow streetlights, the scuffed up knuckles were visible.

"You never eat anymore, not with me. I've woken up in the night to you gone, and I can hear your footsteps downstairs trying to be quiet. But you never are quiet enough. Your parents buy snack cakes for me when I don't even eat them, but you do. Margot, I've seen the stash of

wrappers in your closet and your endless supply of mints and when I hug you, you are always smaller than the last time."

Margot felt numb when Logan's voice broke on the last word. She couldn't remember who had unclasped their hands, or when Logan had started crying or when she had starting biting her cheek to keep herself from screaming, or crying, or apologizing.

"I don't want you to die, Margot. I don't want you to disappear anymore. I want you to be whole, and okay. I need you to be okay. But you won't let me help you be okay, Margot." She began to lean down towards Margot's face, her grey eyes locking with Margot's hazel ones and for a moment, all was still. The sprinklers two lawns down had sunk back into the ground to sleep another night before watering a lawn that still yellowed despite the constant attention. Margot felt overwhelmed, everything inside her was so hot it was cold – as if blue flames were licking at her bones.

"It's not up to you, Logan. You don't know me. *You don't know me.* I don't know you, I don't want to know you. I am fine. I will be fine. I have always been fine."

It had sounded like a memorized mantra, one of practice and poise. Her voice was sure and rustled the leaves of the trees around them.

Logan hiccupped, her tear stained cheeks and puffy eyes finally made her look human. Margot wanted to take everything back but she couldn't, the butterflies had left her stomach and now she felt the void. She wanted to get away from all of this as fast as she could,

"If you're gonna leave me just say it now. Don't be a fucking martyr, okay? You're not a saint or some manic pixie dream girl here to skip into my life and make me better. I am already better, I am fine. I will be fine. I have always been fine."

Margot had never felt so cold in her life, and despite the warm October evening, began to shiver.

"Margot... I love you, don't say this. Don't do this. I'm not trying to do anything but help you, I love you. I just need you to be better, for you. I love you, please, know I love you."

"You don't love me." Margot took a step back, voice steady.

"Margot, don't. Don't shut me out again. Don't do this." Logan's arms opened, as if for a hug but her feet were planted as she was unsure what else to do.

"You don't love me." Margot took another step backwards.

"Margot. I love you. Don't push me away." Logan stared into her eyes, looking down at her with uncertainty.

"Leave. Leave me. I don't need you."

"Margot. I love you. Let me help you."

Logan reached out, her touch sizzling against the coldness of Margot's bare forearm. Margot yanked it back at the burn and crumpled to the ground.

The sidewalk was warm. She felt her body curl in half, her forehead leaning forward against her knees, her teeth clenched. Logan slid down next to her, a tentative arm reaching out around bony shoulders for comfort. She kissed the back of her head, and held Margot as if she was holding her together and if she had let go, Margot would have dissolved into a puddle.

It was a long while before Margot leaned into Logan, no longer fighting the touch but needing to feel it. Crickets chirped all around them, drowning out her heavy breaths. *I'm sorry.* She couldn't speak but instead pressed her lips to the bare collarbone in front of them before standing up, extending a hand to pull Logan up. Logan wiped the remainder of her tears off her own face and was pulled into a hug.



Margot pressed her nose into the golden blond hair, inhaling the permanent beachy smell that was so different from the desert forests around them. There was a moment of understanding before Margot broke the silence, her voice bouncing off every surface around them.

"Leave. I don't need you."

Logan destroyed her in the wee hours of the morning on an empty suburban street and Margot was glaringly aware that if she had screamed right then, it would've caused a scene. Instead, she had let go of Logan and fixed her eyes on the grey concrete. She retraced their footsteps to that point on the street where everything had fallen apart. She avoided where she assumed Logan's feet had been on the cracked sidewalk as if the cement was fresh fallen snow and Margot was stepping into the untouched spots next to the ones Logan's own feet had made. She would have asked Logan to walk her home, told her that the dark was terrifying and the flickering streetlamps that lined her street were no help in comforting her against the ghostly trees in the park opposite them. Instead, she trudged forward, the only safety was in hearing Logan's footsteps quietly behind hers. Margot bit her tongue at how angry she was that Logan knew how scared she was. How angry she was that Logan knew her at all. And how angry she was at herself.

Margot had waited until she was all the way upstairs in her room, before curling up in her covers and wishing she could cry herself to sleep. She laid awake, digging her fingernails into her palm and stared at the fading glow-in-the-dark stars on her ceiling before walking downstairs to find something to fill the emptiness in her stomach. She grabbed four hostess snacks, the chemical sweetness on her tongue erasing the taste of Logan's skin, and she sipped full fat homogenized milk with reckless abandon. She glanced at the clock as she choked down the last

of the fourth cake, the green glow lighting up the white of the milk in her glass and she instantly felt sick.

It was 5:03am.

Her father would be downstairs in twenty-seven minutes to make his coffee. Margot rushed to pour the milk down the drain, the force of the movement splashing it back up onto her hand and on the counter around the stainless steel. She fought back tears of anger and thought for a second of burning the wrappers of the treats she ate. The same ones that her dad took to work every day for a small treat in his lunch, 'the height of his mid-afternoon' he once joked.

The guilt sunk into her stomach and leached into her trembling hands as she forced her fingers down her throat, at just the right angle to make the treats reappear in the kitchen sink. She hoped her coughing couldn't be heard over the running faucet.

She rinsed her fingers, swished the mineral taste of tap water around in her mouth and listened to the deafening roar of the garbage disposal erasing all evidence and guilt. She got herself a new glass, filled it with water from her fridge and felt the coolness wash over her sore throat. She quietly walked up the stairs, all four hostess wrappers stuffed in the pocket of her sweatshirt and fell asleep without the usual afterglow of relief – completely exhausted.

There was a hesitation in her hand, Margot's eyes glanced up at the lone candle that flickered and burnt out in the corner of the bathroom. She pressed her two fingers against her tongue and slid them back towards her gag reflex, hovering over the toilet and itching to throw up the cake she had just eaten. To throw it all up, her memories of Logan and the fact that she was at a funeral, in the bathroom trying to be thinner. Wanting to be thinner, smaller, less. There was a man who was dead in the ground, buried less than a mile away with fresh dirt coating his coffin

and Margot wanted to be skinny. But more than that, she wanted to be released of all the emotions in the world. She wanted to exhale, truly exhale everything out of her body and reshape her bones into a stack that looked like a human.

Margot heard a knock on the door. The three taps were soft and Margot knew exactly who it was.

“Margot...? Are you okay in there?” Her voice was calm, but Margot could tell that on the other side of the door, Logan’s eyebrows were probably furrowed.

Margot stared at the navy blue door, vision blurred by a sudden rush of tears. After contemplating for a full fifteen seconds, she stood up and listened to the loud resonating sound of the door being unlocked. She turned the handle with as much patience as she could handle, first two fingers covered in spit. Her eyes met grey ones, full of nothing but concern and care. She shook her head.

There was a moment of stillness. She stood there, fingers digging indents shaped like half-moons into her palm before opening the door to let Logan in. She was tired of doing this – relapsing after months of doing it all by herself. There was pride in fixing it alone, but it all faltered every time she wasn’t strong enough to keep a sober streak of more than a few weeks. The negative thoughts could only be controlled by herself until they swallowed her rationality and she cracked. Holding it all in was hard. There was no supportive shoulder to cry on when she felt like she was going to do something she would regret.

Margot looked up at Logan, she hadn’t stepped forward yet and she looked cautious. Despite everything, it still felt as if no time had passed and they were back in Margot’s yard, laying under a tree and spelling out secrets on each other’s forearms. Margot had shut her out

when she had tried so hard to help. But she did care, even after all those months and how awful Margot had been to her in the end. She still cared.

“Margot, are you okay? Can I help you this time?”

Margot stepped back enough for Logan to walk in, her soft hands reaching out for Margot’s. Margot caught Logan’s hand, and a sea of calmness surrounded them as she reached for the life vest and chose to float instead of drown.