End of a Life

It was cancer.

She was in the waiting room, shifting from leg to leg, trying to distract herself by fixing the black mask on her face. Even the smallest movement of the mask brought her hand back up to it. The pamphlets on the wall next to her and the painting behind her were catching her attention. The colour stimulated her eyes in the otherwise white room. She was glancing to her mum, a few meters away, who was talking to a family friend. Talking about things that she didn’t want to hear.

A sound echoed through the white room. The girl’s eyes darted up. It was the elevator, releasing a man from its stomach.

Her mum walked up to her. “Do you want to stay, or come with me?”, she uttered quietly.

All she could do was grab her mum’s hands, and stare into her deep brown eyes that were filled with worry and concern. Her voice was stuck in her throat. Unable to make a sound. However, she didn’t need to. Her mum knew what she wanted to say.

They got into the elevator, hand in hand, the girl worried that if she let go she would be swallowed by the very same elevator that released the man. Her mum pressed the button to go up. The ride was short, but it seemed like it went on for years because of what was waiting for her in room 101.

*Who* was waiting for her.

A ping was heard as the door rattled open. She was getting closer. Her mum’s hands were reassuring and grounding as they stepped out. The white walls continued. Stretching the hallways. Doors at every turn.

Her mum leads her down the hallway, taking turns that she was not paying attention to, looking at the people walking past and others talking to each other. Looking inside the empty rooms. Looking inside at the people lying on plain beds. Looking inside herself.

Each step grew harder to take. Knowing that she was getting closer and closer.

“We‘re here.”

Looking inside the dark room, her view was blocked by a curtain. It was jarring. The dark room off a bright white hallway.

Squeezing her mum’s hand before stepping inside. Around the bed was her family. The static room was like a morgue. The deathlike silence haunting.

Feeling the presence of someone entering, her family turned. Their faces were bare, tired and removed of all colour.

But that was not what she was looking at. It was their eyes. Puffy. Red. Exhausted.

Their eyes travelled back to the body. Lying on the bed in front of them. Not moving. Not making a sound. Now their eyes were telling another story.

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