

[A short continuation from previous introduction to a roughly titled story called  
*Castaway*]

I jerked up, sitting erect in the dark, the sweat pooled down my neck to the middle of my collarbone. My heart was pounding to the erratic beat of footsteps. I grabbed my plastered hair. *It seemed so real. The dream*, I thought myself. My heart still pounding, I gripped the deep royal amethyst duvet and matching silky sheets that covered my bed, pulling them aside as I put my feet on the carpet beneath my queen-sized bed. I placed one of my small hands on my knee, my other stretched for the dangling switch of the lamp on the nightstand next to my bed. Finally finding the switch, the light bulb illuminated a warm light across the dark crevasses the night exposed within the room.

*The dream felt so real*, I say to myself again. Taking my hand from my knee, I lean on them. I shoved the wet hair hanging in my face out of my eyes, but I didn't let go of it. *It seemed so real. So, so real. But it wasn't real. Couldn't be real. I have no marks on my body from the falling.* I looked down at my hands, looking for the scratches the twigs of the trees cursed onto what I thought was my body. But after turning my arms around, I found no marks but the one scar on my forearm. It was in the same place where it has always been. *It was only a dream, nothing more.*

Lifting myself from my bed, I went to the bathroom connected to my bedroom. Grabbing the glass sitting next to the sink, I pour some water into it. The water felt wonderful flowing down my hoarse throat. Setting the glass down, no water left but a small droplet, I shuffled my feet across the floor, my eyes already on their way towards closing before I crashed

back onto my bed. It was this reason, my zombie walk to my bed—that I missed seeing the window next to my nightstand opened a crack. The seasons had been changing the last few weeks, the summer heat quickly becoming the fall cool. And my father never allowed the windows to be opened specifically at this time of year. Never. I didn't leave it opened.

The same morning I vaguely remember my door opening and my dad saying "Rise and shine, Sunshine," before shutting the door. But too soon for my taste the door opened again and I was awakened with a "You need to get up Eden," the door shutting once again. Finally, seeing that I was going to sleep through anything he said, my father came up to my bed, his hands engulfing my side, pressing me into the mattress wherever his hand connected, shouting, "Eden get your ass up! You're going to be late for school and I can't take you today if you miss your ride." The pressure on my side was released as he walked to my open bedroom door. He slammed the door shut, the sound finally waking me up.

Turning to my side, I slowly opened one eye to look through the sunlight, into my alarm clock: *8:30 a.m. Shit!* Tossing my covers to the wall, I hopped to my closet, pulling whatever clothes I could find from the hangers and dresser. They didn't need to match, but just cover me. In my hurried race, the getup I picked out wasn't that bad; a pair of snug blue jeans and one of my favorite blouses. Going to the bathroom, I tossed my hair into a hurried ponytail, throwing toothpaste on my toothbrush and giving them a speedy scrubbing. Rinsing the brush, I tossed it in the sink.

Running down the stairs, my feet pounding each step down, announcing my arrival, my dad had a piece of toast out and ready for me. My feet at the bottom step, I grabbed the toast. "See Dad? I am not late," I said. "I would never be late for the next most *exciting* eight hours of my life during my senior year."

My dad's mouth lifted, grunting his laughter, his eyes bright. "Remember your brother is coming home today to spend time together as a family. And so we can go visit your mom and sister," he said. The brief smile he had was gone, his eyes darkening to their normal hue of blue, much like how it was most of the time these days when we talked about my mom and sister.

"All right," I said, nodding my head. "Got it. I'll be here." Putting the soggy buttered toast in my mouth, I opened the door and grabbed my book bag next to it, walking through the doorway, closing the door softly behind me.