

# Shauna

I wake up. A woman sits at my side, crying and clutching my hand. More people whisper behind her. A little girl. Goodbye? A tube sticks out of my wrist. This looks like a hospital bed. The woman repeats over and over, "Jordan, I love you. Jordan, I love you." Her hand. Nice. I can't....

I wake up. A squirrel drops his teeth in my heart. He chews slowly, every once in a while chattering his molars, making my whole body shake with a chill. I've swallowed a golden pineapple and I can't breathe. An ugly man in hospital scrubs keeps whirling around and dropping off the face of the earth. I struggle to hold onto my sheets.

"Sir, can you hear me?" says the nurse before he whirls around again.

"Yes," I say, but moan instead.

"Sir, what's your name?" says the nurse.

"I don't know," I say, but instead I gurgle. Saliva drips from my mouth, and I get one breath in, one breath out.

"How old are you?" says the nurse.

"I said I don't know," I say. The bed floats out of reach, tumbling mid air. I fall into a sea of shadows, trailing the wind whipped sheets behind me.

Someone speaks.

"Pump him full of pain medication and pull the plug," the voice says.

"It would be a mercy," the nurse says. "You could still say goodbye. A day or so."

Their voices echo in the darkness.

I wake up. Everything is quiet. Light enters through a window by a desk, books neatly stacked in one corner. But... crumpled bandages by the lamp. I slip out of bed and pick them up. Woah, I sway and fall to the floor. This floor is carpeted and soft. A residential street lies outside the

window. I'm on the second story. I pause for a moment, studying the bloodied bandages, the street, again the bandages, then drop the pile in the trash. I walk down the stairs. The woman from before is setting the table. It's steaming bowls of oatmeal.

"Jordan, Honey, how are you?" says the woman. I blink.

"Doing well, how are you?" I say. Then, "Who are you? Who am I?"

"Jordan?" She whispers.

I walk out the door opening onto fresh lawns and a street cold and pokey against my bare feet. Children play on bikes and scooters. I stand in the middle of the road. The woman follows me out of the house calling my name. A small child runs her trike over my bare foot. "Sorry daddy," she says, then rolls away. I stop. Daddy?

A rumble echoes from around the corner of the street, the throaty chuckle of an engine and the whine of a loose belt.

Whirr, whirr, whirr, kahrooom, a scrappy car driven by some scrappy teenagers skids around the corner. Children scream and run out of the road. One of them isn't fast enough. A little girl, my daughter, sits on her trike and stares at the car roaring towards her.

I throw my girl to the side. The car washes over me like water over a beach. I can hear the water, I can feel the waves. It's dark again.

I wake up. The woman, my wife, sleeps. I pick up the phone on the nightstand, looking for clues in my contacts. Shauna. Shauna is the person I dial the most. Shauna is my wife. I jump out of bed, and Shauna starts awake. I run down the stairs, unlock the door, and step into the street. It's dark. I wander until I hear the familiar rumble of the scrappy car. I follow the sound up and down the streets until I reach the garage where a group of kids work over a car. I tell them to be more careful driving around. I threaten to call the cops. I slip on a wrench and crack my skull on the sidewalk. Someone calls an ambulance. Shauna's there, cradling my head.

I wake up. Shauna sleeps, breathing softly. I breathe too, enjoying the moment, accepting it. I shower, eat breakfast, and follow the route in maps to the place labeled ‘work’. I spend most of the day shoveling manure out of horse stalls, then return home. I talk a little with Shauna, and we go through our wedding photos together. She tells me she’s expecting.

“Expecting what?” I say.

She laughs.

I wake up. The air vent rattles. Someone snores. Shauna? But she isn’t there. Yet. There are three other guys in my room. Bunkbed, my backpack full of books. Schedule tacked up on the wall. Class starts in ten minutes. My hand brushes over a tiny velvet box in my dresser. It’s a ring. A ring with a diamond. I call Shauna.

“Hey, I’ve got to talk to you,” I say.

I wake up. My alarm is blaring. I run upstairs taking the steps three at a time. Shauna isn’t in my phone. My beat up Civvy squeals into employee parking. It’s a Wendy’s. I’m in the drive-through. I give out extra straws all day, then I see her. I’m doing an extra shift, and it’s nearly midnight. Shauna leans out the window to take her food. Scribble my number on the back of the receipt and hand it to her, breathless.

I wake up. I’m so tired. Food. There are two people staring at me. It’s so blurry. I’m screaming. Somewhere in the back of my mind I feel ready. Ready to start whatever adventure this is. My tiny fists grab at my parent’s fingers. I hear so many sounds, smell so many smells, myself included. I need a new diaper. Both my parents stick their noses in my hair and inhale my musky baby scent. Shauna will be born down the hall in two days. I can’t wait to meet her.