

Happiness

I gaze up at the burnt sky and bathe in its warmth. The wind rustles my hair and crinkled leaves swirl around my feet. The silence is bliss. Abruptly, my husband's ringtone slices through the air causing numerous animals to scurry away in panic. I clutch the bulge of my stomach. A kick of agitation. "Sorry," he whispers, quickly answering the call.

"Hello, is everything okay?"

A muffled reply from the other line.

"What?! Okay, we're on our way," he hangs up. "What is it Richard?" I ask, trying to keep up with his brisk pace. "I'll tell you when we get there," he replies, a concerned look on his face. I decide to stay quiet, it seems urgent and I can barely keep up with him, let alone ask questions. We scramble into the car and begin driving. I stroke my swollen stomach and try to calm my heart rate.

"We're here," he states, opening my door and helping me out of the car. He puts a hand on my shoulder, "Honey before we go in, I think I should tell you." He pauses for a long time, gathering his thoughts. "She's, fallen ill again." My breath catches in my throat. "The doctor doesn't think she'll make it through this time." Tears threaten my eyes and I squeeze them shut before a drop can escape. He holds my hand tightly and opens my mother's front door.

Walking in, I see my family, clutching one another, their faces dull and pale and their eyes raw.

"She's just upstairs." says my aunt quietly, clinging to my uncle.

"Thank you." a hoarse whisper I manage to squeeze out of my parched mouth.

Every step I take towards her room seems to last an eternity but finally I reach it. My hand trembles as I push down the handle and the door creaks open. "Mum?" I squeak.

"Jennifer, come in my darling." she croaks. I walk in, still clutching Richard's hand. I go towards her bed and see my beloved mother lying there. Grey, spindly hairs framing her lined face. A vase of sunflowers by her bed side. Sunflowers. The flowers of happiness. She pulls Richard away from me and whispers in his ear. "Take care of them my son." I manage to make out. Tears prick his eyes as he forces a doleful smile. He kisses her forehead, squeezes my shoulder and leaves the room. I stare at my mum and she stares at me. She suddenly bursts into laughter, clutching her sides. "Oh, Jennifer. Always so serious, I am happy, don't you know. As I always say-"

"Outside that single fatality of death, everything, joy or happiness is liberty," I cut in, finishing the sentence with her. A small chuckle escaping my lips as I clasp her hand.

"Happiness that, is the key to life Jen. Promise you'll remember that," she places a hand on my bump.

"I promise mum, I love you," I bend over and kiss her wrinkled forehead.

"Now leave me in peace, you're just like you were as a baby. Never left me in peace," a small silver tear escapes her eye as she rushes me out of the room, laughing still. I admire her for that.

I begin to walk back towards the foyer, when a sharp pain suddenly jabs my stomach. I try walking quicker but the cramp becomes too painfully. I take one more step but my foot is met with wet carpet. "Oh, no."

The next few hours go by in a blur. Next thing I know, Richard finds me crumpled on the landing in a puddle of my broken water and races me to hospital. Everyone running around like headless chickens trying to help. We arrive at hospital and labour begins. I feel desperate, tired and sweaty. All my emotions at once. A baby wail and the nurses rush off. Richard talking to me the whole time. Chaos. Complete chaos.

Then, all of a sudden it's over. The most beautiful creature is placed in my arms. Looking at me with the most beautiful, auroral golden eyes I've ever seen. Just like the sky that same morning. She flashes me a gummy grin. Richard strokes my head. "She looks just like her," he says, reading my thought exactly. The doctor smiles at us. "Any thoughts on a name?"

"Of course!" I exclaim. I knew before she was even born. Thanks mum. "Happiness. Her name is Happy."