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AIDAN NEEDHAM

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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~ A Sudden change ~

I woke to the sound of the hospital pager, "Dr Kruger to ICU, Dr Kruger to ICU.", This was no shock to wake up to as I had been spending numerous nights in the hospital. I slowly pulled myself out of the bed that the nurses had kindly given me the night before. My sister not yet at the tender age of three, lay in the adjacent bed to mine, I could hear the respirator slowly click over as it pumped life into her lungs, I could hear the slow rhythmic sound of her drip ticking away. My watch read 05:30am, My mother lay asleep, slouched over my sister's bed and seated on the edge of her chair, I knew she hadn't had much sleep because she never slept anymore, she would stay awake incase anything happened during the night. The smell of fresh coffee drifted into the ward, it was a sickly smell of antiseptic mixed with freshly brewed coffee the smell seemed off putting, but in my state I couldn't resist.

I pulled myself to my feet and sleepily walked to the ICU kitchen. The walk had become natural for me now, if I was lucky I would occasionally do it in a wheel chair but not today. I entered the kitchen just down the hall from my sister room, there were two nurses inside chatting amongst themselves, usually they were very friendly, big smiles consumed their faces from ear to ear and the sound of laughter was always shared between us. However today was different I found the two nurses chatting as I entered, yet for some reason they ceased their conversation as soon as they noticed me. I felt obliged to smile and attempted to do so in the awkwardness of the room, they continued to pour two cups of fresh coffee.

The walk back to my sister's room was tricky, as carrying two cups of coffee proved rather difficult for a ten year old boy. I entered the room and placed the cups of coffee on the bedside table, my mother looked so peaceful that I decided against waking her. Instead I kissed my sister on the forehead. The hope that she would wake up was so large that it was painful, I held her hand and gently stroked her head, she looked at ease - and I felt better knowing that she wasn't in pain. My sister had been in a coma for three months, she was on life support to keep her breathing. A disease which she had acquired a year ago was preventing her body from healing after she had had a tumor removed. I sat back on my bed slowly sipping my cup of coffee, the taste was average yet it seemed to awaken my senses.

My mother began to stir around an hour later, she woke up as though a bad dream had shocked her from her sleep. As though acting on instinct she immediately checked to see whether my sister had come to during the night. She rose from her chair and sat next to me, I could sense she was upset and that she was going to deliver some bad news. The news was worse than I had imagined, she told me that she had decided to take my sister off life support, as she felt it was not right to put her through any more pain. As I was only ten, the shock was apparent but didn't seem to last, I couldn't seem to grasp the nature of what was happening. I went about my day, playing on the jungle jim's and

having fun. Before long a few of my mother's close family members began to arrive they all seemed pale and not there, none the less I continued to play by myself and not fuss over their problems. My father arrived (not the father of my sister) and came to talk to me. I have always looked up to ^{my} father and enjoyed the time we spent together, but he seemed distant, distracted by an invisible force. We sat together for a long time not talking but rather being, he would occasionally put his arm around me and tell me to, "hang in there!".

A nurse from the ward, the same one from the kitchen that morning came to call us. She said little about what was going on but I recall her saying, "It is time." My father and I returned to my sister's room, it was now full of people that I knew, my grandparents, all my family and my mother's friends were there. I was told to move to the front of the crowd, there I found my mother holding my sister, a chair had been placed next to her and I cautiously sat down. My mother looked at me with a tear in her eye and asked, "Would you like to hold her?" I reluctantly shook my head and held out my arms, my mother stood up and placed my sister on my lap, she moved behind me and hugged me, I could feel my sister's breathing slowing she began to relax and the expression on her face was one of sheer happiness and peace. In those final moments my sister's mortal body left us but her spirit remained with me forever, A moment forgotten is a terrible thing and I pray our spirits will live on forever.

~THE END~