

I.

The day began like any other. Rain sprinkled against windows, light but steady. Insistent, almost, like someone knocking on a door, waiting outside with a message still a mystery.

Perhaps I should have known. Nature has its way of sending messages, but I'd been too caught up in the moment. The sounds that greeted my ears were finally loud enough for me to place them. I was looking forward to things, to further development and understanding of the world.

Then the same rumble I'd grown used to echoed through my body. It was a voice. A woman's voice. But it wasn't my own. It spoke, "good morning, mother."

"Morning, Rose. Are you feeling alright?" Something shifted, moving me along with it. I had grown used to this feeling; there was no longer an element of surprise to it.

"I'm all right. The usual morning sickness, but otherwise I'm fine." There was a pause, not awkward, but rather natural, like the pause between the beeps of a monitor nearby, before the same voice spoke again. "Where's Jack?"

Silence. The only thing I could hear was a heart beating, close. The beats grew closer and closer together in time. Faster and faster. Thump thump. Thump thump. "Rose, dear —" a sympathetic note to her voice.

"No. No, no, no!" the beats grew erratic. Trembles rocked throughout my body, but I couldn't understand where they were coming from. I tried to stop them, but to no avail.

The beeping of a nearby machine picked up its rate. The sound grew louder and louder, ringing in my ears as the pounding grew in my head. Stop it, stop it, stop it! It was unbearable, it

was too much, and my new sense of hearing had not learned to, and simply could not, deal with the loud sounds.

“Rose Elizabeth Fall! Don’t just think about yourself, think for the two of you! You’re hurting the poor thing!” her mother scolded.

There was a clear note of desperation inside her voice when she stopped trembling and finally spoke. “Jack...how could he just leave? We were a family! Why...why would he do such a thing?”

At this point the incessant beeping had slowed and my head grew clear. Her mother replied, “Rose...things like this happen sometimes, but we just have to learn to get through them and survive on our own. It’s not going to be easy, but you have your father and I to support you.”

Sniffling sounds filled the room. The rain outside had picked up, and thunder quaked the building. “I...I don’t think I can do it, mom. I don’t think I can bring it up on my own. I think...I think I want an abortion.”

The room grew deathly silent, but the ringing in my ears returned. The quiet grew too loud for me to bear, and I shook inside my mother’s body.

I was never to see my own mother’s face; never to meet my father, or even hear his voice.

It was the 24th day of my life.

II.

Days had come and gone, each of them bleary and hopeless as I awaited my imminent death. It was hard for me to believe that my own parents would abandon me like so, but even in my darkness there flickered a glimmer of hope, like a ray of sun on a dark stormy day.

At last, the day of the procedure came.

“Rose...are you sure about your decision?” Doubt rang true in her voice as she questioned my mother’s decision. Hope flared within me, a little flame that could turn into a wildfire at a snap of fingers.

“Yes.” There was no question or doubt in her voice when she replied. It was hard to believe that my own mother, just 20 days after my father left, had grown so sure of her decision to be rid of me.

Footsteps, and a sharp clang of metal tools being dropped on a tray alerted me of the doctor’s presence. It felt as though everything had been leading up to that moment, though all I had ever known in my life was what I could hear. Nothing seemed to be on my side. Not the doctor’s voice, not the woman I would have called grandmother’s voice, and certainly not the voice of the woman I would have called mother. At least not anymore.

III.

My flame doused, my life stripped away from me, I embraced the darkness when it came. The last thing I heard was an empty, piercing cry.

It echoed from my chest.