

If I Had It All to Do Over Again*

By Lily Idle

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*Trigger Warning: this story has a severe car crash scene and a memory loss theme

The private waiting room felt uncomfortably small to Elisa. She thought the Billings and Laine Genetic Research Clinic must have aimed for a cosy ambiance but they'd landed at claustrophobic instead. Two tall floor lamps stood on either side of the baby blue sofa. They emanated warm light which dimly illuminated the generic abstract paintings on the walls. Elisa thought higher wattage bulbs might make the waiting room feel less like a converted closet.

The Sherman family filled all provided seating and did the perceived size of the room no favors. Daniel, Elisa's father, sat on the couch to Elisa's left. He tapped his right foot rapidly against the carpet. Sophie and Claire, Elisa's sixteen-year-old twin sisters, had forced themselves into the space meant for one on Elisa's right. The twins had inherited their mother's auburn hair and wore it like they'd earned it. Elisa's older brother, Kyle, sat in the armchair wedged in the corner between two closed doors. Kyle and Elisa had their dad's brown hair, but they'd snagged their mother's vibrant green eyes. The twins tried to keep their jealousy from their brown eyes, but they clearly felt they also deserved this feature.

Elisa shuffled her feet resting on the edge of the Ikea coffee table. She wondered why the clinic hadn't aligned the cost of their furnishings to the price tag of their procedure.

The door opposite the couch opened abruptly and Dr. Billings entered the room. He had a clean shaven face and thick white hair both of which enhanced his blue eyes. In his mid-fifties, the arrangement of his handsome features could only have helped him along his

impressive career. His charming manner matched his appearance and comforted Elisa's younger sisters. It made Elisa uneasy. His innate charisma seemed as impossible as what he offered her family.

Daniel leapt to his feet followed by the twins. Kyle unfolded his large frame from the small armchair and moved toward his sisters. Elisa lowered her feet and stood, attempting to rationalize her burdensome heart. No doctor would smile with such genuine enthusiasm if about to deliver bad news.

"She is ready," Dr. Billings said through his grin.

"She's awake?" Daniel asked.

"My colleague is waking her as we speak."

"Can we see her?" Sophie asked as Claire nodded eagerly.

"Yes," Dr. Billings said. "But this is immensely important, your mother believes she's waking up in a hospital from a three month coma. We cannot shatter that illusion. The last thing she'll remember is being in the car with you, Elisa."

Elisa automatically looked at her feet atop the floral rug. She hated the blame that never left either sister's face. She feared the sympathy she inevitably found from her father and brother more.

"Understood," Daniel said.

"This way," Dr. Billings said.

They stepped from the waiting room better suited to a massage parlor into a hallway that exactly replicated any average hospital. The warm light gave way to harsh overhead fluorescent panels. The carpeting became pale grey linoleum. The shiny floor reflected the aggressive light like a mirror so it blared from beneath almost as much as from above.

Typical two-tone walls blurred by in Elisa's peripherals. The setting threatened to transport her back to the hospital where she'd recovered reluctantly, suffocated by her grief and guilt.

Elisa followed last experiencing every step like a rider in her body's passenger seat. Dr. Billings stopped before an open doorway on the left and faced the Shermans.

"She's in here," he said, extending his right hand.

The entire family paused and then entered, one by one. Elisa walked in last, just before Dr. Billings. This could have been the room she'd woken up in. A bed stood with its headboard against the opposite wall. The reproduction of a watercolor painting hung to Elisa's left. It depicted flowers sprouting from the spout of a watering can. Elisa knew it would amuse her mother. At the thought of hearing her mother's laugh again, Elisa's chest felt strange, as though her heart had lifted dumbbells that should have been too heavy.

"Nadine, you have some visitors," Dr. Billings said.

Nadine leaned against the back of the bed which was propped up like a lounge chair. Her eyelids fluttered gently. Sophie and Claire surged toward the bed. They each took a side and leaned so close they looked ready to climb on beside their mother. Nadine opened her eyes slowly and smiled as she focused first on Sophie and then Claire.

"Girls," she said hoarsely.

She took one of their hands in either of hers. Daniel and Kyle walked forward and took a side next to a twin. Nadine's smile swelled further. Tears ran down every face save for Elisa's. She stood frozen just inside the doorway, her eyes stubbornly refusing to dampen. Her memory showed her the blanket covering the figure on the ground beside the wreckage again and made her smiling mother before her impossible to believe.

"What happened?" Nadine asked.

Her eyes found Daniel who looked quickly at Dr. Billings. Dr. Billings nodded reassuringly as he approached the foot of the bed, blocking Elisa's view of Nadine.

"There was an accident, but you're fine now," Daniel said.

Dr. Billings looked over his shoulder. He spotted Elisa and moved aside quickly, mouthing "sorry." Elisa nodded vaguely and stepped toward the bed. An arm's reach from the plastic baseboard, she paused.

"And don't worry, Nadine," Daniel said. "Elisa's here. She's also safe."

"Who?" Nadine asked.

She followed Daniel's gaze. Her eyes traveled across her other children until they landed on Elisa who had managed to smile at last.

"Oh, hello," Elisa's mother said, her tone suddenly formal. "Are you my nurse? No, you can't be. You're way too young! If you are, I'll need to talk to my doctor about this."

* * *

Elisa's Mini Cooper pulsed in time with the booming music. The sides and floor vibrated as the small car's small speakers amplified the song with an impressive intensity. Despite the decibel at which Elisa and Nadine sang along, Dolly Parton's voice still drowned them out. Elisa could never imitate Dolly's sass and confidence as skillfully as her mother. The orange light from the oversized speedometer in the center of the dashboard faintly illuminated their joyful faces. Elisa tucked a strand of long brown hair with dyed purple ends behind her left ear.

Just eighteen, Elisa had only passed the driving test five months prior, a lateness

unheard of for a Los Angeles teenager. Her loathing for driving after dark frequently resulted in mother-daughter car karaoke.

Tonight their musical led to the all-night pharmacy for Elisa's migraine medication. Elisa turned left at a stoplight after pausing for an SUV to pass through the intersection. The progress of its harsh LED lowlights made it clear Elisa could easily have turned first. Nadine always teased Elisa that she drove like a minivan mom rather than a teen in a racing car.

Elisa approached a four-way stop sign and stopped. She determined the headlights to her right adequately far behind their line. Their sing-a-long accelerated into the intersection.

The headlights to the side grew brighter until the white light outside overpowered the orange tint inside. Elisa glanced in their direction. She had barely registered their closeness when time began to behave in bizarre ways. She watched her mother's smiling face become silhouetted with the dramatic pacing found in Noir films. Nadine still sang along carelessly to music now inaudible to Elisa, the brightness her stage light. Elisa tried to warn Nadine but before her words formed, an immense booming sounded.

Elisa's car suddenly moved leftwards and her body with it. She heard the right side of the Mini crunch sickeningly. She tried to look but she no longer had control over her head's motion. Pebbles of glass rained inwards from the passenger side windows. Elisa's white-knuckled grip on the steering wheel loosened when her skull smashed against her window. The force dazed her but before she could process pain, her head snapped back against her headrest and then hit the window again. Elisa's hands fell from the steering wheel and landed at her sides. The Mini slid on and on in a direction cars aren't meant to travel. Elisa sat with her arms limp beside her, head bouncing wildly, helpless to recover the runaway rollercoaster.

The front left of the car suddenly smashed against something and stopped abruptly. Elisa's head struck the steering wheel. She ricocheted back against the head rest and watched the hood of the Mini buckle upwards. The windshield shattered. Elisa instinctively closed her eyes. Safety glass showered down onto her chest and torso joining the pieces already covering her. She tried to open her eyes when the windshield wipers started swiping as though desperate to clear the view during a torrential downpour. She wanted to see how wiper blades could move across empty space but her eyelids refused to rise.

Elisa noted that a bright light still blared from the right but she didn't much mind since it had begun to dim. She wondered with an almost clinical curiosity why the airbags hadn't deployed. Was the accident not as bad as it had felt? Her mind had grown as reluctant to follow instructions as her eyelids.

Elisa's thoughts drifted like bubbles on a summer breeze. They dispersed lazily until one-by-one they popped out of existence. Her final thought enabled her to notice that Dolly Parton sang on before it too vanished.

* * *

The clinic room had descended into a quiet not found even in a real hospital. A portable speaker on the bedside table played music that softly challenged the overbearing silence. Elisa glanced behind herself to see who her mother had addressed the way an actor does in a farce. Dr. Billings stood there, a severe expression on his face.

"Who are you talking to, honey?" Daniel asked.

Elisa turned back to her family. Her dad looked between her and Nadine frantically as

though doing so would provide an explanation. Kyle's eyes traced the same path, adding an occasional glance at Dr. Billings. The twins ignored everything but the hand of Nadine's they held. Elisa stood as inanimate as the bed in front of her. Fear deadened her arms until they dangled from her shoulders like severed chains. Nadine smiled at each twin and then her husband and son.

"Doctor," Nadine said as she looked at Dr Billings. "Would you and your child-nurse please give me some time with my family privately? I'd like a moment without any strangers."

Nadine's gaze briefly met Elisa's. Her eyes held the polite apology you give an outside who you don't wish to offend but will if you must. Elisa's lifeless arms somehow wilted further.

"Stranger? What are you talking about, Nadine? That's your dau—" Daniel started but Dr. Billings suddenly spoke so vehemently it bordered yelling.

"You may of course but first, I need a brief word with your family."

Concern flared across Nadine's face as Daniel's reddened to an alarming shade.

"Everything is perfectly alright, Nadine," Dr. Billings said. "We'll be gone only a moment. Then you can be with your... uh... family."

Kyle stepped from the bedside. Daniel glanced at Nadine and then did the same. Neither twin showed any sign of movement prompting Kyle to walk back and grab Sophie's free hand. He pulled her from the room behind Daniel who towed an equally reluctant Claire. When all four had filed into the hallway, Dr. Billings turned to follow but paused when he noticed that Elisa's stance indicated paralysis. Her mother smiled courteously like a customer to their waiter and closed her eyes. She leaned against her pillow, her smile

melting from forced to serene. She noiselessly mouthed the lyrics Elisa hadn't sung since the night her mother died.

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Elisa walked down the hallway a few steps ahead of Dr. Billings slumped like a guilty party led to give testimony. The waiting room door had hardly shut when Daniel erupted at the doctor who'd promised them another chance.

"What the fuck is this?" Daniel bellowed. "My wife's child is a 'stranger' to her? What the hell happened?"

Dr. Billings held himself like a third grader fighting tears while his classmates laughed at the ice cream his bully had knocked to the ground.

"I've never in my entire career seen this large an omission—" Dr. Billings started.

"Well look how fucking special we are!" Daniel interrupted. "I don't give a shit about your flawless fucking resume. How did this happen and how do you fix it?"

Someone had begun to adjust the focal settings on Elisa's brain. Her mind steadily blurred until her dad's aggressive shouts and the doctor's desperate replies sounded muffled. The thickening fog gave Elisa the sensation of eavesdropping on a neighbor's argument, her ear on a glass against their wall. Her fuzzy eyes drifted lazily over her sisters. Sophie tapped her foot rapidly like a delayed Wonderland rabbit but Elisa struggled to comprehend the motion's meaning.

Kyle moved beside Elisa, slipped his hand into hers, and gave hers a supportive squeeze. Elisa had lost control of her arms so didn't reciprocate. She looked at her brother's

face, her hand dangling like a dead fish held in a fisherman's grasp. Kyle smiled reassuringly but Elisa spotted an unfamiliar glint in his eyes that resembled panic.

"Well?" Daniel yelled.

Elisa had no idea how much she'd missed prior to this word. Kyle squeezed Elisa's hand again and then released it. It slipped from his like the wet sand she played with on the family beach days of her childhood. While Daniel romped with Kyle through shallow waves and their nanny watched the toddler twins, Nadine helped Elisa fill buckets with water and sand. A variety of colorful buckets contained specific combinations of the two. Elisa's favorite purple one held the concoction the consistency of slimy mud. Nadine never asked why Elisa preferred this activity over the sandcastles made by all the other children. She simply served as Elisa's skillful assistant, adding sand or water as instructed to the desired bucket.

Elisa returned to the waiting room and her eyes fell on Dr. Billings. She had a mild interest in hearing his answer to her father's question but when he moved his mouth, the fog engulfed her once more. It tromped along her neural pathways, intensifying as it went and blocking all sound.

"You should go back to mom," someone said.

Only when everyone looked at her did Elisa recall speaking. She had no idea if she'd done so at a relevant point in the conversation or if she'd interrupted someone. She didn't even recall deciding to say something.

"Go," Elisa said with more intention. "Please. She'll be worried."

Questions flew at Elisa. She didn't bother trying to process them but simply repeated "I'm okay, just go." Finally only Dr. Billings remained in the waiting room. Elisa watched his lips frame words. As he closed the door behind him, Elisa understood he'd offered water or

coffee.

The second the latch shut, Elisa's legs quit on her. They threw in the towel like a wrestler's dedicated sidekick, incapable of supporting her defeated body a second longer. She crumpled in place. Her knees met the carpet followed by her left hip. Her head nearly hit the coffee table, brushing by dangerously close for such a recently repaired brain.

Elisa lay on her left, her cheek against the soft carpet. Her stomach writhed and bile teased her throat. She waited for the inevitable torrent of tears, but her eyes denied her the relief.

Everyone had said again and again that she couldn't have done anything. It wasn't her fault. Still, the severe concussion Elisa "shouldn't have survived" and all her other injuries felt like disproportionate punishment. The texting driver may have blown the stop sign, but the demolished passenger side should have been empty. She deserved much worse than the damage she reaped because she should have behaved like any self-respecting adult and picked up her meds alone. Had she done so, the obliterated side wouldn't have held her favorite person in the world. Nadine would have been home, safe and alive.

Elisa drew her knees to her chest and wrapped her arms around them as conviction hardened like resin within. She had finally received a fitting retribution.

* * *

Elisa became vaguely aware of a flashing light. It brightened and darkened intermittently and reminded her of the rhythmic lights at a concert. She began to register a swaying sensation. It brought her to the hammocks at her first home. The surface beneath her felt

much harder than the caress she remembered.

Elisa realized her eyes were closed and decided she'd try to open them. After a surprising amount of effort, a man's face blinked into focus. He stood over her feet illuminated by the flashing light Elisa now identified as red. The color sparked a primal terror in her which helped her keep her weary eyes open.

"She's coming to," a voice said from above her head.

Elisa tried to look up and attach a face to the voice but found herself immobilized. Firm material surrounded all sides of her head. She widened her eyes and darted them side to side. She reminded herself of the black cat-shaped clock she found so creepy that her mother loved so much.

Her mother.

"Don't worry," the man at her feet said.

The headlights.

"You're going to be okay."

They kept getting brighter.

The roving red illumination gained meaning. Elisa understood why her body swayed. She desperately scanned the nightmarish scene.

A pick-up truck rested in the middle of an intersection. Elisa couldn't determine its color with all the red but it was large even for a pick-up. It had a partially shattered windshield and an object wrapped around its front grill that looked like it might have once been a small car. A telephone pole had turned its front into an accordion.

Elisa's weary eyes faltered as she realized she was staring at the remains of her Mini Cooper. Her blinks lengthened but she forced her eyes to reopen. The pick-up had dived so

deep into her passenger side it practically touched the center console. The weight in her eyelids worsened but she continued fighting. She thought the EMT might have spoken again but at that moment her gaze fell on a figure on the sidewalk.

The woman lay unmoving on her back. Her favorite paisley dress had wrapped itself skin-tight around her legs in a way unsuited for its loose fit. An EMT swept a hand across her mother's face, from forehead down just passed nose. The EMT pulled her hand back, stood, and brushed some dirt off her knees. Another EMT began to drop a brown object he held. The shape tumbled from his hands, elongating as it fell. Elisa identified the mystery item when the EMT started to cover her mother's feet with it.

Elisa watched the thick blanket delicately cover her mother's body. When it entirely obscured her still figure, Elisa lost her fight and her eyes finally closed. She struggled to reopen them but the stretcher swayed with that gentle rhythm she cherished as a child. As Elisa drifted off again, her mother called for her, beckoning her to leave her favorite hammock and come inside.

* * *

"I don't care!" Sophie shouted again, slamming her fists on the dining room table. "I won't lose mom a second time!"

The Sherman family had banned drinks from their collective debate podium. Elisa had taken the head of the rectangular table. Her sisters sat to her right and her brother and father to her left, Kyle in the seat beside her. Elisa rested her hands flat against the dark highly-polished wood. Vibrations from more passionate arguments occasionally rippled

across her palms.

“I can’t believe you, Sophie, you selfish bitch!” Kyle shouted.

“Dad!” Claire yelled to demand punishment for her twin’s mistreatment.

The two girls stared at their dad, expecting the immediate gratification they always got. Daniel’s gaze darted around the table with frequent pause on Elisa. She didn’t know what expression she wore, but she knew it never wavered.

“Nothing he says will change the fact that you’re both selfish bratty bitches,” Kyle said.

Elisa wondered whether she preferred this loud argument over the tense silence of the ride home from the clinic. Dr. Billings had presented the Shermans a choice that imbibed the quiet in the car with a feeling of impending menace. Elisa felt like the family dog a moment before the earthquake hits, sensing the oncoming chaos but helpless to prevent it.

Dr. Billings had proposed they retry the procedure, starting over again from scratch.

When the phrase “no guarantee” joined his pitch, Elisa had emptied her stomach on the waiting room carpet lightly splashing her favorite purple ankle boots her mother had given her on her seventeenth birthday. Despite the insignificance of the damage particularly compared to the decision they faced, Elisa’s mind flitted frequently to the stained suede. A sharp pain from the migraine her medication hadn’t cured returned her to the dining room.

“Your mother taught you two better than this,” Daniel said softly.

The smug expressions forming on the twins’ faces transformed to outrage. Both chirped loud objections and pointed accusatory fingers at Kyle.

“Your mother taught you better than this!” Daniel bellowed.

He stood, slamming the table harder than anyone else had, rattling Elisa’s hands. The twins fell silent. Tears blossomed with an impressive synchronicity. Daniel lowered slowly

into his chair. Its creak sounded deafening in the sudden silence.

“You believe your loving mother would want to live like this?” Daniel asked. “If she knew she’d forgotten one of her children and had the chance to remember, no matter the odds, you really think she wouldn’t risk it?”

Tears cascaded down Claire and Sophie’s cheeks.

“But, there has to be another way,” Claire said, almost drowned out by a loud sob from her twin.

“Dr. Billings was very clear,” Daniel said. “And we can’t get a second opinion on an unknown procedure. We always risked failure. Dr. Billings said restarting with less genetic data or whatever he calls it increases that risk but we have to. He feels conf—”

“I say we vote,” Sophie interrupted.

“You’re sixteen,” Kyle said. “You can’t vote.”

“When it comes to this family, we can!” Claire said to second Sophie’s proposition.

Phrases like “this isn’t a presidential election” and “just because you can drive a fucking car” bounced around the room.

“Your mother taught you to show compassion to others, not just yourselves,” Daniel said.

The defiant flame in Sophie and Claire’s eyes dwindled slightly.

“But it was her again,” Sophie said.

“No, it wasn’t,” Elisa said.

Elisa’s emotions prompted her words more than her mind did. Elisa dragged her gaze from the tabletop. Her family stared at her, engulfed in a strained silence. Elisa studied each Sherman in turn giving her thoughts time to catch up with her feelings.

“That wasn’t mom,” Elisa said, her voice stronger. “But it doesn’t really matter. I refuse to

take her from you again.”

* * *

As the only Sherman with photo editing skills, Elisa’s deletion fell to her. She meticulously erased herself from every family photograph. File after file, she watched herself disappear from each memory. She printed the new images and returned them to their original frame, all the while battling the selfish desire to gamble it all for a chance at her own happiness. Her mind muffled the urge’s every flare, reflexively projecting the footage of the brown blanket lowering onto her mother’s body. The scene played, rewound, and played again, her memory doomed to forever skip. Elisa had led her mother to her demise, so Elisa’s mouse clicked furiously turning the Shermans into a family of five.

Kyle reluctantly agreed to help redecorate Elisa’s bedroom. Together they peeled the proof of personality from the room. Kyle covered the lavender walls Elisa and Nadine had painted a few years back with a bland eggshell white. They hung new decorations to match the guest room Elisa’s bedroom had become. It had a generic feel, like a hotel room or an Ikea tableau. It felt pleasant enough but it didn’t intend you to stay very long.

Elisa’s suitcase contained only a few possessions. The bulk of her belongings sat in storage. Dr. Billings had advised Elisa wait to unpack until they knew how her introduction to Nadine went. Elisa hadn’t objected. She couldn’t pack her life up another time. She had no desire to stay if her own mother didn’t like her.

Elisa sat at the dining table waiting in a silence that should have felt peaceful for her family to return from the clinic. Summer sunlight streaked in from the row of tall windows

opposite her and illuminated the room. Elisa felt herself floating amidst a calm only found at the eye of a terrible storm. She recognized her reprieve from destruction wouldn't hold much longer.

The doorbell rang and propelled Elisa to her feet. She rushed to the front door, wiping any lingering familiarity with her home off her face as she went. She mustered a smile she hoped read as authentic and opened the door.

The twins pushed past Elisa with a swiftness that would have been rude even to hired help. They had apparently resolved to pretend that Elisa preferred to open her front door as a stranger to her family. Kyle followed them inside wearing an expression that suggested he wanted to hit them both with the overnight bag he carried. He used his free hand to give Elisa's a swift squeeze.

"Hello, Daniel," Elisa said, her dad's first name still unfamiliar to her. "And you must be Nadine!"

As she looked at her mother, Elisa felt her smile grow into a more genuine one. Nadine stared up at her house's facade from her wheelchair as though memorizing every detail. She finally shifted her gaze onto Elisa.

"Honey, this is Elisa," Daniel said. "She's gonna help out around here while you recover."

"Welcome home, Nadine," Elisa said.

She waited, her muscles tensed, her heartbeat pounding. Nadine smiled. It was a polite smile, timid and a little wary, but not unkind.

"Thank you, Elisa. It's lovely to officially meet you," Nadine said. "I'm sorry I was rude when I mistook you for a nurse. A three-month coma sure does wacky things to your brain!"

She laughed as she said her last statement. Her subsequent smile felt friendlier than her

first had. Elisa masked the sudden stab in her chest by widening her own grin.

“It’s no problem, Nadine,” Elisa said.

“Would you two help me out of this wretched thing? I’d like to walk into my home,” Nadine said.

Elisa kicked the doorstopper down and released the door. She walked across the threshold and positioned herself on her mother’s right side. With her dad on Nadine’s left, they helped her to her feet. Elisa realized she last touched her mother the night she died. The knowledge crashed over Elisa like a tsunami. That night, Nadine joked that Elisa’s driving made grandmas look like speed demons. Elisa briefly removed a hand from the wheel and playfully slapped her mother’s shoulder. Elisa breathed deeply to return to the present, steadying the sandbags around her wavering resolve.

“I hope you’re a decent cook,” Nadine said as they supported her into the entryway. “This lot is just hopeless.”

Kyle stood waiting for them positioned like someone prepared to soften a rock climber’s fall. The muffled sound of pop music drifted down the stairs and explained Sophie and Claire’s absence.

“I like to think so,” Elisa said. She hesitated and then added, “my, uh, mom taught me to make a mean curry.”

Nadine stopped abruptly, forcing Elisa and Daniel to a halt as well. She swiveled toward Elisa, who turned startled to face her mother. Nadine studied Elisa’s features with an almost desperate intensity as though her grade rested on memorizing them for an imminent exam.

“You know, it’s the strangest thing,” Nadine finally said, her eyes still scouring Elisa’s face. “You remind me so much of someone.”

Elisa's heart stirred. It fluttered faintly like a baby bird bracing itself for its first flight. Dr. Billings's final statement played in her mind.

"This is new territory in a developing field. It's not impossible that Nadine's memory could theoretically unearth some missing pieces."

Elisa's smile sounded a wordless plea. It begged her mother to locate a missing piece, even if only one.

"I just cannot for the life of me place it!" Nadine said with a gentle shake of her head. "Curry sounds delightful."

Elisa's hoped her expression hadn't plummeted as her heart had. She felt the gratitude that her mother had looked away strengthen as her grip on her mother slackened. Elisa's arms slipped from Nadine's to hang listless beside her. Elisa's eyes began to lose focus as they had at the clinic.

"Why don't we get you into your favorite armchair, honey," Daniel said. "Elisa here can get going on that curry."

He supported Nadine into the dining room. Elisa watched her mother nod through her blurring vision. She thought Kyle might have put an arm around her shoulder but the settling numbness inhibited her ability to verify. Her gaze fell on the carpet but she couldn't see its familiar pattern. Her familiarity to her mother unintentionally sparked the faintest glint of hope. But the glimmer had merely been the mesmerizing orb above an Angler's maw. Elisa's eyes snapped up when Nadine called over her shoulder.

"Don't worry, Elisa. It'll come to me."