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3<sup>rd</sup> Place

2019 CFUW Writing Contest

### Blue Light

The message was clear; she loved me and didn't want me to be upset for too long.

But none of that felt true right now.

I missed Marjo every single day. Her laughter rang in my ears some days—other days I swore her shadow flitted across my bedroom walls. Sometimes I felt like I could just reach out, and she would be there, really there, as if these past months had just been some kind of horrible nightmare I'd been moving through like quicksand.

But it was real. She was gone.

All that was left of her was a phone message I kept replaying.

I sat in my room, staring at the wall and all its tiny chips and cracks as Marjo's shaky voice played once again.

*Eliza, don't stay sad for too long—I mean it. There's a blue moon tomorrow. I think you'd like it. And I don't want to be the reason you miss it. I love you.*

*I love you.* Her voice was breaking as she said it, but it didn't feel like she really loved me.

If she did, why would she leave?

Downstairs, I heard Mom and Dad talking in hushed voices, and Peter's sniffing every now and then. No music like there always was, no creaking of the floorboards that meant someone was dancing, or, at the very least, moving. It felt like everything was at a standstill these days. Silent grief hung over the house like a dark cloud.

Last week Mom stood outside my bedroom door. She talked to me through it, but she didn't come in. She told me we would be cleaning Marjo's room soon. Even though a month had passed since she left, it felt too sudden. I said nothing in return, but Mom knew I had understood. She always knew.

She hadn't mentioned anything about it since then, but today felt like the day we would do it. When I did come downstairs every so often to stretch my legs or eat something small, a kind of uncertainty lingered. Peter would stare at me like I was an alien. Dad would pet the cat, but falter when he could sense I was near. The tension connected us all as if we were tethered by a string.

Yes. Today felt like the day.

And maybe today would be the day I would say something, anything. I hadn't said a word since I heard the message. I knew Dad was upset that I never talked—I could hear his low voice hum against the walls at night when he'd talk to Mom.

But how could I say anything when there was nothing left to say? Marjo was my sister, my best friend. And no one could ever guess this would happen. No one understood why.

I wanted to understand.

A sudden knock on my door startled me from my daze. No one ever knocked; they knew I would not open the door, so they just talked. I waited, hoping whoever it was would give up and go. But they knocked again. And again. And again. And still said nothing.

Whispers hissed from behind the door. I recognized the voices. Everyone was out there, waiting for me. I didn't move. I was still hoping they would leave.

Finally, a voice: “Eliza.” It was Mom. Her voice didn’t sound like it usually did—it was collected, firm, even. Maybe that’s why I opened the door. Or maybe because I knew why she was out there this time.

“Do you want to come with us?” she asked. She didn’t even have to say what they were doing. Mom always knew what I was thinking.

“It’s okay if you don’t,” Peter murmured, looking down at his feet.

In that moment, I saw that they had all accepted everything. They were just waiting for me to do the same.

So I went.

Marjo’s room was already tidy. They had probably cleaned out her room beforehand.

Everything looked the same as I remembered. Her vanity right across from her bed.

The big bay window I used to be so jealous of. But there was one thing that looked out of place.

A blue lava lamp on her desk.

Labelled with a Post-It note.

Only one word. Eliza.

“Why would Marjo give her that?” Peter whispered. But I knew. I missed the blue moon the day after I got the message. Maybe she knew I would.

Either way, I wouldn’t miss it again.

“I don’t know,” I said, smiling.