

## **DELETED SCENE & PLOTLINE (second or third draft) – Kat's house**

### **Kat and her dad**

When my brother and sister and I were younger and my mom had to go deliver a baby, Plan B or D was set into action. Plan B was Babysitter, one of six to eight brave souls whose numbers were pasted on the wall near our phone, in order of their ability to be available at a moment's notice. Plan D was Dad, a professor of archaeology at the University of Denver, whose tenure and schedule often enabled him to take over parental duties while Mom was out helping to bring new babies into the world.

We always liked it best when it was Dad who took care of us. If it was an early evening delivery, he'd order pizza with extra cheese and sausage plus a vegetarian pizza for me, something Mom would complain about because that was her favorite, too. We'd also snag a few movies from the local Blockbuster and have a movie marathon, another favorite of Mom's.

"Save some for me," she'd say, peering over Dad's shoulder as he looked at the pizza menu, ordering extras like salads and buffalo wings.

"Will do," he'd reply, knowing full it would be up to me to salvage a few slices of the vegetarian and put them away for her. Dad and Will would scarf any remaining sausage from the box before falling into bed that night.

Dad would help Mom gather her midwife bags and load them in the car. They'd kiss deeply, hug long and hard as if she was going on a long trip out of the country, not just across town for ten to twenty-four hours.

"Head down, shoulders back," Dad would shout after Mom as she drove away. It was his standard farewell, one we'd stopped laughing at long ago because it was so overused. But he always turned back to us grinning, thinking he was the funniest guy in the world.

When Mom got a call in the middle of the night, we'd wake up to the smell of banana pancakes, their sweet bread-like aroma circling its way up the staircase and under each of our closed doors. After we ate, Dad would drop me off at school and Will and Lucy off at Mrs. Gerber's a neighbor whose children were grown and who ran a small daycare in her home.

Dad was always there to pick me up after school, reporting on the progress of the delivery Mom was attending. We'd pick up Will and baby Lucy, grab some ice cream, and head home to await Mom if she wasn't home yet, to play games quietly or draw if she was, since she was usually asleep.

My dad was always there for us when Mom wasn't, changing Will's and then Lucy's diapers, helping Will with his potty training, gazing in awe when Lucy lost her first tooth at McDonald's, biting into a chicken McNugget. And because I was older, he and I would often do things together after Will and Lucy were in bed. We'd watch old movies or read a book out loud together or play Life or Monopoly. It didn't matter what we did, as long as we did it together. My dad knew how to make me feel special and I felt myself blossom with confidence under his attention and humor.

It wasn't until later, when I was twelve, that I realized I wasn't the only one he made feel special, the only one who must have blushed under his gaze, heart swelling with each word of praise and encouragement.

That was when I put away the board games, choosing instead to read alone in my room,

leaving him alone in front of the TV, a look of sadness and confusion on his face as he flicked the channels.

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My dad was sitting in his office, surrounded by paperwork, when I came in from a workout with Christy one Wednesday afternoon. I pulled my jacket more tightly around me as I passed by, willing him not to look up, not to notice me. Not--

"Katima?"

I stopped in the hallway, debating on whether to pretend I hadn't heard. It would be easy enough. I still had my headphones wrapped around my neck. I could pull them up over my ears, act as if the music were filling them so I couldn't hear him when he called.

"Kat?" He was in the hall now. I could feel him looking at me. Too late to put on the headphones. I reached across to my opposite arm and flicked the On/Off switch on my MP3 player. Let him at least think I hadn't heard the first time.

"Yeah?" I didn't look at him, had a hard time looking at him since I'd found out his secret four years ago.

"How was your workout?"

"Fine."

He took a step toward me, then stopped. His voice, his actions, were all slow and deliberate, as if he was afraid of scaring me, sending me scurrying off in another direction, away from him. Which is exactly what I wanted to do.

"You seem really dedicated."

I shrugged. When I committed to something, I committed completely. Unlike some people.

"I need to take a shower," I said. "The hot water heater at the rec center was broken."

He nodded and I could feel his eyes on me as I took the stairs two at a time, wanting to put as much distance between him and me as I could.

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It was after the Joey Bickman ordeal that I found out the truth, discovered my dad was not the greatest man on earth.

It was an unusually warm and sunny Saturday in January. I remember the frost winking off the brown grass in the early morning, the sky a brilliant blue behind the spindly fingers of bare tree branches. I had gone down to Serenity Space, the room off the back of our house where my mom delivered babies when the mother's couldn't deliver them in their own homes for some reason. I liked to go in there when I knew no one was there, breathing in the smell of my mother, feeling the calm and quiet envelope me like a warm blanket.

That particular morning, Will was playing quietly in his room and Lucy, all of four, was curled up on the couch watching a video. The door to my parents' bedroom was open slightly and I could see my mother's shape under the blankets, her long hair spilled over the white pillowcase like a dark [need a word here]. My dad's side of the bed was rumpled, the pillow scrunched at an angle. I didn't hear any sounds coming from their bathroom so I assumed he gone for a run like he often did on Saturday mornings. This meant I could have Serenity Space to myself. I headed down the hall with a book, opening the door softly even though I knew no one could hear me.

I sucked in my breath when I saw my dad in the bed that was usually reserved for birthing mothers. He was asleep, his dark hair flung over his eyes, his clothes strewn over a chair as if tossed there in haste. I smiled, admiring his thin nose, his full pink lips, the slight scar that started

at the back of his cheekbone and disappeared into his hairline. He liked to pretend the scar was from a fight on some adventure, feeding the jokes and references to Indiana Jones, the teasing he got because of his name and chosen field of study. I played along, not revealing the truth, that he'd scraped his face on a barbed wire fence when he was a boy, trying to get away from an angry bull he'd disturbed in a field where he and his brother were playing.

I thought my dad was incredibly handsome and so, I realized early on, did most of the women who met him. There was no shortage of women offering to help him when Mom was off delivering, smiling and tilting their heads in a way that made me uncomfortable. But though Dad smiled and seemed to enjoy their attention, he never took them up on their offers, relying instead on Mrs. Gerber and the other babysitters on our approved list.

"She's pretty," I remember saying about one lady, the divorced mother of a boy at my school who had introduced herself to Dad and offered to help one afternoon when he'd picked me up. Dad had politely declined, saying he had the best helper in the world, ruffling my hair before guiding me to the car.

"She is," Dad had replied. "But no one holds a candle to your mother."

I didn't know what the lady, a candle, and my mother had to do with each other, but I knew he was saying something good about my mom, and it left me with a warm, safe glow in the middle of my chest. He was crazy about Mom.

So when I saw my dad in the bed in Serenity Space, his breath puffing out in even breaths, my heart did a little jiggle.

I watched as my dad shifted under the covers, then blinked.

"Katima?" His voice was thick with sleep, his eyes unfocused. He reached for his glasses

and slipped them on, pressing them against the bridge of his nose.

"I thought you went for a run."

He breathed out heavily and rubbed his eyes behind his glasses. Then he sat up and I could see that his chest was bare, as if he hadn't taken the time to put on his pajamas.

"I should have but..." His voice trailed off and he looked away from me toward the bathroom. A sense of dread was filling me, starting at the tips of my toes and pricking its way up my calves, across the backs of my legs and then around the front, to my thighs. It continued upward, across my belly, between my fingers, and around my chest, stopping to tighten as if someone had wrapped a belt around it, cinching it to the last hole.

My dad's downcast eyes, the hastily thrown clothes, my mom asleep alone upstairs.

And that's when I remembered the voices, rising and falling in the night. My mother crying, my father apologizing, and my hands finally over my ears to shut it out.

"Katima." My dad's voice broke the silence in Serenity Space. But I was already gone, racing down the hall, out the front door, sprinting across the now-melting frosted grass, hardly able to see as I squinted painfully in the bright sunlight.