

I awake in a cold sweat and I know my grandfather is dead.

I can barely recall the sight of his lifeless body which came to me in my dream – the image flashes through my mind and I try to suppress the rest of them. I am sick, and the sheets are damp beneath me with what I assume to be my sweat. The sun is rising outside the bedroom window – my mother will wake up soon. She will find him, and it will rip her to pieces, and I will feel nothing because I already know.

My grandfather is dead.

My mother and I moved into my grandfather's house three weeks ago, when the pneumonia began killing him at an immeasurable rate. He made the stubborn decision to be placed on a ventilator in the upstairs bedroom. He wanted to die inside of the house he built. An endearing thought, if you do not consider the fact that my grandmother drowned two of their children in the upstairs bathroom shortly after my mother had moved out. This was a family secret – the kind your mother mentions in passing only once and never again; the kind you know better than to speak of.

I never knew about my grandmother, and I am too afraid to ask what became of her. When I was a child, however, I used to see a woman in my dreams when I stayed overnight in this house. I dreamt of wandering the halls with her ahead of me, swiftly turning corners so that I could never catch a glimpse of her face. On the mornings that followed her occasional visits, I awoke to a half-eaten jar of peanut butter or a dusty novel at my bedside with no memory of the night before. Though my grandfather never admitted it, I suspected that these were things my grandmother once did. As the dreams became more frequent, my grandfather became increasingly occupied and distant until my mother stopped asking him to watch over me on her late-night shifts. He was never able to look me in the eye after that.

The sound of water running reminds me that the sheets are wet. I am reminded of the dream.

My grandfather is sleeping. There is the sound of water running.

A woman approaches him in his room. It is my mother. She is going to bathe him.

She helps him out of bed and guides him to the bath she has prepared. She does not bother to undress him. His frail body cannot save him from her grasp, and his diseased lungs do not allow him to scream. The bathwater takes him rather quickly.

I watch this unfold. I scream as she leaves him behind. The woman passes in front of the mirror and I see there are two. Neither of them is my mother.

One of them looks exactly like me.

I hear my mother scream, and I realize that my clothing is soaking wet.