

## Wedding

You felt nervous from the moment you arrived at the church and it only gets worse as the congregation stands up and turns away from you to watch the bride walk up the aisle. You clear your throat, tug at your jacket a little to smooth out any creases and put on that smile you've been practicing for weeks. It feels fake, like the crescents painted on the mouths of circus clowns. You see the happiness on her face as she catches the eyes of family and friends. Her father, walking slowly beside her, looks in your direction at the altar with a hint of sadness in his eyes.

You remember the night you met her. She told you that her idea of happiness was a rugby match on a wet Sunday afternoon. You told her that you always wanted to go up in a hot air balloon but you'd never met a girl brave enough to go with you. She said you could probably get any girl you wanted if you cut your hair. She said she'd do it for you if you wanted.

'You're a hairdresser?' you asked her and she shook her head.

'No,' she replied. 'But I'd do it for you anyway.'

You fell in love with her quickly, even though you tried not to. She made you forget there were other people in the room.

'I'm head over heels,' you told your brother when he asked you why you looked so sad all the time. He asked you who she was. 'This girl,' you said, shaking your head. 'This girl I know.' A minute later you were crying.

You smile at her when she reaches the top of the aisle and she winks at you, which makes your stomach turn a cartwheel. Her skin is perfect. Her shoulders. The way she bites her lip nervously.

The organist finishes the wedding march and the guests take their seats. You both turn to look at the priest and he spreads his arms wide and starts to talk, welcoming everyone to this happy day. You try to listen to the words but the misery you feel inside is overwhelming. Instead you look at your brother standing beside you, holding her hand as he repeats his vows, and you wonder how you ever let things get this far. Whether you should have told her how you felt at some point. What might have happened if you had.

The priest looks at you and asks for the rings and you snap back to the moment, take them out of your pocket but close your hand around them, your fist refusing to release them just yet. 'We need the rings,' he repeats, leaning forward and looking at you like you're crazy. You stare at your hand and consider your options.