

ACCLAIM FOR *SHADOW SISTER*

"*Shadow Sister* plunges readers into the worlds of two very different sisters: Jenna, who ran away from home to escape her past, and Sarah, who stayed home and forgot who she really was. Jones skillfully handles the juxtaposed settings and the sisters' divergent viewpoints to illustrate the way God pulls family back together...even if sometimes it must first be pulled apart." ~ Heather Day Gilbert, Grace-Award winner and best-selling author of *God's Daughter*

"With lyrical prose and a complex cast of characters, *Shadow Sister* tenderly reminds the reader there is hope in the midst of our brokenness. Bravo to Katherine Scott Jones for crafting a beautiful and bittersweet story about letting go of the past and embracing what lies ahead."
~ Heidi McCahan, author of *Unraveled* and *Covering Home*

"A twisting tale of love and betrayal that ends in new beginnings. *Shadow Sister* does not disappoint, satisfying not only the intellect, but the soul as well. Delving deep into issues that cripple families and developing countries, Jones pours God's grace into the nooks and crannies, and then wraps it up in a blanket of forgiveness that warms the reader's heart." ~ Paula Scott, author of *The Mother Keeper*

"A beautiful story of family, love, and hope, *Shadow Sister* is a refreshing story of one woman's journey through loss and heartache to redemption. Jones's ability to create real characters and places will leave you wishing you could roam the streets of Bolivia. It will also open your heart to the marginalized and those serving them. I was left inspired and encouraged. I definitely recommend this book!" ~ Jamie Lapeyrolerie, INSPY Awards advisory-board member

PRaise FOR *HER MEMORY OF MUSIC*

“*Her Memory of Music* is a nuanced page-turner. In this novel, Jones delivers compelling characters and a story that's hard to put down. She deftly explores complex emotions intertwined with life's dark moments and disappointments.” ~ Lisa McKay, Christy-award-nominated author of *My Hands Came Away Red*

“*Her Memory of Music* is so fine-tuned, it reads more like a veteran novelist's tome than a debut. Heavy topics are addressed with a nimble hand, propelling the story's momentum to a riveting climax.” ~ Jolina Petersheim, bestselling author of *The Outcast*

“From a fresh, new voice, *Her Memory of Music* has all the elements of a lovely read. Jones weaves a captivating story.” ~ Sherri Sand, author of *Leave It to Chance*

“*Her Memory of Music* has so much to love—a charming island setting, a gifted musician, a child at risk, gentle romance and parallel mysteries. It is a grace-filled and entertaining read.” ~ Rachel Phifer, author of *The Language of Sparrows*

“In her remarkable debut novel, Katherine Scott Jones captures our universal ache for wholeness.” ~ Kim Galgano, speaker, life coach, and author of *The Chance to Choose*

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For those who give their lives
as the hands and feet of Jesus,
whose real stories inspired mine.

“Then you will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”
~ Jesus, the Gospel of John

PROLOGUE

JENNA

Cortadera, Bolivia

Present day

“Jenna—” Jonas stands from the scuffed table in the smoky hotel restaurant. “Baby, it’s time.”

At his quiet announcement, I close my journal, cap my pen, and rise. Reaching for the *serape* sling hanging from the back of my chair, I fumble twice before managing to tuck the book and pen inside its folds.

“You okay?” His hand on my waist reaches warmth through my thin blouse.

“Fine.” In truth, now the moment has come, my heart races like the trilling notes of a *zampona* pan-flute. But I meet my husband’s espresso-brown gaze, allowing his peace to steady me. Come what may, for better or worse, I’m doing the right thing at last.

No more secrets.

I call to Miski, the golden puppy that's been dozing beneath my chair while I've been sketching and, before that, sharing a feast of fried-egg sandwiches and spiced api with Jonas. Our last meal together for some time. As we leave the hotel restaurant, the sinking September sun casts long, lazy shadows across the cobbled village square. Something tugs on my wrist and I see that a charm from my silver bracelet has snagged on my skirt. "Hold on a sec." I pause in the shade of the porch to untangle it.

"Jenna! Jenn-na!" Dolores, one of the ladies from our women's co-op, hastens toward us in a swirl of red skirt and petticoats.

I tug my bracelet free as Jonas, smiling, takes my bag and hooks it over his shoulder. "I'll ask the driver to wait five minutes," he says.

Smiling back, I quash my private anxieties, then raise a hand to greet Dolores as Miski plops himself across my sandaled foot with a soft, puppy grunt.

"I am glad to see you," Dolores says in Spanish, but then her yellowed smile fades. "I am worried about Matilde." Her youngest daughter soon expects the arrival of her seventh child.

"Is she feeling worse?" I ask, also in Spanish.

"*Así-así*. She is getting very fat. Around the ankles, no? And so tired all the time. Some days, she doesn't make it out of bed until halfway through the morning. This pregnancy, it has not been like the others. But of course, a boy will make them all happy. After six girls, her luck must change, no?" Dolores says all this lightly but a pucker creases her broad brow.

I bite my lip. After little Nora's birth eleven months ago, I carefully explained to Matilde how she could minimize the chance of another baby too soon. But I had the sense even then that Matilde wouldn't listen. She wants so much to make Sixto happy.

Her choice means she hardly gathered strength after Nora's birth before she was pregnant again. Even more troubling, the last time I

saw her, she showed continuing signs of anemia and possibly pre-eclampsia. With the nearest hospital four hours away, I dread any kind of complication. *Please, God. Please let Matilde be all right.* I don't think I could stand anything happening to Matilde, the closest thing I have to a best friend in Magdalena.

"Try not to worry." I touch Dolores's arm. "I'll look in on her as soon as I get back. If we need to run some tests, we will." I make a mental note to ask Abby's advice, maybe even call her from Santa Cruz.

But Dolores shakes her head, her thick black braid bouncing on her shoulder. "Is more than that. It's Sixto. He is complaining now because Matilde is gone from the house so much."

I frown. "But Matilde wants to come to class, wants to learn to read. Not only for her sake but for her girls'." And I would encourage her in any way I could. Matilde has so much to offer the community, her agile mind one of the joys of my life. "Would it help if Jonas talked to Sixto?"

Dolores shrugs. "Perhaps. But it might be better for you to talk to Matilde. Maybe you will see her tomorrow?"

"Not tomorrow. I'm on my way home to the States to see my family. I won't be back for a couple of weeks, but Jonas will return to Magdalena tomorrow. I'll ask him to talk to Sixto—and have him check on Matilde's symptoms, too."

Dolores glances toward Jonas, now standing beside the microbus chatting with a man in a dusty black hat. Miski chooses that moment to leave me and gallop across the square, prancing over the man's thick boots before Jonas scoops him into his arms. The other man chuckles, showing crowded, yellow teeth.

Dolores narrows her eyes. "You are going with that man? He is your driver?"

"I guess so. Why?" I study the man. His complexion is coppery-brown, his hairline low, barely an inch or two above coarse, salt-and-pepper eyebrows.

“I know him.” Dolores frowns. “He drives too fast; he is not reliable.”

I hide a smile. Most drivers in Bolivia have this reputation. “I’m sure he’s fine or the bus company would not hire him.” I glance again toward the microbus. Jonas has moved to its front fender, Miski tucked like an American football into the crook of one muscled arm. The fading sun burnishes Jonas’s beautiful coffee-colored skin as he bows his head, his big hand splayed on the vehicle’s rust-splotched hood. “There, see? Jonas is asking God to send His angels to guard us. He is with us.”

Dolores sucks in a sharp breath, and by the brows drawn over the kind, black eyes, I sense an argument brewing. But then the older woman’s shoulders slump. She seems to realize she can’t win an argument against the power of God’s angels. “*Bueno.*” Sounding more defeated than reassured. “Then I too will pray.”

“*Gracias.*” I catch Jonas’s eye as he twirls a finger in the air: *Wrap it up.* I give him a nod, then impulsively lean in to hug Dolores. After a brief hesitation, Dolores hugs me back, tolerant of my American ways. My heart lifts as I breathe in her honest smell of good perspiration and chicken grease. “Tell Matilde I’ll see her as soon as I get back. And try not to worry. Both of you.”

Dolores nods and pats my shoulder gently. “*Vaya con Dios,*” she murmurs. Go with God.

Jonas climbs into the bus behind me. I ignore the faded stink of sweat, animal musk, and spoiled beer, and lead the way to the very back, where Jonas and I might enjoy a small measure of privacy.

The microbus holds only twelve other passengers. Minutes later, we are crammed in and underway. Turning to peer out the rear window, I wave to Dolores. The woman remains motionless, staring after us until we disappear from sight.



The sun continues its descent behind the Andean foothills, washing the verdant fields in rose and tangerine light. Jonas drapes his arm across the back of my seat, and I lean into him, cradling Miski. The puppy, lulled by the rocking of the vehicle and the security of my lap, falls asleep, twitching occasionally.

I reach into my *aguayo* for my leather-bound journal and turn to the page I was working on, wanting to finish while there is still light. As I balance the book on top of the dozing dog, several slim envelopes slip from its pages and flutter to the floor. I lunge for them, the sudden motion causing Miski to open one brown eye, but Jonas's long arm reaches the envelopes first.

His ebony eyebrows draw together as he recognizes what he holds. "You said you would burn these."

The accusation in his tone makes my toes curl. "I just thought ... maybe when I'm home, I can figure out who sent them."

"Knowing won't change anything." And before I can react, he tosses them through the open window.

"Jonas!"

"You're obsessing again after you promised not to."

"But don't you want to know?"

"I don't want to give him the satisfaction of knowing he affected you. Only a coward would pull such a stunt. He's not worth your time."

"It could be a *she*."

"Jenna—"

"Okay! Okay, I know."

"Do you? Baby." His voice gentles as he sandwiches my hand between his. "You've got to stop this. You're going to tell Sarah the truth. After that, whatever this spineless wretch is threatening will have no hold on you. You understand? No hold at all. You'll be free."

I cringe at my husband's words, unable to share his anger. I am actually weirdly relieved at being forced to come clean. I deserve this.

What's happening to me, as wrong and twisted as it seems to Jonas, is justice. He knows the truth now and by God's grace loves me still. But when I tell Sarah ... I tremble to think of her reaction.

The notes. They haunt me. The first accusation arrived in my Cortadera post office box a month earlier. The other three awaited me last week. My name and address were typed on the plain white envelopes. No return address. Each bearing the postmark of a different Washington town. The last one contained a demand.

I dissolved into a heap right there in the village square, such a wreck I couldn't even ride my motorbike home. Poor Jonas had to all but carry me back to Magdalena, where I confessed everything.

Well, not everything. Sarah deserves to be the first to know the last chapter of my story. But Jonas knows everything else, all the parts that matter.

I think I hesitated to go to Jonas with the first note because I couldn't imagine who wrote the hateful threats. Partly because I can think of no one who would be so vicious, but mostly because no one knows. *No one*. It is impossible. So a small part of me kept hoping it was some kind of perverse joke.

Now Jonas glances at my open journal. "You're still working on your plans?"

I follow his gaze, glad to talk about something else. On the page are rough sketches, thumbnails outlining several murals I hope will someday grace a new literacy center in Cortadera. "I thought I'd show Sarah my ideas while I'm home. See if she'll consider coming to paint them for me."

"But she stopped painting, didn't she? After her ... after the accident."

"Yes, but I keep hoping a project like this might convince her to start again." I trace my fingers over what I've drawn. Mine are only

crude sketches, but in my sister's hands, they will become masterpieces. And then ...

In my heart of hearts lives a prayer I barely dare whisper even to myself. If Sarah paints these murals, I'll see it as a sign. A sign that she has really, truly forgiven me.

Jonas's talk of the literacy center reminds me of my conversation with Dolores. "By the way, can you check in on Matilde while I'm gone? We may need to run some tests. And keep an eye on Sixto. Dolores told me he's giving Matilde grief again over coming to my classes."

"Did she also tell you they can't use their well anymore?"

His faintly derisive tone puzzles me. What isn't he saying? Then I straighten. "Did someone damage their hand pump?"

"The handle and head assembly didn't just walk off by themselves."

Without a handle and head assembly, a pump is useless. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"You had enough on your mind."

Sixto. Impatience tightens a cord inside me. Why can't he see that easy access to clean water makes life better not only for his wife but for the whole family? This isn't about just Matilde.

"No, Dolores didn't tell me that. Neither did Matilde. She doesn't like me thinking badly about her husband. So, what can we do?"

Jonas leans his head back, rubs his forehead. "I could use some help repairing our solar panel. I'll ask Sixto to lend me a hand. Give us a chance to talk without coming across like I'm preaching."

I nod, knowing it's the best he can do. Change comes so painfully slowly down here, even good change, which is often met with suspicion simply because it's different. And not just in the lives of the women. Jonas faces similar challenges getting the men in the

agricultural co-op to buy into his ideas for new crops or genetically-engineered seeds.

Fingering the silver charms of my bracelet like beads on a rosary, I think of everyone's hope that Matilde will give birth to a boy. *Please God, let it be a boy.* It's a frivolous prayer, but I'm unable to help the hope that the addition of a boy to the family will distract Sixto from his simmering resentment over his wife's determination to make a better life for herself and their girls.

The constant jarring makes it impossible to add to my sketches, so I close my journal as the sun slides behind the horizon, leaving a rolling landscape illuminated only by the light of a full moon. We are climbing into the foothills now. Nestling against Jonas, I savor the solid strength of him. Three years of digging wells and hauling stone have given my husband a physique Hugh Jackman would envy. "I'll miss you."

He presses a kiss into my hair. "Don't stay away too long."

"I won't. I have to be back for Matilde's baby, remember?" The bus jerks as our driver avoids one of a thousand potholes that mark the narrow, winding road. The motion jolts me against Jonas, but then our progress smooths and I close my eyes.

Suddenly I'm awakened by a violent lurch. I struggle upright. "Where are we?"

"Been descending a while." Jonas raises his voice against the shriek of brakes as the bus resists the pull of the steep switchback. "I'd say we're still a couple of hours from Santa Cruz, but I'm not sure. Can't see much out there."

The tension in his voice causes an anxious tingling to spread across my skin. I attempt to see past the other passengers to the road ahead, illuminated only by the headlights. "He's going awfully fast, isn't he?" Miski, oblivious, snores softly in my lap.

Jonas tries to smile, squeezes my hand. "Faster than I would like, but he knows these roads better than we do."

A frisson of fear shoots down my spine as I hear the echo of my conversation with Dolores. “Should we ask him to stop? Take a break?”

“It’s fine. Go back to sleep if you can. We’ll be there soon.”

I know I won’t sleep now, but so that Jonas won’t worry, I rest my head once more on his shoulder and cup Miski’s soft little rump in my palm, trying to draw from the puppy’s trusting calm. We are traveling a series of switchbacks to get through an Andean pass. With every turn, the motion throws us sideways.

A fresh lick of apprehension brings perspiration to the surface of my skin. Inside the bus, the air goes thick and heavy. For the first time, I notice the absolute silence of the other passengers. *Please, God, keep us safe. Please, God, oh, please.* My prayer becomes a mantra.

We ride for another ten minutes in tense silence. After cresting another small summit, a new descent begins. The rhythmic squawk of brakes at every turn punctuates the dead quiet. I begin to relax. The driver has slowed. We’ve made it past the worst. I turn to say so to Jonas when a shout opens up the night.

For one split-second, I feel a curious thrill of weightlessness as we hurtle off the road into blackness. A terrifying crunch, the bus landing nose first. Momentum pitching us tail over head. Down the mountain. Glass shatters. Bodies tangle. I am propelled though cold mountain air.

And then—I’m not. I open my eyes, sensing the passage of time. How much time? I feel oddly weighted, as if I’ve been lying still for hours, but perhaps it has been only seconds. I am on my back. Pain rips up my spine. A silent scream fills my head as I try to writhe away from the searing agony. Why won’t my body respond to my brain?

I become aware of other noises in the dark. A distant scream. A moan, then a liquid gurgle. Jonas? I will my hand to reach for him but nothing happens. I cannot move.

Cannot move? *Oh God . . . Oh God!*

Panic bubbles. I struggle to draw breath. *Oh God, where's Jonas?* My lips part to call his name. *Jonas, come to me!* But all that emerges is an animal groan.

Then another sound, not far away. The soft whimper of a puppy. Miski. Miski is hurt. *Oh, sweetie, you need your mama. Come here to me, Miski. Come to me!* My eyes fill with tears that slide into my hair.

I hear my name. Jonas, a wire of panic threading his voice. And then—*oh, thank you, Jesus!*—there he is, hovering over me, blocking the glare of the moon. Oh, beloved face! Looking so worried! Blood seeps from a gash on his forehead, his eyelashes are wet with it. From the way he holds his arm, I know he is hurt. But why does he look so worried? He need not be worried, not now that he has found me.

In another moment, I'll sit up, take Jonas's hand. Together, we'll find Miski. Then we'll help all the others who are hurt. Just as soon as I catch my breath . . .

Jonas curls over me, presses his mouth to mine. He blows out a puff of air, my chest rising as his warm breath fills me, strangely comforting. Intimate. And then—oh merciful God!—the pain disappears. Like that, gone. *Oh Jesus, You are so good.* I sense His presence as surely as if He is sitting on the scabby ground beside me. I feel bathed in warmth. He is near. So near! I've known His presence often here in this land, want others to know it too. These people who love stories so.

What a story I'll have to tell them now.

CHAPTER 1

SARAH

Selah, Washington

Present day

She can't breathe.

Weight, cold and black, crushes her chest, only moments after a terrible roar rent the thin mountain air, drowning terrified shouts. Now silence reigns. And pain. In the chaotic tumble of snow and debris, she had the presence of mind to let go of her ski poles and wrap her arms around her head. But the tiny pocket of oxygen she created quickly becomes toxic, filling with her own expended breath. Every limb screams. She longs to cry out. To find TJ. She wills her legs to move. An unseen grip holds her fast.

Something wet slides across her cheek.

Sarah jerks upright, gasping. She stares blindly into the darkness of her bedroom, disoriented, until she recognizes the jagged rasps

tearing into the silence as her own gulps for air. *Breathe, Sarah. Just breathe. Dear Jesus, help ...*

She struggles onto an elbow, instinctively reaching for the gold cross at her neck, twisting its chain as she practices the breathing technique they taught her in rehab. Slow and rhythmic. Gradually, her pulse slows, her panic ebbs. Relief and anguish rush to fill the void. She's thankful to be alive but crushed all over again to find TJ gone, leaving her alone, no one but herself to blame.

She blinks and sees the faint outline of her chocolate lab's head at the edge of her bed, his warm muzzle only inches from her face. Her thrashing about must have worried him. "Cork?" she manages, freeing her legs from the tangled sheet. He pants softly, amber eyes boring into hers. "I'm fine, fella, just one of my dreams. Go back to bed." She points to his overstuffed cushion on the floor, and when he doesn't budge, repeats, "Cork, bed."

He whines and backs toward the door. Still wrapped in the shroud of her nightmare, she doesn't move until he whines again, adding a low growl for emphasis.

"You need to go out?" Her left knee aches as her toes touch the floor, an everyday reminder that her dream is not just a dream. The floorboards cool her feet as she crosses the room. No sooner has she opened the door a crack than Cork shoots past her. But he doesn't head for the wide, banistered staircase. Instead, he darts toward Jenna's old room, paws at the closed door.

Weird. It's like he knows Jenna is coming home tomorrow. Then it dawns on her: *she's already here.*

Of course. How like Jenna to take a different flight, hire a cab from the airport, and sneak home earlier than expected. To catch them all unawares.

A spark of mischief she's not felt in years ripples through Sarah as she contemplates this chance to foil her sister's plans. Cork looks back at her, cocking his head, imploring her to hurry. Quietly, so as

not to alert Jenna, she opens the door. Cork brushes hard against her bad knee as he darts past, making her grab the doorjamb for support.

Holding her breath, she waits, imagining Jenna relaxed in sleep, anticipating her shout as Cork pounces.

But her expectation is met by silence.

She pushes wide the door. Moonlight slants across Jenna's empty bed, its green and violet pinwheel quilt smooth and neat.

Swallowing disappointment, Sarah scans the room for any sign of Jenna's presence. Nothing. Her belongings remain just as she left them years before, from the pillows lined up on the window seat to the rows of thick, non-fiction titles marching across the shelves. As Sarah crosses the threshold, a draft brushes her bare arms, strangely warm given the window opened to the cool, September night.

Cork runs a tight circle and leaps onto the bed. "Cork!" she hisses, not wanting to wake Dad, who sleeps across the hall. "Get down." In the Lanning house, dogs on beds are strictly *verboten*, although Sarah has long suspected Jenna breaks this rule. Cork ignores her command, so she snaps her fingers and tries again. "Down!"

He paws the quilt and whimpers.

A mental picture of Nana's shredded heirloom flashes before Sarah as she hooks her finger inside Cork's collar and tugs.

He stiffens his limbs, digging in.

She lets go and glares at him. "What is *wrong* with you?"

She leans down and tries scooping him into her arms, but he drops to the bed, a limp, dead-weight she's unable to shift. She straightens and lifts the edge of the quilt to drag it off the bed, beast and all. Cork's lips flutter over bared teeth, a low growl erupting inside his chest.

What the heck? She stumbles backward, staring at the dog until he ducks his head and whines. Relieved, she approaches again and strokes his fur, but when she reaches for his collar, he whips his head and shows his teeth.

Sarah backs to the window and narrows her eyes at him, rubbing her arms against the chill flooding the room. She turns and lowers the sash several inches.

In Silverwood's fields beyond the courtyard, the full moon illuminates rows of chardonnay vines in opulent display. Beyond them stand the syrah vines, then the cabernet, all heavy with ripe fruit. It won't be long now, a month at the most, until they start moving their people through those acres, divesting them of their treasure.

The silvery light slanting through Jenna's window captures an object on top of the bookshelves in a muted glow: a carved mahogany box the size of a bread loaf.

She remembers this box well. A fiercely guarded gift from Dad to Jenna on her tenth birthday. It features clusters of grapes carved into all four sides and the Lanning family crest on top. Its lock opens with a tiny, old-fashioned key, whose hiding place Sarah has never found.

She picks up the box. Something inside slides and rattles. Out of habit she tries the lid, but as usual, it holds fast. The box leaves a waxy residue on her fingertips. The whole room smells of orange peel and furniture polish, evidence that Ana has been in here, preparing the room for Jenna's arrival.

The prodigal daughter returning home.

To the equally proverbial delighted father.

Her insides lurch, signaling the familiar internal tug-of-war that begins whenever she considers the uneven tripod that remains of their family. Dad. Jenna. Herself.

Somehow, whenever Jenna is around, Sarah ends up the short leg.

What reason does she have to believe this time will be any different? Since Jenna called last week to request a plane ticket home, Dad's been over the moon at the thought of seeing his beloved daughter again. Though Jenna didn't give any hint of her long-term plans, he's

already asked Sarah to include her in the upcoming Harvest Festival. He could hardly stop smiling in anticipation.

A qualm settles in Sarah's stomach as she wonders again why her sister is breaking her self-imposed exile—and what it might mean for her. Will this be when she knows at last that Jenna has forgiven her? She presses a hand over her heart, as if to relieve the ache that throbs beneath her skin whenever she thinks about Jenna's leaving. Will the sting of rejection ever fade?

A breeze ruffles the sheer drapes framing the window, drawing her attention once more to the vines awaiting harvest. When Mom was alive, she liked to say that each bottle of every vintage had its own unique character. The amount of sun and rain in any particular season gave grapes an indefinable quality, a *goût de terroir*, the taste of the land. No other grapes in the world tasted the same, and thus, no wine did either.

She also said the best wines, like the truest, noblest characters, were produced under stress. Pamper a vine and you'd get a soft grape: flabby, without the necessary acid to form the backbone found in the best wines. On the other hand, too much deprivation led to death. But the right amount of drought, when the vine had to cast its roots down ... down ... summoning all its strength and will to survive—those vines were capable of creating a wine able to hold its own among the finest in the world.

Sarah sighs, her heart squeezing again. Probably a good thing Mom didn't live to see what happened between her and Jenna. How the cord of family loyalty that bound them from childhood began to fray soon after Mom died. Then snapped completely when Jenna left the vineyard for Bolivia six years ago, an absence broken only once, two years later. Mom would have grieved to know they'd hardly spoken in all that time.

It doesn't have to be this way. Not anymore.

The voice sounds only inside her head, yet it's clearly Jenna's. The *old* Jenna. The before-Mom-died Jenna, her timbre wry and husky, as if every word verged on a good laugh. So vivid that the hairs on Sarah's neck tingle and she turns to see if her first assumption was correct and Jenna has made it home after all.

"Jen?" She whispers the name aloud, but all she hears is the pounding of blood in her ears. Jenna isn't here, but in a jiu-jitsu move so like her sister, Sarah's apprehension flips into anticipation. Hope swells inside her chest.

This visit will be different, she can feel it. She may not be able to bring TJ back and undo the harm she caused, but she can at least repair what's broken between her and her sister. Can't she? *Yes*.

She replaces Jenna's box on the shelf and turns to look at the dog. Cork stares back from the bed, unblinking. Jenna's bedside clock reads 2:42. In a few hours, she'll have to be up for another long day, and she's too drained to fight with her unaccountably feral dog. His immobility forces her decision. Nana's quilt will have to take its chances.

Back in her room, Sarah pulls the covers to her chin and closes her eyes.

Downstairs, the phone rings.