

Reality

By Avery Frayn

Echoes and her own heartbeat are the only things she can hear. Sophie breathes in stiffly, her eyes snap open and they wander about the dark endless corridor. She staggers forward and notices a light engulfing the darkness, getting larger and brighter. The girl puts her hands over her face, the light beginning to blind her.

When she moves her hands away from her face, Sophie stares in disbelief at what seems to be an apple orchard. *Just like grandpa's orchard* she thinks. Sophie tries to move toward an apple tree, but her feet are frozen to the ground. Frantically she looks around trying to find something to yank her feet off the ground. She starts to panic when the scenery begins to spin and change with a booming thunderclap.

BOOM! Sophie slips and falls to the slick wet ground, while rain falls pours down. The peculiar rocking movement catches her attention and leads her to think *I am on a boat like Uncle Edgar's boat*. Sophie gets up and steadies herself. Hearing shouts, she walks to the upper deck where men can be seen attempting to put up a sail.

"Excuse me" Sophie says to a man. He walks past ignoring her.

"Could you help me?" She asks another man wearing a blue coat. He only looks ahead of himself and walks through her! *Calm down its only a nightmare*. The girl tries to reassure herself. She is breathing heavily not only because of sea sickness, but because of the revelation that came reeling at her. *Maybe this is real. Maybe I am a ghost*. Her heart is racing and pounding in her head. *It's only a dream*.

Sophie tries to wake up by pinching her arm and squeezing her eyes shut. Instead of waking up when she opens her eyes, Sophie finds herself gazing at an elegantly furnished room. *It looks like the opera house dad, and I went to one time*. She smiles at the memory. *But why did my dream change again?*

All around her are people eagerly staring at the stage where a young man is singing. Sophie wanders down the carpeted walkway hoping someone will notice her. Unsurprisingly no one does. The girl stops. She sighs. She turns back. Almost instantly Sophie catches sight of a little girl with her father. The young girl leans forward in her seat, a childish smile on her face. *Me! What! It is a memory inside my dream*. Sophie thinks, happy to see something familiar. *Maybe the other scenes were more memories.... But I don't remember them*.

“Is this dream real?” A ghostly voice counters from behind and immediately says: “Also, brace yourself the scene is about to change.” As if the voice has control over the strange dream, the scene shifts.

A house comes into view. It’s Sophie’s own house.

“Who are you? And how can you hear me?” Sophie fiercely asks the pale, ragged girl.

“I am your present self. You have been out a long time and I have been in your conscience many years.”

“What?” Sophie asks confused.

“You have been asleep a long time, this is who you are now.” The young woman explains gesturing to herself.

“So, you are me,” Sophie says finally understanding.

“Yes, lets go inside.” The older girl directs Sophie to the door.

They go inside.

“How do I get out of this nightmare?” Sophie asks impatiently.

“You wake up,” she says simply. “If...”

“If, what? Tell me!” the younger Sophie demands.

“If you want to endure the surprises of the outside world.” the older girl says.

“I will, I want to see mom and dad again and even,” Sophie pauses. “My annoying little sister.”

The young woman smiles. “I knew you would say that. Well, I guess this is it. See you in real world.” As the scene blurs, Sophie’s house disappears, and the older girl vanishes.

“Ah, the light it burns!” Sophie shouts. Someone quickly dims the light. “Where am I?”

“In a hospital bed,” the figure whispers. Sophie’s vision clears and she sees a frail, gray-haired woman beside her cot.

“Grandma is that you?” She asks hopefully.

“No, it’s me, Mom.” Her mom says.

“What?” Sophie croaks.

Her mom sighs “Honey, you’ve been asleep thirteen years.”