



KAVANAUGH

SING

I smiled when I found a brown-edged picture among my sister Jean's old photos yesterday. She looked regal—at nine she was a little Liz Taylor look-a-like.

There's Mom, eyes squinting, her hand resting on Jean's shoulder. There's me, I'm a real knock-out leaning into the other side of Mom, wearing high-topped shoes below a pinafore with standout ruffles—my knees too big for my skinny legs, my arm wrapped around Mom's thigh, my thumb inside my face. The floppy curls in my eyes would be red if the photograph were in color. The date on the snapshot's scalloped edge tells me I was four years old at the time it was taken. 1947. I don't remember this time in my life at all. This picture's happy.



One mysterious day a year later, life changed for Jean and me. I've pushed that dark day so deep it stinks of mold. Now here it comes, a sourness in my throat.

My five-year-old mind didn't know our dad was leaving Mom. It didn't know Dad arranged for Jean and me to live in a private foster home, fifty cornstalk miles away from our mom who only rode streetcars.

My chest tightens as I summon up that pivotal winter day. Why were we alone in that big backseat? Why was that ominous suitcase in the car? Why was our father standing in the snow waving good-bye? Who were the strangers who drove us to that scary house? Why did they LEAVE US BEHIND and DRIVE AWAY?

There were no answers to quiet my cries. Not then. Not now. I'm sure Jean was traumatized as well, but she saw the event through more worldly eyes. After all, she was ten.