

Sarah J & Laura S 10Z

“For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

A single teardrop meandered down the contours of her face to join the small reservoir on the tip of her nose, threatening to splash onto the square of paper in front of her. She brushed them away angrily. No. She wasn't going to cry. Not yet anyway. Not in front of all these people. Swallowing, she released a slow, tortured sigh, and hung the sign on the wall with slow, careful deliberation. She could hear the whispering, a low hum behind her as she left the shop, the glass door swinging shut behind her. A closure. At last. It was over. She stole a quick glance back through the window at the display inside. Nestled amongst the jumble of mismatched oddities cluttering the window display was a tiny box. A tiny, baby-blue box that contained the tiny, baby-blue shoes that she'd brought almost 6 months ago now. She choked back a distraught sob and spun on her heel, striding away from the shop, and the shoes.

She could feel herself sinking back into the misery. The cloying, desperate misery that had engulfed her for so long. She looked up at the sky. The big blue sky. Baby blue. Was he there?

Her heels clicked against the paving slabs. Faster, faster. She was almost running now. Brushing past the sympathetic looks, the kind words, the outreached hands, she pushed through the Saturday morning shopping crowds. Faster, faster. Past the market stalls, where ice cream stalls sold laughing children lollies, past the park where parents pushed toddlers in push chairs, past the school so empty on the weekend. The echoes of their laughter followed her. Bittersweet.

She was on the main high street now. She kept going. Past the little toy shop where she'd spent hours picking out the perfect teddy bear. Small, with glossy button eyes, and fine fur the colour of milky tea. Past the library where she'd found that book of fairy tales. She'd never get to read it to him.

The hospital now. Up the stairs. Breath coming in short pants, face red from the exertion. Past the maternity ward, past the screaming babies, past the ecstatic new mothers, past the looks of bliss on their faces. The top floor. The roof. The edge.

That sky again. Was he there?

It's a long way down. An even longer way up. No matter.

Another deep breath.

A step.

Was he there? She was.