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Looking Up

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ONE

Kerry Jeffrey

And then there was one
One that survived
Trapped behind its cage since birth
One that endured pain for others
Silenced only by happiness of others
One that bled its voice over logical thought
That stood by idle as time created rust
One that had so much to say
Shouting a warning upon deafened spaces
One that protected you
Gave you life
One that strengthened
Telling you that love is powerful
One that showed you the truth about you
And then there was one
One...just one...lonely heart

LOOKING UP Taylor Roseberry

MOTHER'S DAY

A. J. J. Bourque

Based on true events



IF YOU LISTEN REALLY CLOSELY you can almost hear the ocean when you breathe in and out. Sometimes when it's quiet, and I'm alone, I think about my grandparents' house near the beach, and the summers I spent there as a kid. I haven't been back since I was sixteen. A lot can change in a few short years.

It's four o'clock. *Ellen's* on TV. Mom's drifting in and out of consciousness, but a part of her mind must know she's on. The steady cadence of her heart monitors slows with every joke, rolling like the tide: in... and out...

I've been picking up extra shifts at the paint store. Four hundred dollars. All I need is four hundred dollars and this all goes away.

This was never the plan. Not at nineteen. Not now... Now, at the absolute worst moment of all; now when Mom needs me mos... when I need her.

But... I can't involve her. Not with this. She's got enough to think about already.

So, I don't tell Mom. She doesn't need to know. No one needs to know. Just four hundred dollars. I can do this. I can get through this.

You know, she asked me about it once. We were doing laundry, and she was watching me out of the corner of her eye, and then she turned to me, and said, "Leah, honey... are you pregnant?"

And what was I going to say? I mean, how many times has she said, "Just look at that, girls: another teen mom-to-be. Don't they know they're throwing their lives away? It's a shame. Just a real shame."

So I lied. "No, ma'am," I said, and we haven't spoken of it again. Because there's nothing to say. In a few weeks there won't be anything left to say.

But...

But then I think about how it happened, and I'm mortified. You know, he tried to put this all on me. Can you believe that? He said that it "wasn't his problem," and that I was "manipulating him." As if I would *choose* this at nineteen. As if I *could make it happen* all by myself. But no... of the two of us, *he* chose. *He* wanted this, and I... I just tried to think about the ocean, and the beach, and just... breathe.

I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK SINCE I WAS SIXTEEN.
A LOT CAN CHANGE IN A FEW SHORT YEARS.