

# Light Through Fog

By Holly Lisle

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“Can he still see us, Mama? Does he still miss us?” Sarah, tucking the boys in bed, tried to keep breathing.

“Yes, Jim” she whispered. “He’ll always be with us. I’ll leave the light on,” she added, and turned each of their nightstand lamps on low before she turned off the main light and stepped out into the hall. The feel of their hugs lingered around her neck.

She had lost so much—more than she thought she would ever be able to bear. But she still had them.

Sarah’s mother stood waiting at the top of the stairs. “They’re not ready. You’re not ready. Bring the boys and come back to our house. At least for a few more nights.”

Sara hugged her. “Mom, we’ll never be ready. But this is our life now. We have to start living it.”

Her mother nodded. “I’m not sure how you’re making it through the day. And you know whenever you need your father and me, we’ll be there for you. We’re...so proud of you.”

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Sarah watched her mother walk down the drive, get into her car, and back out. She stood in the doorway until the red glow of the taillights faded away at the end of the block.

And then she shuddered and went inside, locking the door behind her.

She smelled flowers. Most of them would be waiting under the tree, but funeral people had carried the indoor arrangements and plants into the house and set them up.

“Deepest Sympathies.” “In Remembrance of Sam.” “We love you, Sarah. You can count on us.” “You’re not alone.”

She had never seen so many flowers. Everyone had loved Sam, everyone knew him. He’d been a light in the town, some who did well at everything but who brought everyone else with him in his triumphs.

Including her.

Everyone had loved Sam.

She’d heard variations on the same theme from her friends and neighbors: as they put casseroles and baked goods into her fridge and her freezer; as they hugged her and wept; as they stood in the kitchen after the funeral and told stories about Sam and how wonderful he had been.

For those short hours while the house was full, while people lingered, she’d thought, I’ll be able to get through this.

But in the vacant rooms, the emptiness echoed. Sam was gone—he whom she had loved since the eighth grade—and this was her new life. She wanted to peek in on the boys. She wanted to cling to them. But Jim was twelve, almost as tall as Sam. Mike was ten, and already taller than her. Growing boys, soon to be grown. She had a few more years with them, and then they would move on to their own lives. She had friends, she had family. But she didn’t have Sam.

She wished, when the drunk’s car jumped the median and came at him, that she had been in the driver’s seat. She could have been. She’d been going to pick up the boys from school, and at the last minute he’d said he needed pick up something, and he would do that after he got them.

He never made it to the school.

She braved the living room and the flowers and plants, held her breath against the unwelcome sweetness in the air, and took Sam's urn from the mantle.

When dark fell, when family and friends went home, when the boys went to sleep, the truth was that she was alone. But before she let herself sink back into the endless recrimination, of how it could have been her and should have been her, she had a promise to keep.

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