Litas eyes fluttered open, sticking slightly at the sides where she had been crying before she had fallen into the pitch-black chasm of sleep. A small pool of drawl had seeped from te corner of her mouth leaving a stale puddle on her pillow. She brought her hands up and wiped her face as brilliant golden light from the mid-morning sun shone through the curtains like they were paper. Her house was silent, not even the clock in her room ticked or tocked. She was utterly and completely alone. Alone with her thoughts and the comforts of the old rickety house that she shared with her husband and children, as well as the anxious old dog that liked to pee on people’s beds when she either wanted to punish them for locking her away (like with a visitor) or because she got scared about the weather. They were gone. Gone for days on holiday, she remembered. Visiting other family. But she couldn’t go. And she needed space anyway.

Lita stared at the four walls of her own bedroom; she had always needed her own space, so liked to sleep separate from her husband. They still had a beautiful love life, yet she always just preferred to spread out and reflect as she slept. Plus, he worked early, and she had often got terrible insomnia or juxtaposed to it, the most intense need to sleep, like a hibernating bear. These four walls with badly painted edges, with crown mouldings and strangely plastered ceilings; with mismatched edged shape designs linked together, one on top of the other, then across from the other in a nonsensical way. The best feature of the house by far was the very large window that took up almost half the wall, looking out towards large rolling hills, forests and farms. Something about the view was incredibly peaceful and rather beautiful in it’s postcard prettiness.

Lita walked from her bed to the window, nothing outside seemed to stir. No cars, no birds fluttering. Almost like the world had become still. She pulled the curtains as closed as they would go and climbed back into bed. Putting the sleeping mask over her eyes. She heard creaks and the sound of footsteps. Pulling off her sleeping mask her head jerked up “hello?” she called out. But nothing. No one replied and once again the house was silent. “must be the neighbours” she muttered to herself. More creaking but she soon fell into a restless dream-filled sleep.

“I love you so much, why did you leave me” she heard sobbing in her dream and watched as the shadow of a man, in the pitch black room, stroked the hand that fell from the bed in front of her, the milkiness of the skin reflected from the sliver of light that penetrated through the curtained window; it was so familiar, the shapes of furniture and the way that the shadows remained eerily still against the soft illumination, yet danced around the fact that they were standing in this quiet, dark place. “why did you leave me?” he repeated, his voice cracking with intense emotion, his head was bowed to the floor as he held that stone cold hand. The rest of the person was covered. He sat beside them and was still; the only sound was the ticking of the clock, which seemed to reverberate loudly throughout the room, it’s loudness was almost mocking, the only noise, the only indication of life, though it was only mechanical. She put her hand on his shoulder, feeling the heaving sobs come from his broken soul; she felt a pang of something – overwhelming sadness but within that lay something else, that she could not put her hand on. Feeling the softness of her grip on his shoulder, he quickly turned. Lita woke up, she didn’t see his face, the darkness had covered it. She stared at the ceiling. Thinking.

Her grandmother had passed in this very room. Earlier in the year. After years of living with each other, she had watched her decline. Until a fall and pushed her dementia from mild to full-blown; asking to return home to a place that was taken from her by one of her greedy children, she had even forgot that she was divorced and looked in shock as the daughter that stuck by her and her grandchild, had aged. It was only then when Lita realised that her grandmother wouldn’t make it to the following Christmas. They were each other’s’ best friend and at times, they knew when and how to push each others buttons. But it was always out of love. Lita adored her grandmother. She was the strongest woman that she knew, and then she had to watch as she quickly became a shell of her former self, until she forgot everyone; calling her grandchild “nurse” yet through this, she had never forgotten her great-grandchild Thomas, though at the end, she believed him to be the boy that she had lost. Until, dosed up by numerous nurses as to be comfortable, her breathing began to take a deep rattling edge, and her skin grew mottled with pink and purple spiderwebs that spread from her knees. Then as her granddaughter slept next door, she took her last breath, instantly awaking her granddaughter. Lita had run in “oh gran” she sighed. Stroking the hair away from her warm face. No covers had been disturbed, she passed peacefully. Quickly her rosy cheeks turned white like alabaster “you know how much I love you, don’t you” the tears started to come thick and fast. She sat beside her as the clock continued to tick, it seemed louder than before as Lita’s heart began to crumple but she pushed that feeling back into itself. At least, she had been where she had always said that she wanted to be, when lucid. At home, in her bed, with the person that loved her most.

Lita blinked with that memory. Sadness washing over her and the patterns on the ceiling seemed to cross like puzzle pieces. The light hadn’t changed. But there were new sounds within the silence, like something was being moved, the sounds of doors opening and closing intermingled with the faintest sound of grunting. She rose up and jumped into her hallway, the door was locked with the key dangling from it, the long neck strap rocked back and forth yet, there was no breeze. “Gran?” she called out. Feeling stupid. The only reply was the sound of nothing. Nothing; nothing came from outside, nothing within the house. The clocks were unmoving and without sound. The house was in utter silence. Outside the window seemed unmoving too. No sounds of cars that frequented the road, not even the odd neighbour passed, no wind beat against the window. It felt all one note. Like today was the day of rest and no one was going out.

Maybe she was going crazy. But she couldn’t bring herself to leave the house. Going to the door, touching the handle, she felt overwhelming sadness. She couldn’t put her finger on why. The creaks and moans of the house was her company. As she sat staring at the walls until she climbed back into bed. She felt safe in bed, like the blankets were her walls and warmth. She touched her pillow “why did you have to leave me, gran” she sighed into it. “I miss you so much” no tears came. Only the cover of sleep.

Lita heard her husbands voice “why did you do it? How could you leave me and the kids” he sounded bitterly destroyed “I love you so much. Why didn’t you let me help you” she heard him cry “how can I do this alone?” she wanted to hug him and tell him she was sorry “I love you, I hope you are at peace” she felt the kiss on her cheek. But she was dead, in her bed. A cold mannequin corpse. Surrounded by pills and vomit. He brushed the hair away from her face. “Please come back” he squeaked. He sounded so small, so lost. It was if she could see his broken heart etched on his face.

She shot awake. The dreams were disturbing. She reached for her phone, but it wasn’t where she usually put it. She rushed to the hallway and picked up the home phone, no dial tone. Frustration grew as she began to tear the house apart. She needed to call him, and her kids. Just hear their voices. That last dream felt like she had been cut into a thousand pieces. Nothing seemed to work; her computer wouldn’t turn on. She could not find her phone. Even the TV did not work. She found a lighter and thought to light a candle, just to see something move. Yet as she pressed on it, nothing happened.

It was then, she began to remember.

With the memories, the room began to swirl around her.

She watched herself dancing through the Livingroom crying; the pain of grief never got easier for her, and that night, it became too much. She could not take it anymore. So, alone in the house, she went to the kitchen and raided the medicine box; some of her grans medicine was still in there. She watched as she choked down every pill that she could find. Blood pressure medicine, painkillers and diabetes medicine. All swirled together as it was drunk down with a grass of tap water. She watched herself wander back into the bedroom and lay in the bed, half vomiting, until her body gave out and she fell into the last sleep, the acrid pain from the stomach acid ceased. Her body grew colder and colder, harder and harder until the morning; when her husband returned from the trip with the kids.

She watched as he called out to a silent house. She watched as he gently opened her door thinking that she was asleep then rushed to her side. She watched him scream at the top of his lungs and the older of the children run in then wide-eyed, run out crying and grabbing the other children to keep them away from the scene. She watched as he called the emergency services, sobbing down the phone. She watched as they came and pronounced her dead. She watched as he sat beside her whilst they called the funeral directors for him because he was broken. She watched as he had to see her taken away and slumped into a chair. She watched him, devastated. The younger children asking, “where’s mummy?” but he couldn’t talk. She watched as the older child pushed all of her emotions back and tried to look after her father and siblings. She watched her family break like glass.

Lita sat on the floor; her head swimming as the room around her changed. Her bed was gone, her belongings in boxes, shoved in the corner. The room looked bare. Sad. She wanted to cry but no tears came. She knew what she was now. The past. A horrible event that marked those that she loved.

A ghostly remnant. A memory. A spectre of nothing. She could not touch them, nor could she properly see them, the living. Her family. How she wanted to! But it was her choice to leave them.

She had done the unspeakable. She had taken her own life.

She was sorry, so very sorry. Now she understood what she had done. She wanted to hold them so badly. How they have suffered. Regret swirled in her stomach. Her poor children. “Please lord, do not let my husband follow” she whispered out loud to the air. Remembering the searing pain that she had caused him.

Now she began to wonder; is this hell? For it certainly wasn’t heaven. Though, she felt the loss of herself and her life. She wasn’t in utter pain or despair, she could not even cry, unlike that night. The grief of it all was not overwhelming, just indescribably sad. So, if it were hell, it is not so bad. Just a bit lonely. Or maybe, she thought. It is limbo, and the house is simply a waiting room. As she thought that, the clock in the bedroom, that remained undisturbed, began to tick.

The sound was a welcome melody. A moment of life, repeating and counting. She stared at the clock “but how?” she whispered out loud to no one. She heard footsteps in the house, feeling that they were there, in the house with her. Rushing into the hallway, all she saw was the bounce of the shadows as they moved. But nothing else. She tried to touch them, but they were non-corporeal. They were not wholly there. “I’m so sorry” she looked to the floor “I’m so so sorry”.

Suddenly, there was a soft knock on her front door. Rat-a-tat-tat. Not too loud but in a house of stark silence, it filled the space with a welcome distraction. There was someone there. She had been alone for god-knows how long and now someone was at the door. Fear crept up her spine, but she had no choice but to answer. Whatever lay behind that door, may have answers, or may simply be the end of her story.

She walked from the Livingroom to the door; a shadow waited, slightly moving through the large glass plate. Lita apprehensively turned the key and pushed down the door handle until it clicked open. She pulled it open and faced the person on the other side.

It took her a minute to grasp what she saw. There in front of her, was her Grandmother. No longer old or infirm. But younger, and smiling warmly at Lita, there was no surroundings behind her, only the most brilliant golden light. The roads and shrubs had disappeared. She looked at Lita warmly, smiling, waiting.

Lita stood in the doorway “Gran!” she cried out, flinging herself into her gran’s arms for a hug. Suddenly the hot salty tears flowed from her eyes “gran I missed you so much” she put her arms around Lita as they both sobbed “I love you so much” Lita continued “I just couldn’t…” Lita’s gran shushed her “it’s okay, I’m here now, I love you” she took Litas hand in hers and smiled “it’s time for us to go home” without looking back, they walked together into the golden light and the house disappeared behind them.