



A PROJECT OF THE DOMINION INSTITUTE

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Métis
17yrs.

Invisible

I paused to take in the smell of the night air. I loved to walk through the night. The peace, the quiet – it defined me. I could see the lights of my living room casting a ghostly glow onto the sidewalk, but I was in no rush. I cherished these moments I had alone from my family. Of course I loved them. I'd been brought up to cherish them more than life itself, but I was still grateful for my time to reflect. The night soaked through my every fiber, creating a natural high. I continued towards my home, each step gently placed, and then one bound up the steps of the porch.

I stepped into the house to find my mother sitting in her chair, knitting, and my younger sister, Ellen, sprawled across the living room floor, recreating the wedding of my mother and father with her dolls. It was a standard day in our house; relaxing, comforting, and balanced. My mother greeted me with a warm smile while Ellen embraced me in the biggest hug a ten-year-old could muster. I swung her around in a helicopter, and she screamed with delight.

“We’re going out for dinner in celebration. Ellen won the spelling bee at school! Put on something nice, Grace.” My mother interrupted.

“My little spelling Princess! Congratulations! You are so amazing!” I swung her around again, then rushed upstairs to prepare.

My older sister, Sara, was lying in bed as I got into our room, a cloth spread out on her forehead and a look of sheer agony stamped on her face.

She noticed the inquisitive look I was giving her and told me, “I’m sick. I’m not going for dinner. I am not moving an inch. Tell Mom.” With that she rolled over, and gestured for me to leave the room.

I left the room and scooped Ellen. “We’re off, Princess! Your royal carriage awaits!”

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We returned to the house a few hours later we returned to the house, our stomachs full and our spirits lifted. We burst into the house, singing one of the many songs we’d memorized from the radio, and danced around the living room.

“Sara!” my mother called, “Come join us!”

We started calling up the stairs to her, begging her to come join us. When she didn’t appear after a few minutes my mom started to venture up the stairs, creeping forward to surprise her. Ellen and I stood at the foot of the stairs. My mother then reappeared, but the smile was

gone from her face. She slowly descended the stairs, her hands gripping the rail so hard her knuckles turned white.

“She’s gone.”

Those were the only two words that it took to send me sprinting up the stairs into our shared room. Her cloth was sitting on the bed-side table, her sheets thrown messily aside. I started to take an inventory. I knew she would never leave us, so something had to be wrong. She couldn’t have run away, she would never run away. Her purse was sitting at the foot of her bed, her cell phone sitting on the table beside the cloth. I opened her purse, and her wallet with what must have been all of her money was still there. She was smart enough to know not to leave without her money. Something was wrong.

I sprinted back downstairs where I found my mother crumpled in a heap in the middle of the floor. I could hear small sobbing coming from her still form as Ellen sat on the couch, confusion written across her face. I knew I had to take the control. I picked up the phone.

“9-1-1 emergency, can I help you?”

I explained the situation to the woman over the phone and then waited for the police to show up. Time seemed to crawl to a stop as I waited, every minute being another minute my sister was in danger. I rushed to the door as they arrived, but was discouraged to see only one squad car parked in the driveway. I didn’t understand. I showed the police our room, gave them Sara’s picture, and told them that she was kidnapped. After they’d laid eyes on my family, however, they seemed to have an air of disinterest as they conducted their investigation, one policeman even pressuring the other to hurry up. Our dark skin, our dark eyes, deterring them from doing the best investigation they could.

“She’s probably just run away. Wait for her to come home, dear. There’s nothing we can do at this point in time.”

I was taken aback by their response. They walked out of our house before I had the chance to stop them. They were supposed to help us. They were supposed to find Sara and save her. But she was missing and nobody cared.

A tear rolled down my face. I turned to my mother who had picked herself up far enough to collapse into the chair. I went over to her, picking Ellen up on my way. I sat into my mother’s lap, my head resting on her shoulder and my arms wrapped around Ellen.

“She’ll be okay. She’ll be okay.” My mother kept repeating this sentence over and over as it became her mantra. I just sat quietly, a silent pillar of strength reaching out to hold up my family as the world crumbled around us.

Months passed with no word from the police, nor any word from Sara. We spent our days in a gray haze, our lives becoming more of a chore than anything else. Every time the phone would ring, my mother would jump up, and every time it wasn’t Sara, she would sink deeper into the black pit of her depression. My mother sat in her chair and waited, watching the news for any signs of the missing piece of our family. Every day on the news there would be stories of missing people who’d gone missing last night or last week. Never two months ago. The difference was that these people who had gone missing were white. They didn’t share our

appearance, so somehow that made them more worthwhile. They weren't Aboriginal, therefore they couldn't be ignored. They were not invisible.

I took Ellen into my arms and took her upstairs to put her to bed. She was not herself either, her playful nature had disappeared, and she barely spoke anymore, but at that moment she looked me in the eyes and asked, "What colour are tear stains?"

"Tears don't have stains, love. They're clear."

"Are you sure? Because I think Mommy has some. You do too. Do you think Sara does?"

I just smiled at her and placed her in her bed. I couldn't let her see me cry again. I took this time to do some research, and what it revealed shocked me. Over 500 Aboriginal women had gone missing thirty years, and no one of authority cared. They were like Sara, gone missing, and people assumed they'd run away, and put their cases on the back burner. I could no longer hold it in, and all the anger and sadness I'd felt burst out of me. I cried harder than I ever had before, for Sara, for the sisters I'd never known that had disappeared without a consequence.

Sara disappeared like so many of the other women. The police took up her case after four months, after which the case had already gone cold. My mother went to the press with no avail, but Sara's memory would always stay within our hearts.

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I kept my face blank, eyes forward, and kept a quick pace. My hands grasped my keys in my pocket, my one protection. I could see my house and the lights coming out of the living room. *Two more blocks*, I thought to myself, *two more blocks*. I picked up my pace, the anticipation of getting home driving me to speed up. I ran up the front steps and surveyed the empty street I had just walked down. It was a perfectly normal city street, and would seem safe to most people. But I was not most people. I was Aboriginal.

Everyday I walked down the street, or to work, or to just walk my dog, a horrible fear gripped me with every step. A fear so immense I could barely ever convince myself to leave the safe abode that was my home. Every step I would imagine the horrors of my sister and the many other Aboriginal women that had ever gone missing. The horrors that I never wanted to experience, and that saddened me deep within my soul. These women were like me, exactly like me. They looked different; dark eyes, dark hair, and dark skin. That was their only mistake.