

# That Picture of You

by Kelli Christiansen

I remember that picture of you. It's the one I would have taken, that summer you would have been—what?—four, maybe? The one of you in the treehouse, holding the white daisy, gazing out the window, looking out over the field that would have been our backyard when we would have been living in the far, far western suburbs, where cookie-cutter subdivisions full of duplexes and cul-de-sacs met farmland full of straight rows of corn.

I remember that picture of you. You would have been so happy, so full of wonder, the kind of wonder and glee that only young kids experience, the kind that isn't inhibited or checked or embarrassed, the kind that peels into giggles and squeals, the kind that would have made you start to run to me, teetering forward, making me sure you were about to fall, skinning your knees and hands, dropping that little white flower. You would have cried a few crocodile tears, and I would have swooped in and scooped you up and gobbled up the tears in a frenzy of kisses until your crying turned into laughter.

I remember that picture of you. Your mop of a haircut, the light brown strands nearly falling into your eyes. You would have shrieked so when I took you to the barber for your first haircut, earlier that summer, so much so that I would have just let it go, let it grow long, getting all stringy and mopy, just so we wouldn't have to go through all that again, at least until I worked up the courage to try once more with the scissors, myself, wrapping a worn, rough towel around your neck, cinching it closed with a laundry pin, the hair falling to the floor of the front porch like precious strands of silk.

I remember that picture of you. I can still feel your baby soft skin, your sweet nose, your big, cherry, kissable cheeks, your chubby tummy, your tiny, pudgy little hands, the hands I never got to hold.

I remember that picture of you. The one I never got to take. Because you were never here. We were never there together looking out the window of the little treehouse overlooking the rows of corn in the fields pressing up close against our subdivision at the end of a long, hot summer. You were never here. You were never.