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24 Hour write

*Strawberry Scars and a Lifetime of Marks*

At the age of six, Beth got a scar on her wrist from a stray nail under the dining room table. This is from growing up with a grandmother who would always bake her a peach pie when coming to visit and she didn't have to heart to tell her grandmother that she didn't like peaches and that it wasn't the pie itself. So twice a year Beth would bite her tongue and "eat" the dreaded pie, but it would actually get hidden under the table until the adults left to the kitchen and from there it would then makes its valiant escape out the dining room window to the grey sidewalk below. But one Christmas night while the pie was getting slipped under the table she had got her wrist snagged on a nail. She couldn't hide her surprise and after being bandaged up soon confessed. Her grandmother stopped bringing peach pies and instead brought strawberry short cake.

At the age of sixteen, Beth got her first tattoo in a small parlor where they didn't even ask for her age. It was not the cleanest but it had to do. The tattoo itself wasn't large, this tattoo was for her. Like all the other markings on her body, the tattoo was a reminder. The white ink was almost invisible against the light skin of her inner wrist serving as a gentle reminder that everything hurts, but the pain will fade over time; a reminder that lies can never be repaired; a reminder that it's impossible to regain someone's trust once it's been shattered to pieces. The tattoo was all her regrets and *there was nothing to be shared*, all the faces of ones who had lost their trust in her once the truth had revealed itself. She never could tell a lie without confessing the truth. She stared at her wrist, at the mark she had chosen that would remain with her forever. A small white strawberry stared back.

At the age of twenty six, Beth got her first house. It wasn't by any means extravagant; in fact it was very simple. The walls were all white with traces of grease or pencil left on them and at first she had tried to clean them but soon learned they had no intention of coming off. So they were left as they were without even another glance. It wasn't long until she had felt at home there, after a few days it even smelt of her baking and of fresh berries. Of course the marks on the wall would still bother the others who visited he house, she would often hear them mumbling from the kitchen and more than once Beth had found her mother subtly trying to wipe one off while she was out of the room. This only made her smile because while they saw an ugly patch that defiled the wall she saw a story. A story which she will likely never find out, to most that would be terrifying but she found it refreshing. Beth found comfort in the secret ways she might have entered other peoples live, like who had made those marks on the wall entered hers, without even knowing.

At the age of thirty six, Beth had her first child. It was nothing like she had expected. *What to Expect When You're Expecting* had not done any of it justice. It was tiring, and painful, and unexplainably hard. Spending hours trying not roll her eyes whenever someone would mention her protruding stomach, offering "words of wisdom" or making a joke. But in the end everything was worth it for the love that she felt for that little baby. He had her heart the second that test had showed up positive nine months ago. The stretch marks on her abdomen became her medals of honour. Her son then became

her life and she would not take back a single thing. All of the events in her life lead her to the moment when she became a mother.

At age forty six and while the soft stream of the remaining light washed through the window painting everything a rusted orange Beth began to bake a strawberry shortcake in her small plain kitchen. Once the surfaces were cleaned, as clean as she could get them seeing as it would be impossible to remove all of their past life from their exterior, the outdated fridge was checked to make sure the proper ingredients were in place. Today all was in order and she prepared her counter. From the beige glass bowl to the old silver sifter with a crank. Her dark unruly curls were tied up into a messy bun perched at the top of her head. At forty six Beth could pass as a young thirty, not that she cared for how old she appeared. Beth didn't fret over the developing lines marked in her skin from years of life or the faded distortion of her numerous tattoos because that's also how she saw most things that concerned others. A stain on the living room carpet from a pair of muddy boots, a wrinkle on her forehead, or an oil stained wall; none of those bothered her. Of course she would wash the carpet, look at the mark, and see to the wall but none of it had ever upset her though because it was proof of their life. Experiencing life and having memories to remember were enough to keep Beth happy. And that's why she treasured her tradition, it gave her a chance to stop rushing through the now and remember the past; to bring up old memories while keeping the possibilities of making new ones at bay. Every second that went by marked the end of an opportunity but she knew she had spent them well.