

## Abigail by Evelyn Sharapova

It is 11 am on a Tuesday and I am sitting at the half-broken cash register at Goodwill. Three of the numerical keys don't work, and no matter how many times I have tried convincing my manager that it is an issue, she brushes me off. My shoes are shiny, black Mary Janes over white socks. I am sure when I remove them, I will bear bloody blisters on my heels and feet. My shirt is coarse fabric, but it's alright, because people say it looks rather pretty. It is one of those days that feels long, even though my shift only started an hour ago. Maybe it's the rain, or maybe it's the sheer lack of anything interesting going on. Usually at this time on a Tuesday, the store is empty and the aisles lined with clothing are a deserted menagerie of color. But today, directly across the store, is a little girl and her mother.

Abigail is five years old. She comes in often with her mother ever since Dad left three years ago, but they don't talk about it anymore. Mom can't talk about it anymore. I'm not sure if Abigail was even old enough to remember him after all, but sometimes Abigail thinks she remembers flashes of knights and blocks. She wonders if that was who Dad was, she wonders if she will ever know who her dad was, like the other kids do.

Abigail's fingernails are crusted with dirt from playing in the garden, and they are painted with five different colors of sparkly rainbow nail polish; pink, orange, light green, blue, and silver. Her hands are stained with multi-colored chalk. She has pink, transparent, plastic bracelets on her wrists reaching up to her elbows. Pink is her favorite color. Her knees are grass stained, her cheeks are a rosy red. She wears a cyan t-shirt because it is so soft. But the best part about her cyan shirt is that it has her name on it in purple, sparkly, cursive letters. Abigail wears her favorite skirt with it too. It is a baby blue tulle, and when she spins around, it spins too, and makes her feel like Cinderella. Her mom is bringing her to get new shoes and she has been waiting to go for an entire week. She wants to be a ballerina when she grows up and twirl around like a princess in a Disney movie, so she points out a pair of pink ballet flats that are on the very top shelf. It is okay though, because her mom is very tall and can reach them for her.

Her hair is shiny and smooth and in two misshapen pigtails with tiny, pink, princess clips. She is sitting on a bench and her legs are swinging back and forth as her mom helps her tie a pair of rosy ballet slippers. She shifts side-to-side impatiently as her mom finishes the last bow and she jumps to her feet and runs to the mirror. She spins in the mirror, and her skirt twirls too. She watches herself in awe in the reflection. She doesn't move a muscle. She admires herself. She admires her shoes. She feels so pretty, because she is so pretty.

I can't remember when she stopped feeling like that. Maybe it's when she turned old enough to hear the voices of the people around her, or maybe it's when she became old enough to hear her own. I can't remember what happened to my blue tulle skirt, and I can't remember what happened to that old cyan t-shirt. I think it grew ratty over time, and Mom threw it out. Mom always did that to old clothes, after all. I can't remember what happened to those pink bracelets, or the chalk that always seemed to stain my hands. I think the garden I used to play in is still there in the backyard. But, I can remember when I became the one reaching for the shoes on the top shelf. I can remember when I tied my own shoes instead of Mom, and when I stopped painting my nails with sparkly rainbow nail polish. But none of that matters, because I just can't seem to manage to remember where those beautiful pink ballet shoes went. I wonder if they feel pretty now that they are covered in dust tucked away on some hidden shelf. Would I even recognize them if I found them?