

ICE CREAM FOR DINNER

By DonnaMarie Vaughn

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CAST: one female

When the doctor told me, I can't remember how I *felt*. I remember my mother gasping for air, which I suppose was the correct response.

After the first few sentences, I stopped listening. Dr. Shay's mouth kept moving, but all I remember was thinking she should clean her glasses. How can she possibly see through those spots all over the lenses?

When Doctor Shay leaned across her desk and said: "Do you have any questions?" I simply nodded, looked at Mom, and said, "Can we go home now?"

You would think, like in the movies, it'd be a cold or rainy day, but it wasn't. The drive home was warm and I loved the feeling of the sun coming through the glass. Mom turned on the air conditioning but I asked her to turn it off and she did immediately. She put on the radio station I love and she hates, the one on memory button #6.

And there it was in the void. I listened to it knowing she hated it. Head-banging music, she called it. Loud and disrespectful. How can you even understand what they're saying? I won't have you listening to music about killing people and rape and drugs and drinking and...and...and... Sex. She could never say it, you know. Like, if you never said bad things, they wouldn't happen.

Yeah, right, I guess she got proved wrong today.

Gosh, my head hurts. I don't really want to take another pill, not yet. I want to enjoy the ride home and the sun. I want to make it last.

Last. Hah! What a funny word. Last as in continuing or last as in ending.

And then the car was stopping and we were home. I must have fallen asleep, as I've been prone to do lately, finding myself extremely tired for no reason. The medications have the same effect, but they make me sleep for long periods of time. Last week I slept for an entire *day*.

I felt sort of warm and sticky and I realized Mom had driven home the entire two hours with the air conditioning off and the radio station I'd asked to listen to on, even though I'd fallen asleep within the first ten minutes.

Wow, I thought, she must be really scared.

"Do you want anything?" she asked me when we got inside.

Yeah, I thought, my teenage rebellion surfacing for a bite: I'd like to live to be 100. Or 50. 25. Or how about 17, can you do 17, can I have just one more birthday? Can I? Huh? Huh? HUH!!!???

"I'm just going to go up to my room for a while," I said. After all, why ask for something you know you can't have?

Mom nodded. "I think I'll call your father, he should be back in his hotel room by now." I wondered how he'd react. Would he gasp for air, too? Would they have that same argument over whether he should have stayed and gone to Dr. Shay's with us or left for the convention where he was one of the key speakers.

Dad had said he needed to go, and staying wasn't going to change anything. And he was right. Nothing was going to change.

And yet, now, everything would change.

I heard her asking for his room, and I tried desperately to make my feet move faster up the stairs. I don't want to hear them argue.

It's funny – when you're near death you pay attention to the strangest things. Things you've looked at a million times but somehow never see, like the lines of dust in the crease of the carpeting on the stairs. The spot in the bathroom where the border design doesn't match. Did you know the blinds in my room hang crooked by about a half an inch on the right?

I want to sleep, but I know I shouldn't. Why give up the time I have left?

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DonnaMarie Vaughan. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of
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