

## Even Days

The bitches who knew Lina since kindergarten send their minivan moms to mourn in their place. With their frosted blonde highlights and expensive perfume, they cry over Lina, putting their cheeks against mine and leaving peach makeup behind. Motherfuckers who'd stopped talking to Lina by eleventh grade posted RIP on her wall, tagged her in photos, shared her obituary from the *Syracuse Post-Standard*. 21, *died Thursday at home*.

I exit the kitchen, that sauna of grief where, despite the central air, despite the fact that the food is catered and neither of the two ovens has been used, it feels steamy, like everyone's breath is trapped inside. Besides, I can't handle another conversation with a minivan mom, where they touch my face in pity before asking me about my career aspirations. They still know me as the scholarship kid.

More people would have come, but it's the week of college graduation. I, too, should be walking across the stage, receiving fancy parchment, taking photos in my Class of '09 T-shirt.

I'll miss the LSAT I scheduled, and I left all my shit at my roommate's family's house in Brooklyn, where I'm supposed to be living until I figure out what's next. My campus job in the library has ended. So here I am, suspended, with nothing on my calendar, following a cue out of my best friend's kitchen, while her body turns cold underground.

Emily has made the sign, her finger pinched to one of her nostrils, in the kitchen doorway, just in time. At least she showed up for the wake. She didn't come for the service or the burial at St. Mary's, where a steel machine lowered Lina's coffin deeper and deeper into the earth's hungry jaws. Where Juan finally broke down, sank to his knees, wailed at the earth, "How could you be so stupid?"

Emily and I sneak down into the basement, close ourselves into the bathroom. I remember the first time Lina caught us in here. That was before she tried snorting anything, when she was still freaked out by the idea of putting something up your nose. Plus, Lina had cousins in Mexico who'd died because Americans couldn't get enough. She didn't speak to either of us for days afterwards, and back then, days were their own little universes.

Emily has a whole kit: a bright orange Clinique makeup bag with a metal straw, razor, and little mirror inside.

She sniffs up her line quickly and holds the mirror up to my face. I see my own eyes magnified. My heart rate shoots up. I feel the pulse in my inner thigh. The bathroom feels stuffy. I turn on the switch for the fan, remember discovering it during my first time sleeping over at Lina's, one of the many luxuries I never thought about until I met people with money—a fan to blow the bad bathroom particles into undetectable smithereens.

Emily shuts it off. “Dude,” she says, and I realize the circulation has blown her neat lines apart, whisking some particles onto the floor.

“Shit. I’m so sorry.”

“Chill,” Emily says. Any other time, she’d be pissed, but she’s gentle now.

I think at any moment, Lina will be knocking on the door, getting mad at us for sneaking off. She will storm in, drunk, yelling about not wanting cokeheads in her house. But that was before she got into pills.

Emily and I are two of the few who know about the pills, we and Lina’s parents. There were official stories told every time she went to rehab—they were her “artist residencies.”

As soon as I enter the dense air of the kitchen, Patrick comes over and claps me on the shoulder. “I’ve been looking for you,” he says. He pulls me toward the stairs. My heart is trampoline jumping, intestines clenching around emptiness.

He brings me up to Lina’s room. Everything is the same as the last time I was here, right before we left for our first year of college, when she would take a medical leave the first semester to go to rehab. Bright yellow walls, dream catcher above her bed, Bob Marley posters.

Patrick points to a place on the carpet, next to the bed.

“That’s where we found her,” he says. When I look closely enough at the carpet, I see the stain there, not quite in the shape of a body, but some amorphous form.

“We tried CPR, but it was too late. There was a whole medium pizza from Mario and Salvo’s. And an empty bottle of vodka.”

“Oh my God,” I say. I’d heard of kids dying from alcohol poisoning, those frat house hazing horror stories. I’d learned to turn my friends on their left sides in their dorm beds.

“We’re still waiting on the autopsy report. I didn’t find any needles, or pill bottles, but... you know Lina. If she wanted to hide something, she’d find a way.”

He sighs deeply.

“You know, things were looking up for her,” Patrick says. “She was enrolled in fall classes at OCC—Spanish, Psychology, Art History. I have a lot of suicidal patients. They don’t make plans for the future.”

“Right,” I say, nodding vigorously, wiping cocaine snot from my face with the back of my hand.

Patrick tells me to come over to look at her jewelry box, picks out things he thinks I might like. A gold-plated bracelet, a silver Tiffany’s necklace, her turquoise and silver ring.

He pulls out an empty drawer. “That’s weird,” he says.

Missing: the set she inherited from her late grandmother, Patrick’s mother—a matching watch, earrings, ring, and bracelet, diamonds and emeralds set in platinum.

She’d been so sad when that grandmother died, she locked herself in her room with a handle of Bacardi and missed three days of school and showers. Patrick had called me to come over, and when the Chili’s buffalo chicken salad I brought her couldn’t get her out of bed, she let me in, and I came into her bed and we ate there together and watched *Gladiator* for the hundredth time. As always, it helped her to watch men tear each other apart.

“What do you think happened?” I don’t bring up the two months last year when the boyfriend lived with them. Why would they let him stay here? Maybe they were afraid that if they didn’t, Lina would disappear for days, and there would be no checking on her over the intercom, no family dinners over which they could study her pupils.

Someone is there in the parked car at the end of the driveway.

I see the driver, a white guy in a white muscle shirt. He’s smoking a cigarette with the windows rolled up, which grosses me out but also makes me want to smoke. There is no one in the passenger seat, and he isn’t holding up a phone. It’s a rusty, cream-colored, beat up Crown Victoria, the kind of car my dad used to drive when he still lived in Syracuse. This guy is talking to himself. Debating whether to go inside.

After the funeral, I go out for eight days straight. Emily has a new Adderall prescription, which we crush up and mix with the coke at her boyfriend’s penthouse apartment in Armory Square. We barhop, get bored easily, looking for the next best thing. Everyone I run into starts by mentioning Lina, killing my buzz, sending me back to the bathroom with the blend of mostly pure cocaine and bright blue amphetamines, the drip both sweet and bitter.

I keep thinking about the guy in his car at the end of Lina’s driveway. Thinking maybe I’ll run into him downtown. The latest in a series of toxic relationships that started with Colin, the high school boyfriend who touched her for the first time when she was passed out drunk. This newer guy, though, he knows something none of us know.

It’s not like I’m expecting Patrick and Juan to send out a newsletter with the autopsy results. But I do expect there to be new information, something that says this isn’t over, a longer epilogue to Lina’s story.

---

Lina had a small pool party for her seventeenth birthday, in July, before our senior year. She was always one of the youngest in our class, because she'd skipped a grade in elementary school. I could tell from the decor that Patrick had planned the party: pink and gold balloons tied to the pillars near the entrance, pink streamers over the door, and little gold gift bags in the foyer.

I was the first guest to arrive, and I went to Lina's bedroom to change into my swimsuit. The sun coming through the bay windows filled up the yellow room, making it a golden temple.

"Patrick is doing everything to try to make me not depressed. This party, which no one else is gonna come to. Then they're making me go to Puerto Rico with them."

"Making you?" I asked. I turned away from her to pull my shirt off, hiding my cheap bra, my tiny cone-shaped excuses for breasts. I knocked a hoop off by accident.

"Yeah. I mean PR is cool and all, but I'll miss all the parties right before school starts. And like, I'm already tan."

"Why are you depressed?" I asked, pulling my one piece on before bending over to retrieve the dropped earring.

"I don't know, dude, it's not like, something you can really put a finger on."

"Maybe getting away will make you feel better? I'd love to go to Puerto Rico."

"Come, then."

"Yeah right."

My earring lay between two empty handles of vodka.

Yes, Lina's bedroom was a fun place to hang out, with its 72" huge flat-screen TV and California king bed with the perfect level of firmness, and her two-foot-high stack of DVDs, and the excellent air conditioning. But still. Why was she drinking alone?

"No, seriously, you should come," she said. "Patrick would love it."

Lina took her sundress off. She had a bright orange PacSun bikini on. She had tits and hips filling in, which she said made her look fat. To me, she looked like she stepped off the cover of a surfer magazine. Her skin was glowing, her hair, not gelled or straightened like usual, flowed dark, silky, and wavy around her shoulders. But the skin under her eyes was dark, her eyes crinkled with worry.

I shook my head. "I couldn't afford it."

My eyes found the bright red, wide scars across her thighs. It had been a long time since I noticed any new scars on her arms, and I thought she'd grown out of her cutting phase, like the rest of us had. My scars had already cleared up, the result of dragging sewing needles or safety pins through the shallow of my skin, an experiment in transferring

psychic pain to the outside, less extreme than tattoos. Hers were surgical, performed with a knife. Where mine had been scratched skin, barely red, hers had bled, needed bandaging.

“You’ll hardly have to pay for anything.”

I saw the thread—the red lines, the empty bottles—but I said nothing.

It’s a sunny day, but hazy, so the light’s more white than golden. The last snow of the year came on Mother’s Day, a spring of new lows. Summer’s almost official and the trees are still more branch than leaf, hardly any bloom.

They remind me of being fifteen, struggling so hard against those long dark winters to get out of bed for school. I sat alone on the floor by the radiator waiting for the heat to kick in. Lina struggled even more. I remember snuggling under her soft, warm comforter during sleepovers, waiting for her to wake up so we could go downstairs and eat Patrick’s beautiful, elaborate breakfast. But she could sleep and sleep, until one or two in the afternoon. And she looked so peaceful, a little smile on her lips, sometimes giggling at dreams.

The house is on the Northside, has dark brown siding, the color of mud. There’s a white plastic screen door off to the right, with no steps leading to it, just a stack of cinder blocks serving as a porch. Lina had sent me the address so I could send her a Christmas gift, a little bobblehead Bob Marley I found at an antique shop in Soho. But I never remembered to send it, thinking I’d give it to her the next time I saw her.

There’s no driveway, and there’s a broken-down old pick-up parked in the yard and that old Crown Victoria in the front.

The blinds on the house are drawn. The snow’s melted, but the grass on the yard and along the sidewalk is still patchy and brown. Weeds with yellow flowers struggle to grow in a narrow strip of dry soil lining the front of the house.

A white screen door cracks open, and a pale figure steps out. I put the car in drive, panicked. It’s him. I recognize him from the way he smokes his cigarette, sucking the smoke with his lips curled, like he’s in a hurry to get to the filter.

I think he hasn’t seen me, but then he makes direct eye contact. I wish I was in Lina’s car, with its tinted windows. It feels like an insult to be here without her. He waves, smiling. He recognizes me, too—probably knows my face better than I know his. She never posted Facebook photos with him. “Hey,” he calls out. I park again, get out of the car.

“Hi.”

We don’t say our names. Something has already passed between us.

“Come on up,” he says, inviting me onto the cinder block steps. Butts smoked down to the filter litter the ground around them.

“This is your house?”

“My mom’s,” he says.

His smile is a little mocking, his teeth surprisingly white. He finishes his cigarette and lights another with its tip.

“So,” I say, not knowing how to raise the topic of the jewelry.

“So, Miss Mari,” he says. “Want something to drink?”

I follow him in.

The living room is dark but more or less tidy. A middle-aged white woman and man sit on an old gray corduroy couch, drinking forties of Olde English and watching *The Price is Right* with the volume low.

“This my mom. Her...friend, Greg.”

Sean’s mother barely looks up, but Greg’s eyes linger on me, making me feel the oil coating my skin. It smells fake sweet, like an orange vanilla car freshener.

“Lina’s friend.”

His mother’s eyes float up to meet mine, a shock of blue. “Lina?”

“Lina’s *friend*, Ma. Mari.”

“Oh...poor Lina,” she says, her eyes unfocused on me.

My skin prickles. Sean disappears into the kitchen. It is both dirty and neat in here. Books and papers are organized into stacks on the floor in the corner, and the miscellaneous junk has all been put in a punch bowl on the table. But the light streaming in through the blinds makes visible the thick layer of dust on everything. I think about Lina on that couch, her legs folded up under her, how small she became.

Sean emerges from the kitchen with two Styrofoam cups filled with bloodred liquid.

“Kool-Aid. Sorry, we ran out of beers.”

We go back to the cinder block steps.

He looks more well than he should. His hair is dark, with bleached tips, very early 2000s emo band. His eyes are intensely blue-green. He’s pale but there’s peach under his skin. I smell cigarettes, but no body odor. What is it that’s holding him up?

He lights another cigarette, and offers me one. It’s a cheap menthol, a Kool, the kind they sell eight dollars for a double pack at the smoke shop.

“Sorry I didn’t make it to her funeral,” he says.

I find myself sucking down the cigarette the same way he does. “I don’t know if her dads would have wanted you there.”

He shrugs. “Yeah. I just got out of jail. That day. I was pretty desperate to get high, to be honest.”

“How long were you in jail?”

“Three weeks,” he said. “Criminal mischief. Got into a little tussle.”

I'd been convinced Sean was the one who'd bought the fatal dose for Lina. They'd planned to get high together, but they'd gotten into a fight. Maybe he hurt her. She took what was supposed to be for both of them all to herself.

"I should have been there," he says. "I need a minute," he adds, and retreats into the house.

I am thinking about the jewelry. I think that if I can do this for Patrick and Juan, it will help resolve something, close one scene in this gruesome chapter. I need to find a way to look around the house for the velvet jewelry box, or a pawn shop receipt.

Sean doesn't protest when I follow him inside. He doesn't close the door to the bedroom at the back of the hallway, so I go in too.

He uses a real stone mortar and pestle, the kind Patrick uses to make pesto, to crush up half of one of the small pink pills.

"You sure you want to watch?" he asks.

"I'm curious," I say.

He puts the crushed pill on a metal spoon. My heart races like I'm the one who's about to shoot up. He uses a syringe to extract a vial of water from a bottle on the night stand, and adds the water to the powder in the spoon.

He uses a lighter to heat up the bottom of the spoon.

I remember the summer we started experimenting. We did almost everything we could get our hands on, but Lina avoided uppers. They were too overwhelming for her, her body on overdrive, dopamine and serotonin crashing her system like a hard drive with too many LimeWire downloads. Then she would have these horrible crashes the next day, when she would drink a whole bottle of liquor to quiet her glitching brain.

How long had it taken for Sean to convince her to do this?

He rolls up the sleeve of his hoodie. He tightens a child's belt around his arm, and I wonder whose child it belongs to.

On his forearm, there's a two-inch stretch of dark vein that ends with a mark at the crook of his elbow, a small sore. When he starts to position the needle going directly into the sore, I look away.

"Goddamn it."

"What's wrong?" I try to look at his face, not his arm.

"Can't get it," he says. "Fuck!"

He takes one hand and puts it between his thighs and squeezes his legs together until the veins in his fist swell. I notice little scars dotting his hands.

He finds a good vein. I look at my own hands. I notice the forked road networks of vein, branching off at my wrists and traveling to my knuckles before becoming indiscernible. I think of the time Lina and I took mushrooms and spent hours looking at our hands and

each other's. Comparing our shades of brown, how mine was more yellow and hers more red. Noticing the little hairs sprouting up from our fingers. How like paws they were. Marveling at having a body, we promised ourselves and each other we would no longer take them for granted, would never again abuse them.

Sean sighs in relief, then everything goes quiet. I can even hear the game show his mom is watching in the living room. I watch his eyes roll back, then close.

When they open again, his pupils are tiny black pinpricks in his watery blue eyes. He puts the syringe, spoon, lighter, and pills in a Ziploc bag and stuffs it into the top drawer of the dresser. Then he sits back down and nods off.

I take my opportunity, quietly opening the top dresser drawer and starting to rummage, pushing aside old check stubs, junk mail, light bulbs, batteries, cards lost from their decks, and drug paraphernalia. I hold my breath as if this will help block out the disgust. Which of these tubes did he use to tie up her arm?

"You could just say something," Sean says. I try to pull my hands out of the drawer quickly and end up with a splinter lodged deeply in my index finger. Sean smiles with his bright teeth and freakish blue eyes. "If you need to get hooked up."

"No, no, no." I try to resume breathing, sucking on my finger to extract the sliver of wood. I bring up the missing jewelry, expecting to catch him off guard, for him to play dumb.

"Oh, that's long gone," he says. "Someone on Craigslist bought it."

"When did you take it?"

He stares at me with those icy blue eyes. "You got me wrong. I didn't steal it. She took it."

"It was supposed to be for her wedding," I say. My words hang heavy between us.

"Look, I know you don't like me," Sean says. "But I never did her wrong."

"No, no, no." It isn't me who's confused. "You were the one who convinced her to break into the medicine cabinets, to start stealing from her parents. You were the reason she got the DWI. You were the reason Patrick got rid of her car. You know she loved that car. Without it, she was bored to death."

"Listen to you. You really believe that?"

"Believe what?"

"It started with me?"

"You don't know what she was like before you."

"You don't know what she was like before *you*," he says.

"Are you serious?"

"Let's not argue. Seeing you—talking to you—it's the only thing that gives me a little bit of relief. Besides, you know what she told me about you?"

"What?"

"You're the one who gave her her first pill."

I search my blurry memories. Had I?

I dream about Lina. I am trying to convince her that we can find something fun to do sober. Only when I am trying to plan this activity do I realize how hard sobriety must be. Weed and alcohol enhanced everything we did together—rollerblading, movies, the arcade, chilling by her pool.

We've finally decide to go get pizza and wings from Mario and Salvo's when Sean shows up. He ties up her arm with one of those resistance bands they use in group exercise classes. I'm too curious to protest. He strokes the soft skin inside her elbow first, a sad foreplay.

I wake up nauseous but aroused.

I let the missed call notifications and unanswered texts pile up. A few are from my college roommate asking when I'm coming back to the city. A couple are from Lina's high school boyfriend Colin, long rambling messages, full of drunken typos, about how much he loved her. Most are from Aisha, who keeps checking in to ask how I am, and to send me links to poems and articles about friendship and grief.

Sitting in my childhood bed, where I lost my virginity at fourteen, with my T-shirt and leggings, makeup-less, with tangled hair, I scroll through her LiveJournal until my contacts cake over with protein.

How did I miss all the calls for help? Has it been so long since I last logged in? Was I too caught up in college? Had I seen the posts and ignored them, chalking them up to Lina's morbid humor?

*I don't blame Heath Ledger for overdosing*, Lina wrote in January.

The night before we left for college, Lina and I sat on her plush king-sized bed, listening to Mario's "Let me Love You" on repeat and making lists of everyone we'd ever hooked up with, make outs included. We'd rolled up her Bob Marley posters, untangled and packed the necklaces hanging from the rays of a metal sun mounted against the yellow wall, and sorted her DVDs into three piles: take, leave, and give to Mari. Her room looked even bigger, and brighter yellow, in its bareness.

Lina ran out of names around twenty, I got to thirty-two.

"Now we know who's the bigger slut," I said.

"Don't say that!" She nudged me with her shoulder, shoving me towards the edge of her bed. "One day, these boys will be sending you apology letters. You'll be the one who got away. Meanwhile, I'll just be the depressed loser who's crying when I don't get a text back after the first fuck."

I protested, but she held up her small hand. “Never let a guy mistreat you, OK? I know you won’t, but promise. Don’t let them hurt you, like I did.”

“No, bitch. You didn’t let anyone hurt you. They did that. That’s not on you. They’re afraid that if they don’t hurt you, you’ll hurt them first. That’s fucked up.”

“I’m fucked up too.” A tear dangled from the cliff of her lower lid. “Don’t you get it?”

She was looking at me, but past me—into her sadness.

I found my purse, the pill bottle inside. I’d been building up a little stash during my time working as a cashier at the Eckerd’s pharmacy, swiping one or two pills per shift. I pulled out two Oxys. One for me, one for her.

I sit in the bedroom at my mom’s, which I still don’t think of as my bedroom, since she moved me into the smaller room that was once my nursery. My mom keeps telling me to stop calling it her house. That it’s my house too. But there are none of my Johnny Depp or Allen Iverson posters. My Model UN gavel awards are all tucked away in the crawl space of an attic.

This time, I want to access her private posts. I run through a series of potential passwords.

LiveJournal is not like the newer sites that make you stop trying after X number of failed attempts. It just lets you keep trying and trying. I find the right password, which means it was buried in my memory all along: jim315. Jimi her last living Chihuahua, 315 our area code. Too easy. We always shared our passwords, and sometimes pranked our friends by signing into each other’s AIM accounts and pretending to be the other.

*I’m glad I’m not using drugs and alcohol to cope, she writes. Before rehab in Arizona, I was smoking every day. To forget. Drinking ’til I passed out.*

Being inside Lina’s mind makes me restless. She goes around in circles, from hope to hopelessness, in the space of a sentence, the progression from life to death and back.

*I’m still living the consequences of my abusive relationships. I got heavy into drugs and neglected my friends but then again are they really my friends if they couldn’t see me through my darkest days? Still I would tell them I’m sorry I fucked up that I bailed or never called back. I was probably somewhere drooling on a couch. But now I’m sober which is good but then all day I think about how hard it is to stay sober. I hope this will be over soon.*

When I’m not at my computer going through her entries, I have the feeling a deep conversation has ended abruptly, the cadence of Lina’s voice stuck between my ears.

The tiny pills stashed in my jewelry box have been beckoning me for days with their tiny voices. Sometimes I walk into the room and it’s like the jewelry box has come alive, it has this pulse of energy around it that makes it glow.

*I don't think painkillers is the right word. Opiates don't so much kill the pain as change your relationship to it. You can still tap into the pain, access it, remember it's there. But it sort of blurs, becomes unthreatening. The pain is there, but it doesn't belong to you.*

When I close my eyes, I see her slim, arched eyebrows, the mole on her cheek, a tear on her lower eyelid. I hear her chuckle, that laugh so much deeper than her speaking voice.

I wish I could say I flushed the pills down the toilet. That seeing what this drug did to my best friend made me never want to try it myself.

*I should take all of it now, and then it will be done, and I won't want it anymore, because it won't be there. This time, it will be different. When I finish these, it's over.*

I finally go up to St. Mary's. I bring a spliff with me, mostly tobacco with a little weed sprinkled in, the kind we used to roll when we were on our way to friends' houses and had to interact with parents. I bring two shooters of tequila.

The grass is starting to fill in, but you can still see the rectangle where they lowered her coffin. Now there is a big granite headstone, and colorful tulips grow in dark mulch, yellow and bright pink. There are little clay pots with cacti with orange blossoms, and sugar skulls, and brass angels. It's the most beautiful grave in the whole cemetery.

I tuck the Bob Marley bobblehead I've been holding on to for her behind the headstone. I think she'll find it funny. I pop the top off her shooter and pour out the tequila in the mulch. It can't hurt her now.

I think to say a prayer, but I'm not sure who to direct it to. So I talk to her. I tell her that marriage equality is gaining steam, and soon we'll live in a world where parents like hers can be legal spouses. I mourn, like we used to, for the girlhood of our peers in Iraq and Afghanistan who have come of age during war, and how much easier it has been for us to forget the wars altogether.

"Damn, I miss you. I could use one of our nights right now." Loss is a cruel loop—the one person who can most comfort you, the one person you want to talk to about how much this sucks, is gone.

Patrick greets me at the door, as he always has. His beard is grown out for the first time I remember, and I notice how many grays he has.

The house smells good, like bread baking.

"Where's Juan?" I ask.

"He got his own apartment downtown. We still have dinner together a couple times a week."

I thought about what Lina had said about Juan's other life with a younger man. How she predicted that she was the only thing keeping him and Patrick together. I think she'd be surprised that they still get together. That she's bringing them together, even now.

“Can I have a minute in her room?”

Patrick smiles. “I get it. I go in there when I really want to feel her presence. When I need to ask her a question.”

“Yeah. I just want to be with her for a little,” I say.

I close the door. I scoot under her bed, find the loose floorboard, pry it up. There’s the tin box where she used to keep weed, pipes, lighters. I bust it open.

In it, I find the equipment. A syringe and a spoon. A rubber tourniquet. An empty baggie.

Even though it’s what I expected, I can’t believe I’m really seeing her kit, putting my hands on her needle. It feels like the ultimate step into her most private, darkest place.

I take the whole box home.

There’s no trace of anything on the baggie. I turn it inside out and suck it. No taste. That doesn’t mean anything. She could have prepared her shot, flipped the bag inside out, and licked it clean herself. My DNA mingling with hers.

I crush the pill.

I try to remember how Sean did it.

I have more trouble than I could have imagined trying to tie my arm with the tourniquet.

I remember Sean sticking the needle in his hand. I ball up my fist and search for the most prominent vein.

Searching, I suddenly see myself as an animal, I recognize my own paw.

I hear Lina’s voice, gravelly from smoking too many Djarum clove cigarettes, our favorite treat while tripping. “After tonight, we’re going to realize how precious we are.”

Because we looked at each other’s hands and saw the beauty there, and the beauty of our own. That intricate network of veins, the tiny geometrics of our skin, those elaborate folds in our knuckles, every ridge of each fingernail.

Because when I go to shoot up, I feel her soft hand covering mine.