

GEORGANN TURNER

TALKING WITH SOPHIE

Sophie hunches over her fries at McDonalds, snarfling and runny-eyed, temporarily deaf in one ear, half-staff eyes a bit wobbly. We've just seen the doctor and I don't want to take her back to school. We've stopped for lunch before we go home so she can rest.

Sophie is seventeen. She's got dark hair, pale skin, lots of freckles, a crooked smile that lights up the room, gorgeous blue eyes, what my family always called Black Irish. I adopted Sophie and her biological sister Grace from the foster care system. Grace was placed with me when she was eighteen months old. Sophie was placed with me ten months later, when she was one. Their adoptions weren't final until several years later. Sophie has had a lot of character building experiences. She will not peak in high school.

"Grace's getting moved to the state hospital today," I tell her. "The lithium's not working. She's swelling up like a puffer fish. But at least she'll be there for a long time so they can take their time figuring out what's going to work. Too bad about the lithium though, cause it really seemed to get rid of Sydney." Grace is eighteen. Sydney is the hallucination that tells Grace to set the house on fire, slash her wrists and jump off the roof. We really hoped to see the back of Sydney.

Sophie glances at me. She's not wanted to talk about Grace, not wanted to know what's going on with her. And she feels a little guilty about it. She says, "I know it's not Grace's fault what's happening to her but I'm not ready to deal with it yet. I know at some point I'm probably going to have to take care of her or something, but I don't really want to have to do anything right now." She dips a fry in some catsup.

"I know. You don't have to do anything right now. You don't have to deal with it. You have to take care of yourself. You have to get an education. You have to grow up. Besides, your dad and I are taking care of Grace."

I touch her hand. I make eye contact. I want to make sure she knows

