Shards

By Meg Lefkowitz

“Roses or sunflowers, Arianna? " I tossed my bag down. This is the last thing I need today.

“Mom, it's been six years. I feel like at this point, you just want to see Aunt Christine each year.”

Mom sighed and fixed her blouse. “Get your homework done.” My mom only cares about her clothes, fancy friends, and my sister.

I opened the door to my room, settled down on my bed, and grabbed my laptop. Sure enough, the first Instagram post that popped up, read, “In Loving Memory of Frances Beck.” I hate how random people pretend like they know your pain. “Frances Beck was just five years old when she drowned in the ocean in front of the Beck family's house. Now, each year, the family hosts a memorial service for her.” One follower added, “Can't wait to see what you do this year, Lynda!” It feels more like a cocktail party than a memorial with each passing year. I reach into my pocket, noticing there's something there. It’s a tiny piece of sea glass. It's rough and jagged but also smooth, and it feels familiar.

I’ve never thought of it like this, but no one truly notices a person until they’re gone. Frances was laughed at at school when she was alive, and then was deemed an angel after her death.. I set the sea glass on my stomach and continued to scroll.

Shoot, I fell asleep on my laptop. It's 7:23, and school starts at 7:35. I thrust off my comforter, jolt out of bed, and throw on an outfit, rushing downstairs to grab my backpack. Sprinting down the English wing, I pop on my headphones, a pang in my stomach. I hate coming here every day.

“Hey, Arianna!” Dannie hollered.

“What the heck, Dannie? Don't talk to her, she's weird.” I spin around, taking off my headphones. “It’s Ria.” The girl next to Dannie giggles in this punchable way, and there's the pit in my stomach again. “That’s dumb.” I frown, I know what girls like them are trying to do, to get a turn in your current, a reaction. I can't stand them, and then it just happened. I punch her, and then she punches me, hundreds of phones are recording, and then the principal is screaming, and then the wave of guilt hits me, Mom's gonna kill me.

The principal is on a call with my mom when I leave. I run out of her office, out of the school. The cold air hits me like a dagger as I push open the back door. I’m hoping that I can sneak up to my room without my mom seeing me. I push open the door of the back gate, which we got after Frances died. “Ow!” I exclaim. I pull up my shirt to see the seaglass from last night. The sharp sides dug deep inside my skin. There’s blood dripping down my side, I tuck my shirt into my pants to stop the bleeding, and continue passing through my mom's neatly kept garden into the side door of the house when I see her.

“Arianna, we need to talk.” I nod, sitting down at the kitchen table. There was no shot I was getting past her hawk eyes. “First off, why on earth would you hit another girl? That's not how I raised you.” Her voice is firm and controlling. “And then the principal tells me you're going by Ria? What is going on with you? You're turning into someone I hoped you wouldn't become.” I feel the sea glass cutting deeper into me, “Well, maybe I don’t want to be your stupid idealistic model girl,” I yell, running out of the house, into the garden, crushing flowers under my feet as I go. The water is cold but in an inviting way. I lift my shirt to the sea glass, pulling it out with a groan of pain. I can now see my sister's name engraved on it. I realize it’s the one I made for her at summer camp. I smile, reminiscing about the feeling of her, and step into the

water. Slowly wading further into the tide, my eyes locked with the sea glass. Tears roll down my face, I can almost feel her presence within the sea. Her faint whisper, “It’s ok, I love you Arianna.”