

“You could succeed anywhere.”

You have never considered being anything other than a doctor. You are studying for the MCAT in the public library when you see a black-and-white photo of a mangled hand in a textbook. You imagine cutting through the skin and touching the bones, and you dry heave into a garbage can. That night, after your girlfriend goes to sleep, you call your sister on the landline. She is studying nursing, but she thinks her boyfriend will propose soon and then she will drop out. He is a good Korean-American boy, and they will move together to a suburb twenty minutes away from where your parents live now.

Your sister picks up after two rings. You ask her if she ever wanted to be anything other than a housewife. “I used to want to be a doctor,” she says easily.

“You didn’t tell me that.”

“Yes, I did. Anyway, it was only because I wanted to make Dad happy. But that was always more your job than mine.”

Both of you are so surprised that she has said this that nobody says anything for a moment. “You make Dad happy,” you tell your sister through the phone. It sounds fake, even though you mean it.

Your sister clears her throat. “I will when I get married.” She hangs up before either of you can say goodbye.

Your girlfriend finds you sitting on a kitchen chair in the morning. You ask her what she would think if you didn’t become a doctor. She doesn’t care. “You should do what makes you happy,” she says.

You propose to her the next year, and a month later, you take the LSAT. You only tell your father once you’ve been accepted to law school. You sit in a restaurant booth, opposite each other. He folds his napkin neatly on his lap and tells you that, if you do this, he will not speak to you again. “*What is wrong with being a doctor?*” he says. “*I am a doctor. Are you ashamed of me?*”

No, you tell him. I just want to be a lawyer.

“*If you do not become a doctor,*” he says, “*you are no son of mine.*”