

A different bed. Again... As the disorientation started to fade, I realized this was my last time to wake in a new bed for a long time. There was a huge amount of comfort in that, even given all that had happened lately.

"You all right, Kiddo?" Aunt Cheryl asked over the fragrance of cooking bacon.

"I get a little groggy first thing. It's like I've been here before."

Of course you have," she smiled. "You know to make yourself at home."

My smile probably wasn't for the reason she assumed, but that was all right. It might have even been for the best. I sat down at the breakfast bar. "So, what's the plan from here?"

"There's not a lot we can do today, so we'll just chill here. It's still warm enough to swim. Maybe hit the pool?"

I nodded. "What about school?"

"I'm friends with the principal at the high school down the road. I called and asked her yesterday when I heard what was going on. We'll get you started tomorrow."

I nodded again.

"How's the throat?" Cheryl asked.

"It's a little sore, but I'll be okay."

She leaned across the counter and waited until I looked up and met her gaze. "Yes, you will, and we'll help you to be so, okay?"

I smiled, inside and out.

When I went to bed that night, I wasn't happy.

But I wasn't unhappy, either.

It was a start.