

If

by Aling

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One

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In the room where women come and go, I see young girls no older than thirteen waiting with their grim-faced mothers, sitting across from women wearing garish makeup and cheap baubles.

In the room where women come and go, I hear the harsh ringing of the telephone and the steady beeping of the machinery seeping through the thin walls.

In the room where women come and go, I smell the stringent odor of disinfectant and starched linens that permeates the clinic.

In the room where women come and go, I taste the peppermint candies provided in the waiting area and the bitter ash from the firewood Harry, Ron, and I burned earlier that evening to cook our supper.

In the room where women come and go, I feel the reassuring grain of my wand, the roughened vine wood slipping beneath my trembling fingers.

In the room where women come and go, I prepare to say goodbye to the life growing inside my womb; I tell it that I'm sorry, that maybe if circumstances were different, if there wasn't a war, if I weren't only eighteen years old, if I didn't have to put my own life on the line, if I had fewer obligations...

If I had the capability—the energy, the will—to love again without limit...then maybe it could live to see tomorrow's sunrise.