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### Hot Sand

By: Cassandra Turner

We aren't supposed to be here. Airport personnel couldn't watch us say goodbye. Not with the sound of a metal detector beeping behind us. No one wants to face the reality of war. Watch young siblings hug a brother goodbye as people bitch about removing socks, shoes. Siblings stuck together by mere need, but divided by the shared pain of war. War in our words. War in our choices. War that took my only stability and threw it in the fire. Our moods match the fabric of the seats we cling to, rough and murky. Growing darker as we wait for this plane to fly off with the oldest of us. A flight that would take him to Georgia, to Germany, to Kuwait, to Iraq. A plane taking him back to terrorized deserts. He doesn't need to tell us in what city that last flight will land. His location is wherever the stories pour out of. Like they are waiting just for him. Somewhere never heard of, somewhere burning, somewhere crumbling into hot sand. I sit in silence, watching the gate that will lead him away. Watching him as he bounces our nephew on his knee. The nephew that brought him home, so he could meet him just once. Just in case. Moments that should be smiled at, laughed at. But I can't. If I move, if I let the bubble trapped in my throat break, I will shatter. I can't cry. Avoid eye contact. Watch the floor. I wait. He's leaving again. He is going back to hot sandy hell. The devil shits on solid gold toilets and my brother is fighting against him. He's going to hell and I can't cry for him.

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### Misty Black

By: LeeAnne Lepak

The black receiver slides through my fingers hitting the floor with a resounding crack. Falling through reality to a misty place. Cold... scared...alone.

"I will see you tomorrow," I said only thirty minutes ago.

Bodily landing on a surface of onyx my rapid breath mists the surface. A large pale moon reflects my face back at me; I do not recognize the image.

"Okay, I will finish my book today in dialysis," you said.

The inky black fluid below the surface beckons to me; the icy surface melts away. As I sink, warmth envelopes me calling me to deeper depths. It offers me a cocoon of protection. I only need to accept it.

"Dad pushed me for a walk today," you said.

It would be so easy to succumb, to submit. A noise from above intrudes in this quiet misty peaceful place. I push it away.

A hand extends through the darkness toward me and cold hard plastic is thrust back into my hand. A disembodied voice intrudes in the quiet. It is harsh and urgent, so alien in this peaceful place.

"Mrs. Richter, I must find Mr. Luster...his wife just expired."

"What! What are you saying?"

"She stopped breathing during dialysis and is non-responsive."

"So...she died?" I questioned.

"Yes, yes, that is why I must find Mr. Luster."

"I will find my father," he deserves better than you to deliver the news.