He looks up then, glasses hanging on his hooked nose. He sets the newspaper down on the coffee table. "Well, why didn't she drive you guys home?" he says.

"She was upset about the lawyers," I say. "And dad." My hands tighten, my nails biting my palms, and I wince.

He sits there holding his chin in his hand. "Steve needs to be out of the picture. It's causing Becky too much stress," he says. He reaches to pick up the newspaper again, opening it.

"Dad is already gone. He left when we left the house," I say. I unknit my fingers and feel the cold wetness of the couch.

He looks up again, kind eyes shining. "Yeah. Grandma and I were happy about calling the police that afternoon," he says, turning the page of the newspaper. "We were scared for you kids when Becky found knives in the couch."

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A child begotten of war, golden apple already sliced and falling to bits at his mother's feet.
And so mother takes her son to the river. She holds him underwater and she tries to keep him under water. She wants to save him, but no one can remember the danger. She tries to sear immunity into his skin, but she cannot save all of him, so she raises him out of the water, clutching his ankle between her thumb and finger; she lifts him out of the water, and he is not drowned. She holds him against the harsh light and says I have done my best. Thinking I should have done more.

She sends him out in to the daylight, in to the sea-salt air, in to the battle. And then he dies.

There are parts in between, but they don't matter. Mother takes her child to the river and she doesn't drown him. She doesn't save him, either.