

SILVER LININGS

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It's not so much a routine as a tradition. There is something magical and delicate with the way the grass tickles his neck and Evie lies beside him, picking shapes in the clouds.

'Look, Dad. That one looks like a bunny rabbit!'

A frown pinches his forehead and he does *try* to see it. He squints at the sky until a grey haze frames his vision, trying to trace the curved outline of floppy ears, the bobble of a tail, but ... nothing. Just thick clouds that fracture the sky like white smoke plumes. He hums and nods and the grass rustles beneath him.

Evie narrows her eyes. There is a lingering stillness that hangs heavy over them until she spots the next shape. 'Look! That one is like two people holding hands.' Her eyes flicker with a flame of warmth and wonder and his chest *aches*.

He wishes he could see these things – wishes he could see the elephant's trunk and the unicorn and the people holding hands. He wishes he could see more than just clouds.

Evie rolls on her side. 'Dad?'

'Yes, Spud?'

'Do you think ... maybe that's where Mummy is watching us from? Up there with the clouds?'

It's a whisper across the grass, cradled in the broken quietude. He deflates into the ground, the breath leaving him in a single exhale. A light brush against his cheek, the taste of salt in the corner of his mouth, and it's only then that he realises he's crying.

'Absolutely,' he says softly, pulling her close.

She tucks her head in the crook of his neck and points back

to the sky. 'Look at that one!'

The cloud frays loose around the edges like spun sugar, but he can see it this time. The feathered edges of a pair of wings.

'Do you see it, Dad?'

He stares at the cloud, traces the edges where the sunlight glows. 'Yeah,' he smiles. 'I see that one.'