

## Denial (*Excerpt*)

The tide rolled out in ferocious white waves, pelting mist and sand at the one nearby observer. Maia sat mere inches from the shoreline, watching the swells pull saltwater fingers away from the shore. It clung to shells and trinkets, ebbing them into their depths, never to be seen or heard from again...at least not for a long time. Like Malcolm. Mal, her twin brother, her best friend, surfing the waves one moment, gone the next.

That was one year ago. On this exact day. At this exact time. On Saturday, July 11, 2009, at 1:16 p.m., Maia lost her twin brother. 365 days of misery. She had cried. She had screamed. She had done everything the so-called “grief expert” had expected her to do.

Maia was thirteen when Malcolm disappeared. Respondents searched the ocean for miles off Oregon’s Cannon Beach. Maia heard words of hypothermia and dehydration, but she knew he would be found. Even when the coast guard stopped searching after 77 hours and 14 minutes, she knew. Even when her parents had a memorial service at Cedar Lutheran Church three weeks and three days later, she knew.

She knew even when her parents made her start therapy.

“He *is* alive,” Maia said for the third time, stomping her feet. Despite a week full of pleading, her parents still insisted she see a therapist.

“He’s gone,” her mom said, sitting on Maia’s sea-green comforter with one foot planted on the floor. Her long brown hair, which she usually curled and sprayed every day, lay atop her shoulders, limp and dull. It was August now. The Pacific winds had carried summer away, leaving a sticky chill in its wake. Clad in a black turtleneck under a thick wool sweater, her mom rubbed her arms, shivering.

“He is NOT dead!” she yelled. She didn’t want to cry, but she could feel hot pools stinging her eyes.