A MOTHER'S PROMISE
By J.J. Silvers

From his bed, Thomas could look to the window. It was the same as it was all those years ago. He could feel the wind blow through the cracks in the windowsill. His cheek pressed up to the glass to balance himself on his toes. Mother had promised a brother or a sister, but it never came to be. He was the only one. Now, with nobody left, he was alone and afraid. His sickness had escalated past the point of help. All that was remaining was the passing.

In his mind, he would see the leaves swirling in the driveway, the makeshift scarecrow wave to him at the window. "Curse you Mother. Why didn't you keep your promise? Now, there is nothing."

The sweet smell of cookies poured through his brain. If only one kid would have stayed. However, they would show up in threes and fours and leave. There was no chance to make one stay as she did to him. His room in the back of the cabin remained a prison for one.

"Thomas. Can you hear me? Thomas, it is alright. Everything is in line, you have taken your past and put it in order. Thomas? Give me your hand." Franchica, a looming woman, took Thomas' hand not waiting for him to offer it. She turned his palm upward and peered deep into the lines before her. "Thomas, look here, the lines are all clean."

"But my mother." He grimaced at the sound of that word. Mother."I never had the chance to forgive ah er thank her."

"Forgive her for WHAT, Thomas? For giving you a life of hell. For taking you from your family and keeping you locked up all those years. For letting you teeter on the brink of death until she was finally dead herself and you escaped?" A wave of heat passed through the woman's hand to Thomas and his head turned to look her square in the eyes.

"For saving me from the monster who called me her son - my real mother. I cursed the woman who took me from hell and put me in prison, but loved me enough to keep me safe from the outside world. She was the only one, THE ONLY ONE, who cared for me and only me.".

"But Thomas, you have been forgiven. The powers that be have made it clear that you have done all you can to be able to pass from this world. And it is time. Time to let go and receive your reward."

She let Thomas' hand drop to his side. A forced breath escaped from his pursed lips. Out of the window the moonlight was illuminating the yard. The leaves passed the glass and flew out of sight.

Franchisca turned from Thomas and returned to the window. "Soon." she whispered. "Soon."

The sound of shattering glass echoed from Thomas' room and Franchisca spun from the window. It had to be close to time. She needed him to pass tonight or all would be lost.

"Thomas? Thomas?" she called edging her way to his bed. There was no sound returned. He lay there, motionless, empty. "Are you still here, Thomas?" she whispered?

No answer.

She tiptoed to his bedside and leaned down to hear for a breath. As she brought her ear closer to his face, Thomas' hand reach up and grabbed her by the neck. "All this time," he wheezed into her ear. "All this time it was you. You were the one Mother promised. You were to be my salvation, my .... sister." His hand dropped suddenly and all life was gone from his body. Franchisca, releasing his grip and rubbing her throat, watched the last drop of life leave. It was done.

The smell of cookies wafted from the kitchen. Franchisca turned to the door. How was it possible? She was all alone. The door creaked shut and with a snap the lock was latched. Footsteps started down the hall and then stopped. A voice, old and rumpled, came though the keyhole. "I will get you a brother or a sister. Just you wait. All will be OK."

Franchisca stood on her toes to look out the window. A cool breeze blew in on her cheek as she rested it on the lower pane. The leaves danced around, and it made her laugh. The smell of cookies made her mouth water. From the distance, the scarecrow waved to her and she waved back. Children started up the walk to the asylum. "Trick or Treat!" they called.

Franchisca danced and clapped her hands with delight. "A brother or a sister!"