Excerpt from Short Story: “Listening to Lucy”  
 Maxann Keller

Sometimes he wished his brother and him kept in touch. He would have known how to handle this. Then again, if Chase were here, none of this would be playing out in front of him.  
 It had been fourteen years since he last talked to him. He vaguely remembered how the day went: Both of them arguing after their father’s death in the gravel parking lot at St. Parthan’s cemetery. He couldn’t quite recall what it was about exactly, or who was around. He just knew that this particular argument took place before Luke left to go back to New York. Before Lucy turned six and got meningitis that luckily only stole her hearing instead of her life. Before his older brother and his wife were in a fatal car accident, leaving their only daughter to their closest, only living family member. Luke Packard.   
 The car ride home was silent, as were most of the times he spent with her. What do you say to a deaf teenage girl who has just lost her parents in a freak car accident, four days before Christmas? You’re sorry for never being there for her when she needed an outlet away from her parents for the past seventeen years of her life? That you’re sorry she had to move from her hometown in Topsail, North Carolina to New York City to live with her uncle who hadn’t even known she was deaf until the parenting agency dropped her off at his doorstep Christmas Eve morning? You’re sorry for being such a screw up? Yea, the last one sounded good enough to cover everything in a nutshell.  
 He walked in the door and lightly clasped her shoulders between his hands. She turned to look at him, her glare cut through him like a knife. He felt his stomach lurch, but he knew he had to be the grown up here. He wasn’t used to the idea of being a parent. In fact it scared the hell out of him. Most people got to choose when they were ready to be parents. For Luke, it was no longer an option.  
 He spoke slowly, stretching his lips as he pronounced each word cautiously. “You can’t keep running away. Tell me where you go. Don’t be out past dark. Come home, please.” He closed his lips, waiting for her to snap back at him. She only squinted her black lined eyes back at him. Had she understood what I said, Luke thought while standing in the silence.  
 She read his lips with great precision. “No. You Don’t Get It. Leave Me Alone.” Her voice was low, but Luke could understand her drawn out syllables. She sounded mad, but he couldn’t help but hear a faint hint of fear in her voice. She stormed out towards her small bedroom, her hair waving back and forth across her shoulder blades.  
 The first thought Luke had when she arrived four months ago was that she was indeed a beautiful girl. Looked just like her mother, nothing like Chase. Luke looked like Chase; they both had their father’s blue eyes, thick brown hair, and his slender torso. If you didn’t know the boys were eight years apart, you could have sworn they were twins.   
 The music, he could see, was now blaring from two small speakers resting face down onto the wooden floorboards of Lucy’s bedroom. It seemed silly to have the music on so loud with the speaker’s output pressed against the floor, but to her, it was perfect. Her slim silhouette was against the window that overlooked the city. Her hair was now up in a bun, and her left foot pointed precisely above her left hip towards the wall, creating a ninety-degree angle. The bass lifted and dropped again, she jumped and caught herself on her tiptoes. Her arms made a windmill motion and she swiftly followed the music with the ascending drumbeats. Her next move forced her to come face to face with Luke, who tried to refrain from gawking at what he was seeing.   
 Her eyes widened with embarrassment, followed by a glistening tear. “Stop! Out!” she fumbled forward towards the speakers and pressed the buttons furiously until she could no longer feel the vibrations coming from the technical device. She stood up strait and pulled out the rubber band from her hair. Blonde and red locks fell gracefully, covering her face. She could do nothing now but wait for Luke to leave. But he didn’t.  
 Luke walked forward and brushed the hair from Lucy’s face. He noticed her eyes were wider than ever; perhaps from the anxiety she had coursing her veins at that very second, or perhaps it was because it was the first time in four months he had seen her with no make up on.  
 “That was beautiful” he spoke slowly. This was all he could say. Her eyes left his lips and met with his eyes.  
 “Thank you.” She sat on her bed and twiddled her fingers in a small circle. “Go away” she seemed to mumble.   
 But the strange thing was, he couldn’t leave even if he tried. It was like walking in on Beethoven before anyone else had heard what would later escape his fingertips. He had something in this room, a work of art in his niece he never knew she was capable of.