On the day of his son's birth, Cornelius reflects on his birthmother.

The waiting room at Todayland General is a full house. Bud’s having an animated conversation with Gaston and a stranger about hadron particles while Lucille and Billie pore over every magazine in the place, trading occasionally. Fritz sleeps while Petunia watches on, annoyed, and Joe and Art have secured prime spots by the TV so they can argue about the game. Tallulah and Laszlo are competing to see who can toss the most crumpled up insurance forms in the wastebasket, with frequent snack breaks.

Finally, Cornelius Robinson emerges from the swinging doors connected to the maternity ward. “It’s a boy,” he announces, beaming, to his waiting family. “We named him Wilbur.”

And after that it’s hugs, crying, more crying, some singing. They crowd the room around Franny and baby Wilbur gets passed around to everyone. “He’s got your eyes, Fran,” Gaston says.

“Yeah, well, that’s how genetics work,” she ribs.

No one notices the way Cornelius slinks back into the corner of the room, how quiet he gets. Well, almost no one.

Later, when Franny’s finally resting and most of the family has gone home, Cornelius stands outside the nursery watching his son through the window. Wilbur sleeps soundly, stretching out his teeny tiny baby arms every now and then.

Lucille shows up beside her adopted son, holding a cup of coffee. “What’s eating you, Cornbread?” she asks, nudging him.
Cornelius zeroes in on the coffee in her hand. “Ma, I thought you quit!”

“This is a special occasion,” she says, rolling her eyes. “It’s not every day you become a grandmother.”

“That sounds weird,” he laughs. “You’re way too young to be a grandmother.”

“How about you? I can’t believe you’re a dad,” Lucille says, smiling at him. “Feels like it was just yesterday Bud and I met you and you lodged yourself in our hearts like a pulmonary embolism.” He chuckles. “But you’re avoiding my question. What’re you thinking about?”

Cornelius takes off his glasses and cleans them on his shirt like he’s buying time. Finally, he says, “My birthmother.”

“... Oh.”

“No, no, don’t worry, I’m done… wondering about her, waiting for her,” he says quickly. “Ma, I already have the best family anyone could ask for. And it just got a little bigger, and I… I can’t believe how lucky I am. I guess I just keep thinking… how hard it must’ve been for her to give me up. For her to leave me behind on the steps of 6th Street Orphanage. I’m…” He stops, overwhelmed, and puts a hand on his chest. “I keep trying to imagine having to do that for Wilbur. And… it physically hurts. Like…”

“A pulmonary embolism?”

“Sure,” he says. “It’s crazy. He’s only been alive for a few hours and I can’t imagine life without him. I love him so much. Like I never want to be too far from him.”

“That feeling never goes away,” Lucille says, clutching her son’s arm. “I can’t tell you how happy I were when you and Franny moved into the house. That boy’s going to love growing up there.” Cornelius grins. “By the way, what made you choose the name Wilbur?”

Sometimes her son gets a funny glint in his eye, like he knows something that nobody else does. She usually assumes it’s the look of an inspired inventor, but sometimes she has her doubts. He has that look in his eye now.

“When I was a kid, I had a friend named Wilbur,” he says.

“Oh! Oh, that’s nice,” says Lucille. “Shame you two didn’t keep in touch.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Cornelius says, looking back through the window at his sleeping son. Wilbur yawns in his sleep. “But I have a feeling that I’ll see him again someday.”