**I Fall Unconscious**

‘You don't understand!’ I want to scream at her. ‘You don't know what it feels like, so stop pretending you do! Shut up! Get out of my house!!’ I yell at her in my head, but I don't say the words aloud.

I contain the pain and agony within me, like I always do. I hug my knees tighter, and pretend to listen to what she is saying, but I hear nothing. Tears fall down my face, carrying with them the last shreds of dignity I had, mingled with more pain and shame than any one person can comprehend. That one tear is so heavy with agony it feels like open flames instead of water, as it streaks down my face.

‘Listen to me!’ she yells at me, the words only registering in my mind because they were said so loudly.

‘I don't want to listen! Leave me alone!’ All in my head.

I stare back at my baby sister, dead in the eyes, and my tears slowly find their way down. I try to remember her growing up, and when she became the older sister now giving me advice and urging me to change my life. She’d always been the wild one, and I’d had to pull her back and lecture her; and yet here we were. I brushed the tears from my cheeks, and when I lifted my hand I saw that the water wasn’t clear.

I stare at her dead in the eyes, not hearing her, of course not, just panicking that the tears might wash away the thick layer of concealer that hid the proof of her accusations. She keeps on talking, but I never lose my outward patience; I'm only impatient on the inside, the only place I'm allowed to be myself.

I bury my face in my knees, and my tears increase. It's not her words that cause me to cry harder; it is the look in her eyes - the pity, the condescending wanting to help - that breaks my defenses, and makes my eyes leak even more .

She lays her hand on my shoulder, and my body automatically recoils from the contact, as if her hand was a hot cigarette, not a sign of tender care. She calls my name, but I refuse to answer, I refuse to lift my face. The concealer is definitely washed away, and I can’t risk her seeing the black and purple spots coloring my skin.

‘Do you want me to leave?’ she asks, and I whisper a yes. She clicks away with her heels and closes the door behind her.

Nobody understands; nobody can feel the emotional pain caused by my injuries. It feels as if my insides are burning, as if poisonous fire is spreading inside me and scorching me alive, grilling me. It feels as if the fire is followed by the pouring of hot pepper and sour lemon on the burnt flesh, burning more, hurting more. It feels as if someone is torturing me from the inside out. I dry the tears mechanically, trying not to care, trying not to feel, trying to convince myself that this is all a dream. But it doesn’t work; the tape that keeps repeating itself in my mind starts playing the words I've memorized*.*

*I'm nobody, I am no one, I don't matter, I'm worthless, I'm nothing.*

I start to slowly clean the concealer off with a tissue wet with my tears. I must look like a badly drawn painting, a piece of perverted art, created by my crazed husband. When it is all gone, I bury my face in my knees again, not crying, just fighting the pain, the voices blaming me, the shame. I've always lived an internal war, and now it seems I am losing the battle. I have turned into a scorched, beaten victim. How did it happen? When did I become a victim? How did I let myself get in this position? I can't remember.

I feel fingers that once had seemed soft and warm as they caressed my cheek, but now they feel like rough razors cutting my skin. I keep the whimper locked between my lips; I bite down on them to keep any sound from escaping them. No need to anger him, no need to give him more reasons to hurt me.

What makes him think he has the right to touch me this way? Maybe the fact that I let him… How did I end up so broken, a weak creature that won't even defend herself? Shame, shame*, shame*! I hate myself, I'm nobody, I'm worthless, I'm nothing. The tape plays louder as I succumb to it, mocking me, breaking me. I feel his hard lips on a splotch of purple skin, kissing it hungrily, and I fight back the urge to shove him off and run to the bathroom to throw up.

‘Look at me!’ He growls, and I open my eyes to see his look loving the bruises covering my face.

How can he love to see the signs of my pain? Isn't he disgusted by the way I am? Isn’t he fighting back tears and vomit? He was once a man, but now he is a monster that enjoys my agony.

‘Get off of me! Leave me alone! Stop touching me! ‘ I scream at him hopelessly in my mind. I scream, yell, shove, thrash and kick. All of it contained in my head. I fight him back, but never physically. I surrender to his strength.

When he's done, I walk to the bathroom, unable to keep the tears and pain locked inside me any longer. I lock the door, turn on every water source, and fall to the ground. I weep my eyes out, with only one word escaping my lips: ‘Why, why, why, why, why*, whyy*?’ I moan.

The tape answers me, because I'm worthless, I'm nobody, I don’t matter, I'm nothing. I pound my hands against the hard tiles, wanting to hurt myself; I hate myself, I despise it. I pound until my hands ache, but I don’t stop. It seems that I've lost the ability to respond normally to pain. I keep pounding until my arms stop responding to me. They fall to the ground, limp and bruised. I fall as well, my face resting against the cold, rough tiles, unable to hold myself up any longer.

I scarcely feel the tears traveling down my face; I scarcely feel the pain surging through my body in throbbing waves. I feel warm liquid touching my skin, but I no longer care. A part of my mind registers that I'm going into shock, and I happily surrender to the numbness.

A strong blow pulls me away from the dark shore. My face throbs, pulses of blood pouring down my face.

‘GET UP! What are you doing on the ground?! MOVE! You goddamn idiot!’ The yelling continues, the pain increases, until I reach a beautiful, silent shore of darkness. I fall unconscious.

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