

ALONE

BY DANIELLE BRAME WHITING

ASHLEY

So, what? Do I talk now? Or are we just going to stare at each other until the little hand passes back over the six?

Attempts to pre-occupy themselves, not caring about the other person in the room... and fails.

You care about dreams, yeah? What I dream about? I'll tell you... just to satisfy your curiosity.

Attempts to be dramatic.

The room is black. No windows. No doors. No-one else is here. No-one can hear me cry out. And I do. I cry out so loudly that it splits my face right down the middle and all these miniature versions of me pour out, all over the floor. Each one of them is different. Different parts of my personality or my history. And no matter how many of me there were, how crowded the room became, I was still completely alone, because, it's just me.

Pause.

What do you think that means? Do you think I'm desperate for connection? Do you think I've repressed my emotions for too long and now they will start pouring out of me like all those mini-me's?

Beat

Truth is, I accepted a long time ago that I'm on my own. I don't fit in. I make people uncomfortable and not even my family wants me around.

Pause



Smiles.

I know it's a lie. Well, part of me knows it's a lie. The other parts of me very much believe that I am floating in a void where no-one can reach me. No-one can see me. Nor do they want to, because I am an inconvenience to their calm, precious lives.

Beat

I have no-one.

Looks to see if their audience is buying it.

That's a lie.

Shift.

It's my ears, you see. They translate wrong. I have dyslexia of the ears. Have you heard of that one? Probably not I would guess. I'm pretty different, you know? Like I said, I don't fit in.

Beat

So, my ears. For example, when I hear my sister tell me that she is worried about me. She gets this soft voice and her eyes become kind of heavy, heavy enough to tilt her head to one side and she says, "I'm worried about you." Part of me wants to take her hands and look her in those heavy, tilted eyes and assure her that everything is going to be okay. But the other part of me, the part that includes my dyslexic ears, it hears her say, "I don't trust you" or "You're stupid", and that makes me lose it, you know. As if she's so bloody smart or moral or whatever. She doesn't care about me or how I'm actually feeling, she just wants to sit up on her throne and tell me what to do. Not that I should be surprised about it, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. She's exactly like my mother.

You get off on hearing about mothers, don't you? Well strap in babe cause this one is a doozy. My mother has never created boundaries for me. I am the walking embodiment of her maternal guilt. Unplanned pregnancy? Tick. Fifteen years younger than the closest sibling? Tick. Parents past their prime who no longer have the energy to run a kid around to sports,



rehearsals, hobbies or whatever. Tick. Parents who are so much older than your friends parents that they have nothing in coming and tend to dump you off at parties so they don't have to talk to anyone? Tick. Maternal. Guilt. So, when my mother tells me that she's worried about me, my ears translate it as, "How did you turn out so wrong?"

A part of me knows, that my ears are twisting the words, but I react all the same because the other part of me is so much bigger. So much stronger. It invades every corner of my thoughts sewing doubt. Having me believe that these people, who would probably go to the ends of the earth for me, have no tangible value and deserve nothing but disdain.

I hear the mean words coming out of my mouth and, inside, that smaller part of me, cringes. Cringes at the pain I can see in their eyes as they wonder what they have done to make me hate them so much. That larger part of me, the part that wins almost every time, smiles - bitterly, menacingly - because I got them before they could get me.

I have realised that no matter what they say or do I will always look for the worst in them. I will doubt any kind word they offer. And whenever they walk away, I will say, "See, I was right, you don't really care about me."

Pause.

It's all a lie.

Pause

Obviously they care because they keep coming back. How can I respect them for that? How can I respect people who would take so much abuse from such an absolute loser? You can see my logic, right? People have to earn my respect and they're not going to get it by being doormats. The good time pals, the Nancy-come-latelies, the token gesturer who'll immediately respond to my darkest post on social media by being "there for me"... through a computer screen...

I show respect to those people.

That old school friend, the one I haven't seen for five years, they know me better than anyone. They say the words to me that I want to hear: That I am right, I am strong, and that I should



discard those people who say anything different. Social media friendships are my life-line and I will spread my heart out all over these digital pages. Lay bare the bloody chambers where once a young child's aspirations sang in full voice, "Mummy, I love you and I will never leave your side". It's all I have.

Pause

I have nothing.

Pause.

That is a lie.

The rooms in my house are just as cluttered with useless stuff as my mind is awash in useless thoughts. And when I need something or I'm feeling depleted, I crawl on beggars knees to the suckers I call my family and take what they are able to give. Time, words, happiness, energy. I take it all and then leave them, deflated and confused. I've been doing it for so long now that, mostly, I don't even notice.

Pause

And don't bother looking me up and down with that analytical face that exudes neutrality and judgement. My pain is real. Those people should know that and make allowances for it. They should let me say what I need to say and do what I need to do, not pawn me off to some second rate couch counsellor who, by the way, is being paid a pretty penny to do nothing but sit in that comfy designer lounge chair and listen. You know what you are?

Pause.

You're... you're... one of those little people who sits on the perimeter fence of everyone else's life watching and judging and secretly wishing they could be a part of it, but you just don't know how, do you? I see you and it's not very impressive. And you know what, I'm not going to feed into this sad obsession you have of collecting everyone's secrets. I'm not spending another second watching you greedily lean forward hoping for another tasty morsel of my personal pain.

Makes to leave the room, but pauses as a thought occurs to them.



Oh, my parents are going to ask for a diagnosis before they'll pay you. Might I suggest, compulsive liar?

Exits.

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