

Alone

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She was accustomed to the sleepless nights.

All Bethany would do was stare aimlessly at the ceiling, plastered with old light-up stickers that she had put up when she was who knows how old. The dull light would illuminate the beige walls stained with paint and stubborn crayon marks that never seemed to wear away, the clock would tick away with the time that never seemed to go fast enough for her.

The mornings were always the same.

Her therapist would come in, muttering blunt words that never phased her, watching her intently as she nibbled blankly on a stale breakfast bar. Trying to get her to talk.

And never being able to.

Kind, reassuring words were all she could hear. She could gradually start to hear the tinge of annoyance too, when no one answered.

Words.

They heal and they hurt.

They steal and they give.

And yet Bethany couldn't hear any of them. The words her mum would whisper whilst she thought her daughter slept, drenched in sorrow and choked with sobs. The words her dad would yell, slurred with alcohol, eyes furrowed in frustration. The words her younger brother can't seem to find for his delusional and traumatized sister, the words her pitiful friends uttered silently with their eyes.

I'm sorry that this happened to you.

But I'm glad it didn't happen to me.

And when the therapist would leave - an optimistic smile ironed stiffly across her face, one that never seemed to reach her eyes - the silence that followed would engulf the house. Her mum would stand like a ghost in the doorway, hovering behind the threshold. She wouldn't say anything, knowing that Bethany wouldn't reply. Like always.

All she could do was stand, staring at her daughter who never seemed to take her eyes off the stained beige walls, through tears that brimmed in her eyes and spilled down her sunken cheeks.

And then she would close the door, and Bethany would be left alone again.