

My children have been taken. My babies. Jessie and Margret. I don't know where, when, or by who. I just know that those green eyes that look at me, and their voices that call my name, and their hands that touch my face, are not my children's. I can hear them at night, whispering in their rooms when they should be asleep. Sometimes I creep to their doors, hold my breath and listen. And though it sounds insane, this whole thing does, the words and sounds that their little pink tongues make aren't natural. Aren't human.

I remember watching a news broadcast a few years back. I'd flipped through the channels on my old tube television and settled on a piece about a mother living in the UK. I remember thinking she had a nice face. A seductive face. It was round, with soft features, and red, kissable lips. She'd hacked her two girls to bits with an ax. The authorities found their rotting remains in her basement. Her red lips were perched into a smile as the police led her into the courtroom. I remember at the time it made me sick. It didn't make sense to me. I couldn't understand it. How, or why, a parent would take their children's lives. I couldn't comprehend the callousness and viciousness of it. It felt evil. Ungodly. I remember turning off the television and hugging my girls. They were young then. Barely able to walk. I remember holding them tight and feeling their soft little hearts beat against my ear. Now I sympathize with her, that woman with the round face and kissable lips. I sympathize and wonder, did she go through what I'm going through?

Sometimes, when I can't sleep, or when my mind is running in endless circles, I cut myself. Not on the arms though. It's not smart to cut anywhere visible. I learned that lesson. I used to cut myself when I was a teenager, wrapped up the melodrama of puberty and high-school. My homeroom teacher, an old hag with long gray hair and a nose too big for her face, had seen the cuts on my arms. She informed the school who, in turn, informed my parents. My dad beat me, as he did. It was a more tender beating though, if that makes any sense. Sympathetic almost. Maybe that is why I let men walk on me. My mom, she just cried her quiet tears and slunk in the darkness of my father's shadow.

I never thought I'd do it again. It started small. I'd punch the bed and strangle my pillows. Then, when that wasn't enough, I'd hit the brick wall in my bedroom. And when my hands became useless and numb, and I couldn't make a proper fist anymore, I picked up a razor and dug it deep into my rib cage. I started under my armpit, where the skin is thin and tender, and slid the blade down beneath my breast. The relief was instant and sweet. My eyes rolled back and my toes curled as if I had a tongue working gentle circles on my clit. And my mind, frantic and chaotic, it finally slowed down. Since then I've been hooked.

I can't let on that I know though, and that, quite truthfully, is the most difficult part. To bite down. To resist the urge to grab the two by their narrow shoulders and shake the ever living shit out of them. To scream, "Where are my babies? Where are my girls you little sluts!" I can't drink. I need to be clear headed. And I can't go to the police or confide in my friends or family. If I had a husband he would think I was nuts. Probably chalk it up to hysteria, or think I was on drugs. He'd institutionalize me, and honestly, I wouldn't mind. That would be better, maybe. At-least then they would be his problem.

"Mom!" they call in unison with their voices that are sweet and intoxicating. With those voices that aren't my children.

They look up at me as I walk into the kitchen. I can feel the warm blood rolling down my side. I'd gone deeper than I usually go. For a moment I think the razors edge hit bone. Pure ecstasy. I'd plastered the gash, but little help that was. It needed stitches. Quite a few stitches. I put on a thick sweater though. A dark one. No one would be able to see the blood. I can't let it be seen. Especially not by those two things.

"What is it, girls?" I ask and my stomach sinks. Did my voice quaver? Oh Christ, I think it did. I busy myself at the kitchen sink, turning on the water and plugging the stainless-steel basin. The stream pouring from the tap is warm. Not good enough. I turn the hot water up. It quickly becomes scalding. I hold my hands under it. Joy.

They're sitting at the round kitchen table. Papers are strewn across it. A pack of crayons are cracked open - raided, half empty. Bright colors adorn the pages: pictures of animals and forests, of clouds and castles. Everything seems typical. Everything appears normal.

"Are you alright, mum?" Margret asks.

"You look tired," Jessie adds.

"I'm fine dears," I say. The skin on my hands is turning red. I don't feel the heat anymore. "Didn't sleep well, that's all."