

My children have been taken. My babies. Jessie and Margret. I don't know where, or by who. I just know that those eyes that look at me, and the voices that call my name, and the hands that touch my face are not theirs. I can hear them, whispering behind my back. Sometimes, I think, I can hear their words, and though it sounds insane, this whole thing does I'm aware, but the words they are saying aren't human.

I remember watching the news a few years back, a piece on a mother living in the UK. I remember thinking she had a nice face. Round, with soft features and kissable lips. She'd hacked her two girls to pieces with an ax. I remember, at the time, feeling sick, confused, not understanding how, or why, someone could be so malignantly made. Now I sympathize with her. I sympathize and I wonder, did she go through what I'm going through?

"Mom!" they call in unison. Those voices that are not of my children. I can't let on that I know, and that, quite truthfully, is the most difficult part. Biting down, holding back the screams and shrieks, resisting the urge to grab them by their narrow shoulders and shake the living shit out of them. Sometimes I leave the room and, well it's embarrassing, I haven't done this since I was a teenager. Sometimes I leave the room and cut myself. It didn't start that way. At first I would hit my bed. When hitting my bed wasn't enough I began to hit the brick walls. Then when my hands became useless and numb, and I realized the impracticality of such a beating, I picked up a razor and dug it into my rib cage. I need something to take the edge off. I can't drink. I need to remain aware, vigilant. But I need something. Old habits die hard I suppose.

I walk into the kitchen, aware of the warm, sticky fluid rolling down my side. I'm wearing a thick sweater though. No one can see it. Especially not those things.

"What is it you two?" I ask. Did my voice tremble? Oh Christ, I think it did.

They tilt their heads. Paper lays strewn across the kitchen table where they sit. A pack of crayons raided and half empty.

"Are you alright, mum?" Margret asks.

"You look tired," Jessie adds.