

I Have No Mouth

Chapter 1

Evelyn bounced around the kitchen, slapping together a quick breakfast while she went over the day's plans in her head. From buying groceries to studying for university to a part-time job interview in the afternoon to hanging out with friends tonight.

It'd be a full day. But nothing Evelyn couldn't handle.

I hope.

Groceries would be fine – she'd taken charge of restocking the kitchen over a year ago. Nothing new there. And studying was less of a chore and more an enjoyable pastime. The only thing that *really* had her on edge was the job interview.

It'll be fine! Worst they can say is 'no'.

Yet just the *thought* of being interrogated by a total stranger brought on a mild panic.

It's just an interview, she told herself. You're worrying over nothing! It'll all be fine.

But, try as she might, she couldn't shake the dread. The endless list of questions her interviewer might ask, and the countless answers she'd all but memorised in anticipation of those questions. Her name, her grades, her hobbies and goals, how 'excited' and 'eager' she was to work for them, her openness for working overtime and odd hours and bleh!

It's just a fast food place! Evelyn scolded herself. *Stop worrying about it!*

She shook her head, forced the thoughts as far back as they'd go. Not all the way – her worries and panic still loomed at the edges of her mind – but far enough that she wouldn't have to face or think about them for a little while.

Evelyn let out a sigh, looked down at her breakfast.

A simple ham and lettuce sandwich, with a few cheese sticks set neatly around it and a glass of orange juice.

Hardly high-class dining, but it'd do the trick!

She was just about to reach for it when the kitchen door creaked open. Evelyn's eyes snapped to it instantly, taking in the sight of her older sister.

Clad in a silk robe – and, knowing Vi, probably nothing else – looking radiant despite the bed-head and tired eyes. She strode into the room with a smile on her lips and a twinkle in her eyes.

"Oh crap! I didn't wake you, did I? I'm so sorry, I-"

"No," Violet smiled. "I was already up."

"Oh." Evelyn pursed her lips.

"You're awake early, though," her sister said. "I thought you'd be sleeping in, now that school's over. All that time spent complaining about having to wake up early 'n' all..."

Evelyn shrugged, took a step back as Violet approached.

Only for Violet to snatch up the sandwich Evelyn had made and take a bite out of it.

"Hey!"

"Hmm..." Violet hummed between bites. "It's good. Thanks sis."

Evelyn huffed, stared silently at her sister. Then she sighed, shook her head, fetched another plate from a cupboard and started making another sandwich for herself.

"Do you have work today?" She asked, collecting some bread slices.

"Yup," Vi said, taking another bite. "Night shift. Why?"

"I invited some of my friends over," Evelyn said.

She kept her back to her sister, though she knew *exactly* what look Violet was giving her.

The same deadpan, disapproving look she *always* gave her when Evelyn's friends came up. The 'you're too good for them' look.

At least she's given up on saying it.

Used to be, Violet would 'comment' on Evelyn's choice of friends whenever the opportunity arose. Musing loudly about how she didn't 'understand' what Evelyn saw in them. Thankfully, her sister had given up on voicing her thoughts, instead putting all those feelings into those cool, disapproving stares.

"Which ones?"

"Luke and Dan," Evelyn practically whispered.

Why does it feel like I'm admitting to a crime?

"So the kid who has a crush on you, and the moron who can't stop staring at my tits whenever he's around."

"Luke's not a kid," Evelyn grumbled. "He's older than me!"

As for Dan being a moron... *That* was a bit harder to argue.

"What ever happened to super nerd and blondie?" Vi asked.

Sylus and Nina. "They started dating," Evelyn answered, a tightness in her voice.

"Too busy spending time with each other to hang out with the rest of us, I guess."

And they were going to a different university.

So it was just the three of them now. Her and Luke and Dan.

Until Summer was over and three became two.

Stop worrying about it, Evelyn told herself. Everything will be fine! You'll see...

Done making her second sandwich, Evelyn turned to look at her sister. Saw the older girl staring at her, a look of concern on her face.

"But yeah!" Evelyn said quickly. "Luke and Dan will be over later. This evening. They'll probably be gone by the time you get back, so nothing to worry about!"

Violet stared at her for a few moments more, before shrugging and taking another bite from her sandwich.

"Whatever," Violet shrugged. "But if I find out the perv has been in my underwear drawer again..."

She gave Evelyn a pointed look.

"He won't!" Evelyn promised. "That was..." A misunderstanding? A one-time thing? An accident? "It won't happen again..."

The job interview, it turned out, hadn't been too bad.

Sure, she'd about had a panic attack *before* it. But the interview itself? A breeze. A handful of softball questions followed by 'when can you start?'. She'd stepped out of the building confused.

That was what I'd been so stressed about?

The walk home took Evelyn through several stages of emotion. From confusion at how easy it'd been, to amusement at herself for freaking out so much, to elation at actually getting a job, to embarrassment for all the needless worrying.

By the time she got home, she was exhausted.

Evelyn collapsed onto a sofa, turned the TV on, put some random show on to fill the silence.

Then she burst out in gleeful laughter.

I got a job! I did it!

Now she'd be able to help Vi with the bills and maybe save a little extra for university. Buying a car was *way* out of the realm of possibility, but a nice bicycle might be doable...

Options. She had *options* now!

Evelyn sighed happily, relaxed into the sofa and let her imagination lead the way. Daydreaming about places she could go and things she could do, endless possibilities for the future.

It was an hour later when the doorbell rang.

Evelyn hopped to her feet, went to go answer – already knowing exactly who she'd

find there.

Sure enough, as the door opened, two faces greeted her.

One blushing, the other grinning wide.

"Violet home?" Were the first words out of Dan's mouth, his eyes darting past Evelyn in search of her older sister.

"No," Evelyn sighed, opening the door fully so the two guys could enter. "She's at work."

"Great!" Dan grinned, stepping past her.

Odd. Usually he'd be disappointed.

Maybe the doofus was planning on sneaking into Vi's room again. She'd have to keep an eye on him, make sure he didn't get the chance.

"H- Hey," Luke murmured, standing awkwardly in the doorway. The shortest of the gang, his head barely poked above Evelyn's shoulders. "How'd the job interview go?"

Evelyn waved him inside, began telling him all about it.

She stopped when she saw Dan in the living room, striding over to the TV to turn it off.

"Dan? What're you doing?" She looked to Luke, who blushed even brighter, couldn't meet her gaze. "I thought you guys wanted to watch a movie."

"Nah," Dan waved dismissively, pulling out his phone and tapping the screen. "Explain it to her."

"Uh," Luke murmured. "Well... We- I mean I, saw this thing online about... Uh..."

"Yes?" Evelyn raised an eyebrow.

"It's this game... Like a party game, but..." The boy fidgeted nervously. "We thought it'd be fun to try it..."

"Hypnosis," Dan piped in. "He's asking if he can hypnotise you."

"What?!"

Luke flinched, shot a nervous glance at Dan.

"Y-yeah," he whispered. "I thought... I... Can I?"

"No," Evelyn said, crossing her arms.

Hypnosis? What in the world...

Dan had put him up to this. All Evelyn needed do was look at Luke's nervousness to see that. And, if this was *Dan's* idea, it was bound to be some incredibly dumb game.

"Please?" Luke said, eyes wide. "It- It's weird, I know. But it'll be worth it."

"Better give in and agree now," Dan chuckled. "Before he does that sadboy, puppy-dog eyes thing. Let's get this over with quickly so we can get to the movie."

Yup. Definitely Dan's idea.

So what was the goal?

Evelyn thought about it for a moment.

While Luke was 'hypnotising' her, Dan would have the perfect opportunity to sneak away and find himself inside Vi's room. Knowing the kind of dummy Dan was, that was probably it. Just another silly way to get his hands on one of Vi's bras.

"You know hypnosis isn't real, right?" She said, looking hard at Luke. "It's all pretend."

"Nope," Dan said excitedly. "It's real."

Evelyn ignored him. Kept her eyes on Luke.

"Only one way to find out," Luke said, straightening his back. "C'mon Evie. No harm in trying, right? Please?"

She let out a deep sigh.

Too nice for your own good.

"Fine," Evelyn said, shaking her head. "But the moment things get weird, I'm out. Got it?"

She aimed the question at Dan.

He just smiled.

Fully awake, totally alert, she listened as Luke read a script off Dan's phone.

She stared at a candle flame, as instructed.

I thought hypnosis meant closed eyes. The more you know.

"Two," Luke murmured. "Almost there. You feel your mind slipping away. Thoughts disappearing, eaten away by the flame."

Nope. Still fully conscious.

Not that she let onto that fact. Why spoil the fun?

Curiosity had taken hold by now. She wanted to know what these two would do if they thought she was in some hypnotic trance.

Dan hadn't left the room yet, which was interesting.

Maybe when...

"One," Luke said. "When the flame vanishes, your mind goes with it. You fall into a deep trance."

He blew the candle out.

The sudden change from bright candlelight filling her vision to almost complete darkness was jolting. Evelyn didn't flinch or jump, but she did feel her eyes widening. In her vision, bright shadows of the now-missing flame continued to flicker.

Better not have done any permanent damage to my irises.

"Evie, can you hear me?" Luke asked softly.

Better play along a little longer.

"Yes," she said softly.

"Holy shit," Luke breathed. "It's actually worked."

There was movement in front of her. Where Luke had been sitting opposite her, on the other side of the candle, now Dan was there too. Evelyn didn't dare look up, so she only saw from the periphery of her vision. But it seemed like Dan was nudging Luke aside.

"Evelyn," Dan said, voice firm and clear. "How old are you?"

"Eighteen," she answered immediately.

She had to be quick. Couldn't allow herself to hesitate or overthink answers, or they might catch on to her ruse.

This is actually kinda fun.

The corner of her lip quirked slightly in the ghost of a smile. She schooled it, controlled her face and returned it back to the neutral 'hypnotised' state she'd adopted. And, thankfully, neither of her friends seemed to have noticed the slip-up.

"What is your favourite colour?"

"Silvery blue," Evelyn answered without thinking.

It was her favourite colour. Sort of.

More like... It was a type of butterfly she'd been obsessed with a few years back; its pretty colouring being her favourite.

Normally, she'd have just said 'blue'.

"That's the easy questions," Dan said. "Now we've gotta ask the 'test' ones. You ready?"

Evelyn didn't answer. The question wasn't directed at her.

"Do... Do we have to?" Luke whispered. "What if it makes her snap out of it?"

"It won't," Dan said confidently. "If she's really in a trance, she has to answer. If she doesn't, then she's faking. It's why it's a 'test'. Gotta make sure she's really under before we get to the fun stuff."

Fun stuff?

"Fine," Luke huffed.

"Evelyn," Dan said, loud and clear. "What colour are the panties you're currently wearing?"

"White," Evelyn answered, fighting to keep from blushing.

Moron. Why're you asking me something like that?!

But she had to answer. If she wanted to know what that 'fun stuff' the pair of them had planned, she needed to convince them she was a mindless zombie.

"Have you ever had sex?" Dan quickly followed up with.

"No," Evelyn answered.

When this is over, I'm going to slap you.

"Do you own any sex toys?"

"No."

Somehow, she managed to keep her face even and flush-free as the moron continued to barrage her with pervy questions.

After a few minutes, Luke cleared his throat.

"Alright, alright," Dan muttered. "I've had my fun. Time to get down to business..."

Finally.

"Evelyn," Dan said, shifting to sit straight. "I'm about to give you a set of instructions. You will follow these instructions absolutely. You will not defy them. You will not wilfully disobey them. Is that understood?"

"Yes," Evelyn said, heart thrumming.

"Firstly," Dan said, sounding far too eager. "You will not talk to anyone about hypnosis, or attempt to communicate with anyone in any way about it. You will not tell anyone or let anyone know that we – Luke and I – have hypnotised and taken control of you."

Taken control of me? The idea was in equal parts hilarious and disappointing. *Why in the world...*

That they thought it'd be *this* easy to 'control' her was so silly, Evelyn was half-surprised she hadn't burst out laughing right there and then. But, at the same time, the fact that they'd even *try* something like this – thinking it might work – brought forth a whole cacophony of unexpected emotions.

Anger. Pity. Second-hand embarrassment.

I'm never gonna let them live this down.

"Secondly," Dan continued. "Whenever Luke or I present you with a flame, be it from a candle or a lighter or whatever, you will stare into it and not look away. The moment that flame is extinguished, your mind will return to the state it's currently in. Hypnotised. Tranced. Empty."

These aren't even 'instructions'. They're commands.

"Thirdly," Dan said. "If anyone asks you about hypnosis or comments on you acting differently or unusually, you'll share nothing with them. You'll do what you can to convince them that everything is normal, and that you're completely fine. If you believe anyone suspects something is wrong, you will do everything within reason to convince them otherwise."

A phone began to buzz. Evelyn's phone.

There was an audible sigh – probably Dan.

"Go see what that is," he ordered Luke. "Can't risk her snapping out of the trance now."

"But..."

"We'll get to *that* in a minute. You've waited years for her already. You can wait a few more moments."

Luke grumbled something Evelyn couldn't make out. Then he stood, went in search of Evelyn's phone.

"You'd think he'd be a bit more grateful," Dan whispered over to her. "Me doing all this to help him 'win you over'. But, between you and me, I ain't doing this for him."

Does he know? The thought sent a cold tingle up her spine.

Had Dan figured out she was faking?
It seemed like... But no. He *couldn't* know.
Evelyn remained in place. Motionless.

Like the hypnotised zombie Dan was hoping for.

"Limp-dick doesn't realise it yet," Dan said, leaning forward to whisper directly in her ear. "But he's just handed me everything I've ever wanted. No way you'd have let *me* do this. But weak, harmless Luke? Hah! You're both so fucking stupid."

What?!

Before she had a chance to react, scold Dan for being so rude, a loud shout sounded from outside the room.

"Fuck!" Luke called, footsteps racing through the house towards them. "Oh fuck, oh fuck!"

Evelyn didn't look as the short guy barged into the living room. She kept her expression blank and lifeless. A stone statue. Something she was both surprised and impressed with herself for.

"What?" Dan snapped.

"Texts from Violet," Luke said in a panic. "She's on her way home. Something about her getting the days wrong, I don't know. She'll be here any minute!"

"Shit," Dan growled.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!"

"Shut it," Dan snapped, waving an arm at Luke. "I'll bring her out of the trance. You go wait by the front door. If Bitch-Tits gets back before I'm done, stall her."

"How am I supposed to do *that*? You know she-"

"I don't give a shit," Dan barked. "Just do it!"

"Fuck," Luke's voice sounded as he moved to obey, rushing through the house, his cussing growing quieter the further away he got.

"Well shit," Dan sighed. "Guess the fun'll have to wait 'til next time. Alright Cute-Tits, focus on my voice and nothing else. Just my voice..."

The boys fled the house as soon as the 'trance' ended. Making up some excuse about a game or show they wanted to catch, had forgotten about. Evelyn was barely paying attention.

Her head throbbed with a quickly developing migraine, and her thoughts were so all over the place that she could barely focus on any one thing.

The last hour felt like a dream.

But it wasn't. Hadn't been.

They really tried to hypnotise me.

She wasn't sure if she wanted to laugh or cry. Or get angry.

In the end, her mind settled on pure bafflement.

When her sister got home, she found Evelyn sitting on the sofa, staring at a blank TV screen.

"Hey," the older sister said. "You good?"

The words snapped Evelyn out of her stupor. She snapped wide awake, jumped to her feet.

"Yeah! Just thinking about stuff. What happened with work?"

"What stuff?" Violet asked, kicking off her shoes.

"Nothing," Evelyn sighed. "Just something dumb. You know what h-" Her jaw froze. The word refusing to form in her throat. It lasted only a second before her brain spewed something entirely different. "-housework needs doing?"

Huh? Evelyn blinked. *What?*

"No?" Violet said, raising an eyebrow. "Whatever it is, I'm sure it can wait 'til tomorrow. Or the next day."

“What? No! I mean, when the guys were here, they tried to-” *hypnotise me* “-convince me to throw a party.”

What the hell?!

“That’d explain the panic,” Violet chuckled. “I saw them outside. Looked like they’d been caught red-handed or something. Dipshit even forgot to creep on me.”

Evelyn opened her mouth, tried to say the word ‘hypnosis’.

Nothing came out.

Her mouth refused to utter the word.

What in the hell is going on?!