

I Have No Mouth Five Years Ago

"You're late."

Evelyn jumped, spun on the spot.

There she was. Violet. Standing in the shadow of a doorway, a stern scowl on her face.

"Do you have any idea what time it is?" Her big sister scolded. "You should've been back here hours ago!"

Anger bubbled under Evelyn's chest.

"It's a school night," Violet continued, voice firm. Any moment now, she'd fall right into another unwanted lecture. "Christ, it's almost your bedtime!"

Bedtime. Like Evelyn was a child.

Another string of rage knotted inside her.

She tried to push it down, bury it along with everything else. Deep down, where she wouldn't have to think about it. Where it wouldn't sting and ache.

"I'll reheat your dinner for you," Violet sighed, shaking her head. "You can get on with your homework. And don't pretend you don't have any. The school called and-"

"Shut up!" Evelyn screamed.

Her heartbeat thundered in her ears, a raging heat filling her chest. She clenched her fists, glared at the stunned Violet.

"Stop pretending to be Mom!" Evelyn continued, even as the words opened wounds for them both. "You're not her! They're *gone*. Stop acting like... Stop being so... You're not..."

Evelyn's rage melted away as she stared into Violet's watering eyes.

It wasn't Vi's fault. She *knew* that.

It wasn't *anybody's* fault.

There was no-one to blame, no lesson to be learned. Just a massive hole in their lives, sucking away everything but pain and sorrow and misery. A hole that'd never be filled. A void that would always be there. Always.

Unable to meet her sister's teary gaze, ignoring the moisture on her own cheeks, Evelyn snapped her head away. Stared at a blank wall instead.

"I'm..." Violet gulped, voice trembling. "I know I'm not them, Ev. I'm not trying to..."

Replace them, Evelyn's own mind supplied.

"I'm just trying my best," Violet whispered. "I'm sorry if I'm too hard on you. I don't mean to be. I was... I was just worried when you didn't come home. I was afraid I'd get another call and..."

Evelyn squeezed her eyes shut, bawled her fists and clenched hard. Gritted her teeth.

No. No, she wasn't about to let herself feel guilty over spending time with her friends! So *what* if she was late getting home?! Wasn't like Violet herself hadn't done the same, back when *she'd* had friends to hang with.

A crushing flurry of feelings and emotions bombarded her.

Part of her wanted to continue screaming and shouting, until her throat was raw and she was too numb to care anymore.

Another part wanted nothing more than to rush Violet, wrap her arms around her big sister and comfort her. Bear a bit of the burden Violet had been quietly carrying for over a year.

Mostly, though, there was fatigue. Apathy.

She huffed, walked away from her sister while ignoring every word that came out of her mouth. Stomping her way upstairs to her bedroom, pushing down the guilt and shame and regret until she was alone in her room. Face down on the bed. Surrounded by painful

memories and reminders.

Only then did she allow herself to let go and weep.