

I sit down in the chair, chewing the inside of my lip. My hands tremble as they rest in my lap. Lia sits in front of me with a gentle smile. The smell of the room is unsettling. It's almost like the scent that's in a doctor's office. Clean, but nauseating.

"How are you, Suzette?"

I sigh, clenching and unclenching my jaw. "I'm only here because I must be. I don't want to talk. I just want to sit here for the next hour. That's it."

*Therapy helps*, they say. I try and try. Sure, I have good days where I'm able to talk to her and be in the moment. Sometimes the stench of the office, the noise of the fan, and the dim, cold lights get too much. I don't usually say much anyway, but today is different.

"That's okay. We can sit here."

And we do. My heart is pounding. I know she can tell how I'm feeling. My fingers subtly pick at their own skin, small pains erupting atop my skin. My lungs are being crushed by the thoughts. They ram over and over into my skull. I keep blinking too much. *I hate this lighting*. My eyes bounce around the room, the world tilting as if I had spun in a chair for too long.

*I have a headache.*

A lump is growing in my throat. So much is happening, yet the world is unmoving. My head is spinning. I blink three times. I swallow. My heartbeat is behind my eyes and in my ears. The room is getting blurry.

"Would you like some water?"

"No, thank you."

"You look a bit uncomfortable. We can sit outside if you would like. We have a private balcony."

I hate being called out. I don't like how she did that. She sees me, and I don't want her to. I want to be invisible. I want to suffer by myself. I want to get away from everything. I don't want to be here anymore. Not in this city, not in this country, not anywhere close to everyone.

"Yeah, that sounds nice."

She stands, waiting patiently for me to follow behind her. We get to the balcony a hallway away. She gestures to a seat, so I sit. She sits in front of me, staring out into the grassy areas. Without her gaze on me, I can breathe a bit easier.

The headache claws at the side of my head. My heart rate slows in my chest, disappearing from my ears. My shoulders slump from their tense position. I'm still dizzy, but it'll fade. The drop of anxiety tires me.

"I just want it to stop," I say softly, looking where she had been previously. The grass shines in the sun, the dew sparkling. The feel and look of it completely contradicts my thoughts. The scenery soothes my vicious brain.

"What to stop?"

"Everything. There's too much happening when there's nothing happening at all."

"It's been a while since we last saw each other. What's been going on?"

"My brother is back. His lies are back. His attitude is back. Everything he does makes me want to leave. He takes his family for granted. He uses us just like how he did last year and the year before that. He has the audacity to get upset with my parents when they ask simple questions. I know he is hurting, but I cannot do this with him again. I can't."

The lump comes back. I want to cry until my throat is raw and my eyes are swollen. I want to let it all out, but I'm tired. My headache takes a sharp turn.

"You said you wanted everything to stop. Could you explain more about that?"

"Life. I want to disappear."

"You want to disappear permanently?"

The question makes my eyes bulge out of my head. "What? Gosh, no. That's- that's not what I meant. I-I mean it is, but not. Not permanently. It's like..." I groan, putting my head in my hands. "I want to disappear. I want to leave with no recollection of anything and come back to everything being normal. I guess normal isn't the right word. This crap has become my normal. I want everything to go back to how it was. Where my brother and I had a good relationship. Where we could get along. Where I didn't want to hit him every time I saw him."

I bite my lip, the tears beginning to rise. "Him and I used to be so close. Not best friend close, but you know, sibling close. We would talk about everything. We would enjoy our time together. And it hurts so bad that I can't even stand the thought of him anymore. It breaks my heart to the point that it physically hurts. It's killing me."

My words choke me at the last second, forcing silence upon me. Can I go yet? Can I drive out of here and never look back? All I want to do is curl up in bed and forget. That is all I'm asking. I sound like I'm throwing a pity party for myself. Maybe I am. Who cares?

"I'm so sorry, Suzette, really. No person should have to go through what you have. You are strong for admitting these hardships and trying to live your daily life."

"Yeah."