



SILENCE

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Two months have gone by since the funeral and my mother hasn't said a word. It has been two months of silent dinners, eight weeks of my mother staying cooped up in her room, and 56 days of me being all alone – it's been *fantastic*.

I know she needs the time to grieve but this isn't grieving. This is her wallowing in her grief and avoiding reality.

I look up at my mother and see her knocking about the leftovers on her plate with a glazed look in her eyes and the corners of her mouth curled downward. I wish I could fix things, that I could undo the last few months, undo my mother's pain, and her hurt and her grief – undo the day my brother left us.

It was August the 12th, 2019.

Silence overcame me as I stood there, watching as the body swung back and forth.

I didn't scream.

I didn't cry.

I just watched.

The sight was morbid. The rope around his neck hugged it so harshly that blood began to trickle down, staining the collar of his shirt, and his face looked so calm, so relaxed. The entire scene was unusually serene.

My brain told me I should've felt something, anything, yet I felt absolutely nothing. Maybe it was because I was worn out from feeling so much lately. Maybe it was because some dark part of me knew this day would come. All I know is in that moment I felt nothing.

The thought of my mother waiting downstairs for us crossed my mind. She wouldn't be able to handle this. It would destroy her. I thought of simply closing the door and acting as though I hadn't seen a thing, but that was absurd. She would've come into this room eventually and found him herself. I was not religious, however, I wanted to ask for whatever God was out there to undo this mess. My mother didn't deserve to be confronted with the sight of her son's hanging body. She'd already lost one important man in her life; she couldn't handle the loss of another.

I took a cautious step into the room. It was abnormally tidy. The bed was neatly made, the shirts, sneakers and papers that normally littered the floor were gone and the bedside tables had been cleared of the water bottles and antidepressants that normally sat atop them. This looked nothing like his room. In the wardrobe, I found everything folded neatly, the shoes well stacked, and all his sports equipment packed tidily. It was so unusually clean. Ironic how after years of being begged to clean his room, this is the day he finally does it.

I padded towards his desk, as if to maintain the untouched silence of the room. I picked up one of the many photo frames. A smile crawled onto my face. The picture was of us on my birthday 6 months ago, laughing as we shoved cake into each other's faces. Everything was so much easier back then.

I took a moment to drink in the silence. How I could hear everything going on outside. The screech of Mr Dawson's tires as he pulled into his driveway. The drone of the lawnmower as Michael cut his grass. The distant laughter of children at the park. A scream was all it took to break the silence of the room...

My mother hasn't been in that room since then. She also has yet to say a word of what happened that afternoon.

Going on like this is becoming frustrating. I'm tired of the silence, it gives my thoughts too much space to run wild. This also isn't something he would have wanted. He would've wanted us to continue living life, to pick up the pieces of our fractured relationship and to enjoy being together. He always said to avoid reality is to continue living miserably – clearly my mother hadn't been listening.

My mother's fork clanking against her plate continued to smother the silence and I found myself getting increasingly annoyed with each clank. I couldn't take it anymore and frustratedly exclaimed, "We need to talk about what happened mom. We can't keep avoiding it. We can't keep going on like this! We need to talk about Oliver."