

*Breaking Glass*

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Empty.

Hollow.

That's what the silver glass shows you.

The thing staring at you on the other side.

It wasn't you.

Well, it was you, unrecognisable and yet so familiar.

It watched you, unyielding.

The mirror shows your corrugated ribs pushing against your skin. How your body had wasted away. It made you proud to see what you had become.

Gazing into the mirror takes you back.

To her.

Tears fill your eyes as you hear the words replay in your mind. 'You know you won't ever be perfect, right? You're nothing.'

'Please. Don't do this to me, not again.'

'What else am I supposed to say to you? You're pathetic.' Disgust was heavy in her voice.

You snap out of the memory clutching the sheets on your bed. Your phone reads three o'clock. Another sleepless night then. Five years ago, your ten-year-old self had bigger dreams than looking like a model. You wanted to be a doctor, but social media made you obsess over your body. Now, you craved perfection.

An invitation to a pool party lay on your bed. You really didn't want to go, but you had to. You couldn't miss another family event. They would be suspicious you.

What would you even tell them this time? Nothing. There was nothing you could say to get out of it.

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You clutch the sleeves of your jumper tighter as you walked by the pool. What were you going to do when they asked why you weren't swimming with them? Why did it have to be so hot today? You're sweating under the baggy clothes. This was a bad decision. You shouldn't have come.

You search the familiar faces, looking for your mother. You find her on one of the chairs near the pool, watching your little sister. You weave through the crowd, making your way over to her. When you finally reach her, you notice how her blue bikini shows off her perfect body.

‘Wow, your here.’ The tone of her voice ruins the greeting.

‘Yeah, I wouldn’t miss Cassidy’s birthday for the world. It’s not everyday your little sister turns nine,’ you say, trying to be polite.

‘What’s with that jumper?’ she asks.

You lean down and whisper, ‘It’s hard to have a perfect body like yours, Mum.’ The rage in her eyes is crystal clear when you stand up.

‘At least I’m dedicated to my body,’ she shoots back with a wicked glare. ‘I warned you not to mention that. To anyone.’ She looks ready to shoot daggers into your back when Cassidy interrupts. Her rage melts into a sickly-sweet smile. ‘Honey, can you go find your aunty while I finish this chat. Let her know I said she’s buying you lunch.’

‘Okay, Mum,’ Cassidy replies and runs off.

‘I see your bribing her now. Are you making her sick too? Does our aunt know what you’re doing to her? After all, it’s what you did to me.’

‘Me? I would never. How dare you accuse me of that,’ she says, faking shock and denying what she did your whole childhood.

Rolling your eyes, you reply, ‘Sure Mum,’ and walk away from her, the one who started this obsession.

You walk to the other side of the pool and sit down, and hide your hands in your jumper, so no one sees they are shaking. She is your mother, and she treats you as though you are a piece of gutter filth.

When you never fit in anywhere, where do you go for help? Who do you turn to? It’s not like it matters though, right? As long as people think you’re okay, you’re fine. You have always felt helpless and left out. Your mother isolated you from everyone you tried to be close with.

Your mother slams her manicured hand on the table millimetres from the sleeve of your jumper resting on the table. You glare at her as she yells at you.

‘You’re such a disappointment. This is why your father left. You can’t do anything right.’ She grabs your arm, the rage on her face melts as she realises what she’s done to you. She pulls up your sleeve, her face paling. ‘What have you done to yourself?’

‘Don’t pretend like you don’t know and don’t pretend that you care,’ you say, struggling to get free.

‘That’s bullshit. I cared about you. You were too ungrateful to see that.’ She raises her voice, and you try not to cringe as she tightens her grip.

‘You are unbelievable.’ The words come out like venom.

‘If I didn’t push you into modelling the way I did, you wouldn’t be who you are now.’

‘Maybe I don’t want to be this person. Maybe I wanted my mum to hug me every night and tell me I was good enough for someone.’

‘Without me, you would be nothing. A nobody,’ she says, her voice sounding strained.

It terrifies you, but you don’t let her see that. ‘No Mum. Without you, I would be happy!’ you say ripping your arm out of her grip.

‘How dare you be so rude to me. I am your mother. You will not treat me with such disrespect.’

‘You haven’t been my mother for three years. You’re dead to me. I’m only here to see Cassidy. I’m fed up with your expectations. I don’t care what you think anymore.’

You stand and walk away from her. When you were little, she was your mother. She would comfort you when you had a nightmare. She would tell you everything would be okay. Now that woman is a memory. Why did she want you to be a model? Maybe it was because she was one. It was her dream. Still, even though you wanted it to be, it wasn’t all her fault. You chose not to eat, so you could live up to her expectations.

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Hours after the party, you arrive home. Opening the door to your bedroom, you notice the silver glass had shattered, leaving glimmering shards on the floor. Walking up to what was left of the mirror that once controlled you, you notice something different.

You feel different, look healthier, happier. That’s when you realise that you don’t want to be perfect in the eyes of anyone but yourself. You want to be you. The boy you are. Who knew what broke the glass; whatever it was, or whoever it was, they are long gone.

Smiling as you clean up the glass, you realise you’re going to be okay, that you will recover from this. From her. The road to recovery would be long but, with help, you know you can do it.

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