

## **If I Disappear**

The journal rests in my lap, pages crinkling beneath my fingers. It's the only place I feel safe enough to be real. Out there, I'm just the girl in a mask, the wallflower. I smile when I need to, laugh when it's expected, and keep my head down. But here, with you, I don't have to pretend.

It's hard to remember when the heaviness started. It's always there now, like a shadow that clings to me, making it hard to breathe. It follows me everywhere, school, home, even when I'm alone. I laugh along with the others, but it's not me. It feels fake, like someone else is living my life, and I'm just watching from a distance.

Today was another one of those days, where the world felt like a thick fog that blurred everything around me. I moved through the motions, like a wooden marionette, floating through a world that buzzed around me, untouched. The ache in my chest grew heavier, and I longed for the solace of home, the sanctuary where I could close my door and finally breathe. Alone in my room, I could shed the mask I wore for everyone else, letting the pretence fall away.

The blade feels cold against my skin, sharp and familiar. I don't know why it helps. It's not about the pain. It's about control. For once, I get to decide what hurts and when. I get to choose how deep, how long. It's mine. But the relief is temporary, and as the blood blooms like roses on my flesh, the shame follows. And then guilt. And then the silence in my head isn't quiet anymore.

I think about disappearing sometimes. Not in a dramatic way, but quietly, like fading into the background until there's nothing left. I wonder if anyone would even notice. If I didn't show up one day, if I just stopped being there, would anyone care? Would anyone look for me? Or would the world keep going without me, like I was never really part of it?

*If I disappear...*

I imagine it often, how people would go on with their lives, not even realising I was gone. It should scare me, the thought of being forgotten, but it doesn't. It feels peaceful, easier than asking for help. Because asking means telling the truth, and I'm not ready for that. The world would keep spinning, people would keep laughing, the sun would keep rising. Without me.

So I write it down instead. I pour it all into these pages, every thought, every feeling I can't say out loud. It's the only way I know to stay tethered, to keep from slipping away. Maybe one day I'll be able to tell someone. Maybe one day, I'll be brave enough to tell my story.

But for now, it's just you and me, journal. And as long as I have you, I haven't disappeared completely.

At least not yet.