

Will anyone notice if I don't brush your teeth?

Have I made us invisible enough that anyone would even notice? My desire to be unseen feels powerful, like a force field, making sure no-one gets through to see the mess I've made. See that I don't even want to brush your teeth.

Sunglasses have become a socially acceptable mask to hide from the danger of the outside world. Smiling hurts but, if I don't ever look up, make eye contact, I don't have to connect, answer questions that could reveal I'm nobody anymore.

Some days I don't know how to take another breath. Anxiety lodges in my throat making it hard to swallow. I feel everything, every nerve tingles in pain. Touch is starting to burn my skin, I fight hard not to brush it off, not to let my outside reject the sparse kisses and cuddles on offer, but my insides are screaming 'get off' so loudly I'm sure you can hear.

Some days I don't want to exist anymore, I'm an empty shell, I feel nothing. I just want to sit and be nothing to no-one. My body mutates into a prison, I feel myself shrinking, locked inside with no will to escape. Every limb feel likes its being weighted down, any energy I have goes on survival, nothing else. I hide in sleep, an acceptable excuse not to engage, to interact, not to look into your eyes.

I want someone to protect me, shield me from decisions and responsibilities, so that nothing else can get through, nothing can hurt anymore. Someone to untie the knots in my stomach, place a cool, calm hand on my shoulders and lift off the daily burdens pushing me to my knees.

Home is a sanctuary, an exclusive members club, no-one else allowed inside. No-one can see how badly I'm failing, how I can't be good at this anymore although, perhaps I never was? No-one else sees the constant rejection but it's there, proving that I've failed you, failed in the promises I made to keep you safe.

Your every thought and feeling used to feel like an extension of my own but now, there is nothing. You feel a million miles away, the once intense connection lost. I'm scared I'm not strong enough to survive this. I can't get to you, can't find my way back. I can't run away either, I'm trapped by my loyalty to our shared past and to a fragile history that predates us.

Family offer their help but I can't bear to watch how easily they show you their love. How simple it is for them to hold your hand and cross the road, read you a story with funny voices or play imaginary games. Watch how carefree they are in their union with you. Best to stay by ourselves, out of sight, eventually we'll be out of mind.

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