

## “The trip not taken”

- I still don't quite understand why you did that.

-Did what? The girl replied calmly.

-Don't play dumb Evelyn. It's been four years.

21<sup>st</sup> of February 2020. It was a typical Tuesday night for all children in the “Hope Haven Orphanage”. All children except Evelyn. Evelyn was a nine-year-old girl with dark brown shoulder-length wavy hair, hazel eyes and freckles on her cheeks and nose. Evelyn used to share a room with a couple of other girls around her age. One of them being Sally. Sally as opposed to Evelyn, had long dirty blonde hair, bright blue eyes and thin lips. She was really beautiful, and Evelyn always admired her for that. Apart from her pretty face, Sally also had a pretty soul. She was kind and optimistic. Evelyn, on the other hand, was kind of a rebel. She always stood up for Sally when people bullied her. And that would happen quite often.

That rainy night, Evelyn was waiting for someone, or something, outside her dorm. Her oversized jacket, covering her skinny arms and torso, kept her warm as a cool breeze traveled through her hair, all the way from an open window down the hall. She checked her watch. “Where is she?” she whispered to herself, looking a bit worried and sad at the same time. A few moments later, just as she was about to give up on waiting, footsteps were heard from afar, becoming louder as seconds went by. There was hope on Evelyn's face now. A figure appeared from the shadows of the hall. Not giving it a second thought,

-What took you so long? Evelyn asked quietly.

-Evie? Finally, I found you, a young boy came into sight.

He seemed a little older than Evelyn, a year or two. His messy brown hair was almost covering his eyes as his thin, silver glasses glimmered in the moonlight. He was still in his uniform; blue shirt, black jeans and a gray vest on top. The uniform was pretty much the same for girls, but instead of jeans they had black knee-high skirts and grey cardigans instead of vests. Evelyn noticed that his tie was missing, but she didn't say anything.

-Barty? What are you doing here? And have you seen Sally? She was supposed to meet me here ten minutes ago.

-We have to go. Follow me. I'll explain while we get there, he said, grabbed Evelyn's hand and started running towards the way he had just come from.

-Where are we going? Evelyn asked, trying to catch up on him.

-To the hospital wing, he replied out of breath.

-Why? Did something happen? Is Sally okay? She asked dominated by fear. She was now running next to him, as she noticed his wet brown eyes. He looked terrified. Why aren't you answering me? Barty, you're scaring me, she sobbed.

But the boy kept silent. He only opened a big white door, letting Evelyn's hand go.

-Evie...Are you comfortable with me calling you like that?

-No.

-Why not?

-An old friend used to call me like that. It makes me upset.

- Do you want to talk about it?

-No. No, I don't, Evelyn replied wiping off a tear.

Evelyn got in the room just after Barty did.

-I found her, miss, Barty said to a middle-aged lady that had just come in the waiting room.

-Thank you, Barty. You can go to sleep now, the lady stated. The boy nodded and left the room.

-Evelyn, she said, giving her a sweet smile, trying to cover her worry.

-Yes Mrs. Findlay? Evelyn responded full of curiosity.

-Come, take a seat, she offered, patting on a seat beside her.

Evelyn sat next to her silently. Her face blank.

-You see, Evelyn, your friend Sally came to me after dinner requesting a- she paused. It's your birthday tomorrow, isn't it?

-It was my fault. I should've been there.

-Evelyn, it wasn't your fault—

-IT WAS, Evelyn yelled, not letting her finish her sentence. And what do you know? You think you can help me just because you're a phycologist? Evelyn cried.

-Well, as a matter of fact, yes, I can help you. But in order to do that, you have to tell me why. Why did you do that to yourself? The psychologist replied, trying to calm Evelyn down.

Evelyn took a long pause. She looked at her hands. Her knuckles were still red. Still bloody. She took a deep breath to ease off and glanced back at the psychologist.

-Me and Sally grew up together at the orphanage. I was nine. It would be my birthday the next day and she wanted to surprise me. She told me to wait for her outside or dorm, but she never came, Evelyn sobbed, sniffing her runny nose.

-And what happened next?

-It was too late I... I wasn't there to protect her like I promised to... Some kids beat her... They beat her to death. Four days on coma and then she took that trip... Evelyn mumbled.

-What trip?

-Mrs. Findlay— I mean the Headmistress— She told me that Sally took a trip. Far away from there. But I knew it! Sally would never leave without telling me! Never! Evelyn shouted.

-No need to shout Evelyn. Take some deep breaths and continue with the story once you're ready, the psychologist responded.

Evelyn remained silent She couldn't talk. Just kept bringing up that night in her mind.

-Tell me, what happened to the kids that hurt her?

Evelyn looked up at the psychologist and quickly looked back down.

-They were sent to a juvenile detention center, Evelyn replied calmly. Three versus one. It was not fair at all. Only if I was there... I could've saved her...

-It wasn't your fault, Evelyn. Those kids took what they deserved. She took a moment, studying Evelyn's reaction. So that was the reason you hurt yourself?

- I thought... I thought if I punched myself hard enough, I could take the same trip Sally did. So then I could meet her and apologize for not being there...

"Thank god that trip wasn't taken", the psychologist thought to herself, gently stroking Evelyn's arm.