

Liberosis

I was told as a young girl that smiling would fix everything.

Up until now, that's what I did whenever I'd encounter a problem – smile my way through. I couldn't remember the last time I had cried, letting my mask fall loose or allowing the world to see the 'true me'.

To the world, I was a perfect girl from a perfect family. My parents and older brother always had this charm when it came to other people, and it contrasted drastically with my social awkwardness. People would immediately be bewitched by my family. My parents are distinguished figures in society, and my brother has a charismatic charm that even made his teachers say that despite his many absences from class, he was their brightest student. With the show that my family puts on in front of everyone - people think of them as *perfect*.

The idea of faultlessness, in my opinion, is silly. Nothing worldly can be perfect. One may say that something's perfect, but others will soon see flaws in what that one person finds flawless. That's just how it is, beyond that, can anything worldly be flawless? No, for there is always something that is overlooked, or is hidden away from people's perspectives.

Such is the case of my own family. The entire world may see us as a perfect family, and me as a golden girl, but deep behind our masks, perfection is not what lies, instead anger, frustration, greed, and vanity lurk, hidden away from the world by our smiling faces.

My parents work in the business sector of the commercial world, managing finances and important decisions for multiple large companies. They have a lot of free time on their hands, but I've known for awhile that they'd rather spend it with others, or amongst themselves through a vacation far from my brother and me. When they are around though, they don't interact with us often, for we are the children which they are responsible for, and are neither to be seen nor heard.

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Everyone has always seen my parents as people who ruled the world with a press of a button. Power blinds all. A small mention of how powerful one is, and the world becomes quiet and respectful to the one in power. It works every time; I've watched it happen countless times as my parents manipulate people with their power.

My brother is much like my parents in many aspects, he charms his way out of everything. People don't like things that don't please them, and so my brother wins everyone's hearts by fulfilling one of their wishes near the beginning of their encounter, and then letting the rest of their other wishes fade away as he entralls them with smooth talk. With his upper hand in manipulative psychology, he can win over anyone within the blink of an eye.

Like our parents, he stays away from me too. Perhaps it's because I'm the only one unhappy with the loneliness I've been forced to live in – with the mask I was told to keep on. Smiling my way through things was tiring, and while I longed to cry out from my loneliness and frustration, I was scared the moment I did so, my mask would break and my world would change for the worse.

I always smiled because that's what I was told to do, but lately it had been because I feared the unknown, scared of what would happen if I spoke out to my family and to others of the verbal and emotional abuse I had to deal with at school, and the isolation and feeling of abandonment I coped with at home.

At school, the image my family had put up had left me in a bad position. People either admired me from afar – only due to the famous reputation my family had in the commercial world – or whispered about me behind my back. I was living a perfect life to them, and they'd either gaze in awe or glare with jealousy. I was used to the name-calling and verbal jabs now, but it still nagged

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me at night, when I lay in bed and had nothing to occupy my mind aside from my dark, nightly thoughts.

At this point in my life, I could no longer remember the days of my childhood that were filled with laughter and light. I'm sure they were there when my Grandparents were still with us, but once they'd moved to a place more comfortable for them, contact had worn thin and slowly, memories of them faded along with memories of the days of my colourful childhood.

Despite that, I did manage to contact my Grandfather a few days ago. It was odd, speaking to him after so many years, but I only wished to talk to someone. There was no one for me to talk to at school, for I was either regarded in a nonchalant way, or with hostility. No one was ever home either, and when they were, they didn't want to talk to me.

My Grandfather seemed tired that morning, I heard him yawn multiple times over the phone. I only had planned to say hello though, and I was ready to hang up two minutes in of small talk, when he said, "How're you holding up with everything at home?"

I didn't know how much he knew at the time. I later learned within the next thirty minutes of the phone call that my Grandparents left due to the broken state of my home. It was much easier to leave for their hometown, where they'd be treated well and with respect in their last few years of life, rather than here where they were pushed aside and ignored, treated like they held no importance in anyone's eyes.

My Grandparents knew everything. They kept up with the newspapers regarding my parents, which would occasionally mention my brother and me. They were still in touch with some of my neighbors who were apparently keeping an eye on us too.

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On the phone call, my Grandfather had also said – and was the first one to say to me, “Just be you, dearie.”

In that moment, everything stood still. How could one person who wasn't even an active part in your life anymore know you better than those around you? Know that you wore a mask which you weren't sure you could wear any longer?

I cried a lot that day. The line disconnected as I dropped the landline to the ground, and ran from the kitchen to my room in tears.

You don't always have to pretend everything's perfect.

Feelings are normal, natural things. They don't need to be covered up, hidden. Imperfection is not a flaw either. Imperfection is everywhere.

From that day onwards, my Grandfather's words gave me courage and direction. I started focusing on myself, and being myself. Life drastically changed for me from that point for the better. The sun shone brightly and made me acknowledge and seize the bright future ahead of me. I finished school and moved to a different city, I embraced my flaws and stopped picking myself apart. I let my smile fall - only wearing it when I felt the desire to. I had managed to break free of the illusion of 'perfect' in my life.

I achieved liberosis.

And I was happy.