

But Why...

8 1/2

Why am I leaving? Because of my family. My father, my mother, my older brother... I'm leaving because of them.

Francis walked determinedly in the middle of the street. Her feet slapped the black tarmac, a piercing beat in the darkness. She breathed heavily. Not with exhaustion but with raw emotion. She was running away from home... It was the third time this month.

Francis was on edge. She rang her hands together until they burned with blood. Her eyes darted around in the shadows searching for... She spotted a lone street light. It was the only one in the street that wasn't shattered or damaged. Francis compared the blaring light to that of a car. She vaguely wondered what it would be like to be hit by a car. It was nearly a welcome thought.

Francis' head was a highway of its own. Drunken drivers crashed into each other, branding their destruction into her brain. Her thoughts brawled with each other but it didn't hurt as much as it did when she was younger. They were only a couple more marks on her maimed mind. She recalled all the reasons she was leaving. There were too many to count.

Why am I leaving? Because of my family. My absent, alcoholic, abusive father.

Francis' eyes glazed over. She remembered it as clear as day the moment her father staggered through the front door. He had a vodka bottle clutched in his hand, the alcohol spat out of the top whenever he moved. Francis' mother rushed to greet him. He had slurred something and swung groggily at her mother. Francis subconsciously raised her hand to her cheek. She knew all too well the sharp sting accompanied by one of her father's blows.

Why am I leaving? Because of my family. My submissive, weak, accusing mother.

Francis remembered the previous morning. She had walked out into the kitchen to see her mother slumped over her forearms, body shaking violently. Francis had padded over silently and laid a small hand on her mother's shoulder. Francis didn't have to look closely to notice the bruises peppering her body,

"If you had turned some lights on... He would've seen me coming," her mother had uttered, seemingly under her breath. That's what it was like every time. It was always *her* fault. It was always *Francis'* fault.

Francis could feel hot tears trace down her cheeks. She tasted the salt at the edges of her mouth. She didn't want to cry. She hated crying. It made her feel weak. She scrubbed her glittering eyes roughly with the back of her hand. It only made her hurt more. The burning tears did not stop. Francis didn't think they would ever stop.

Why am I leaving? Because of my family; because of my evil, drug abusing, dead brother.

Harvey had been addicted to heroin. He had overdosed two years ago. Francis felt relief even now.

Harvey used to do horrible things to her. He'd lock her outside until her fingers were blue and stiff. She had been a frail, convulsing tumour in the darkness. He had once put sleeping pills in her food and duct taped her to a chair. Harvey then slapped her until her skin was marbled ink-blue. He had **tortured** her.

Why am I leaving? Because of my family.

Francis felt emotion rise from deep within her. This time it was an overwhelming tsunami of anger. Her hands shook so violently she clenched her fists. Nearly immediately, warm blood pooled in her fists. Francis opened her hands and watched scarlet tendrils trace the lines of her palms. The crimson liquid dripped from her fingertips and stained the ground.

The red held too many memories. Francis squeezed her eyes shut and thrashed her head. She desperately tried to get rid of the searing images behind her eyes.

Francis stopped walking abruptly. Fighting every force in her body she looked up at her front door. All of a sudden exhaustion clawed at her body and she let out a trembling breath. The exhaustion latched on to her and dragged her down. A pair of tears slid from her eyes and dropped from her chin, creating miniscule puddles where they hit the ground.

But why am I staying... Because of my family.