

REGRET

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JOSH

When I was ten my mum had a baby with her new husband. A little boy. I hated him straight away. He was really annoying. You know, in only the way little brothers can be. He used to follow me everywhere. He would play with all my stuff and mess up the levels on my games. He once spilt a whole tray of bottles of model paint my carpet. And it stank! We couldn't get it up no matter how much we scrubbed and scrubbed, and we had to rip up the carpet because I couldn't sleep in there. I had to use the disgusting rug from my stepdad's shed for almost a year. Geeze I really hated him after that.

He used to get away with everything. He had the cutest mop of blonde curls and the biggest bluest eyes you've ever seen. So, people would just melt when he'd ask for something with his annoying little voice. He always wanted to go everywhere with me. Mum was working heaps, and my stepdad was away as usual, so mum would always make me take him with me or stay home. It used to make me so angry, so I started not taking him when I went out with my mates. Locking him in the house... Not for long. Twenty minutes, half an hour max, just when we went down to the shops on the corner or for a skate at the park, that sort of stuff. He used to get so upset when I'd grab my board because he knew I would be leaving him there alone. He'd scream and cry and bang on the door and the windows when I left. It didn't matter how many lollies I brought him back.

This one day recently, he was giving me such a hard time about not bringing him along, worse than ever. I couldn't stand it anymore and I stormed out. I could hear him all the way down the street... (*big breath*) As it turned out I forgot to latch the back door properly and he got out, into the backyard... The thing is (*pause, he's struggling*) we had a pool... He was only five. We actually had an alarm on our back door, but because no one was there to hear it, no one was there to stop him in time.

I got back from the shops. I had him a Kinder Surprise because he really liked the little toys you get in them... But I could see flashing lights, an ambulance in my driveway... police cars and I could see my neighbour sitting on our front lawn sobbing... I felt sick! I ran around the back and there were a whole heap of people standing around. They were in front of the ambulance men who were working on someone... I couldn't see who, but I knew. I knew it was him and I knew it was my fault. Then I saw mum, she was rushing towards the crowd, trying to get through, her eyes were wild, she was desperate, screaming out his name. She knew too.

People, I don't know who... our neighbours maybe? Police? People were holding her back, telling her she didn't want to see him. "My baby!" She screamed... "Let me see my baby!" I tried to stop her, but she pushed me away with so much hatred in her eyes.... I will never get that image out of my head.

When she got through, she grabbed him and held him to her chest screaming like a wounded animal. Everyone was crying. I was on my knees, praying to God that he'd be ok. All of a sudden, he started coughing and spluttering. He was ok! Thank God, he was ok! Thank God... But no thanks to me... It was my fault! ... My little brother almost died, and it was all my fault. I was grounded for months... But I don't care! I am just so grateful to spend time with him... and that he's ok... But I can't stop that picture of him, screaming out my name when I left him and then seeing him all blue, going round and round in my head. And I can't un-see the hatred in mum's eyes... I let her down... I let them both down so badly.