

Script for 'I am she and she is I' produced for the Domestic Academics Quilt Project by Vanessa Marr July 2021

I walk softly into her room and first see the letter on the side table next to her bed. She is sleeping. I pick the letter up and read the first few lines and then scan the rest of the page. I flip over to the other side and then slide the second page into view. I stop reading and look up at her asleep in bed, scrutinising her hand from a metre away. There are red patches all over the back of her hand and up her wrist. Inside I gasp but my mouth doesn't open. What has she done? What did she do to herself?! I stay silent and walk out of the room, taking the letter with me. Downstairs I put the letter on the table. The letter said she was awake at 4am so she won't be up for hours. I get on with all the jobs I need to do to keep our family going and try to push it out of my mind but when her brother wakes up he finds me with the letter in my bedroom, crying as I am reading it. And still the children need to go to school and their lunches need to be made, the dog needs to be walked and dishes need to be done.

Come on love. It's time to get up. You have to go to school. Come on. GET UP! You cannot do this to me! I need to work! You are ruining everything! Don't you understand? You are being so selfish! We are like a caterpillar – you are a section and we all move together and if you don't move our whole family falls apart. Please! Get up! What time did you get to sleep? What?! What were you doing all night?

Come on now, you need to get in your nightie. You can't sleep in your clothes! Have you done your teeth?! Please just try to get some sleep tonight. I know you are trying. I'm sorry darling. I know it is not your fault – I'm sorry.

What did you say? No! You do not get to choose when you go to bed or to school! You do not just decide the night before what time you will go to school the next day! Right – that's it. I'm taking everything away from you – your computer, the ipad, your phone. You have to go to school or you will fall behind. You must try to get some sleep! At least get ready for bed and you will feel more relaxed and be able to go to school! Why don't you take a bath to relax you? You do need to wash your hair...

You didn't eat your dinner? You must eat something! Please darling. You are tired because you are not eating- you are feeling sick because you are not eating – don't you understand you need food to have energy.

Of course you can have a cuddle but I must go to sleep soon. I can't stay up with you all night? Why don't you sleep with me if you need to? I just need to get you to sleep. I have put your phone outside. Please don't get up again in the night and go downstairs. If you really need me just come into my room and sleep in my bed ok?

I feel the pain she inflicts, sabotaging herself and cutting the cord all over again each time. When I look at her – defiant, angry, vulnerable, I see myself at her age and I feel the pain my mother felt. We are joined, she and I. Inseparable.