“I know people around here think you’re too big. And its easy to push people away and they just think so much of you. They just bare it and think you’ve outgrown them, just happy they got to be yours for a moment. Bob, you don’t hurt people because you’re too big for them. You hurt them because you’re too small. Bob, you know it. You know it, and it terrifies you. Yeah the things you do are big, but they’re so much smaller than they could be if you’d just stop running from how small you are.”

Silence followed as Mal finished speaking. Her eyes were darting back and forth between Bobs eyes, pausing briefly and back to the other, trying to read their contents. Bob kept looking down as he gathered himself all the while hoping that she would continue in his place.

“Bob?” she exhaled in a pained, desperate whisper.

“What?” he responded in a blank toned whisper aimed at not giving anything away.

“You need to say something.”

“What do you want me to say?”

“I want you to say what you’re thinking! I just told you you’re small and to stop running. That has to do something to you.

Silence…

“Tell me.”

“I think you should go.”

“I don’t think you want that.”

“Oh, and how do you know what I want? If you know so much then why do I have to tell you how I feel? You already told me how I feel. You said I’m small. That I’m nothing. That I hide behind what people think of me.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“Yes you did!”

“Bob,”

“You said it! You said that,”

“Bob,”

“that I hurt people and I run and I’m so small that I can’t face it. If you know I’m not enough then leave. Give up and go.”

“Bob”

“Just go”

“Bob”

“WHAT”

“I don’t think you’re nothing.”

“You just told me I was.”

“I told you that you’re small and that you’re scared. That you push people away, but I didn’t say you’re nothing.”

“I might as well be if I hurt people the way you said.”

“Is that what you want?”

“What?”

“To not be able to hurt people?”

“Isn’t that what I’m supposed to want?”

“To not be able to hurt people is different from not hurting people.”

Silence…

“You hurt people because people let you in, Bob. They share part of themselves with you. That’s a beautiful thing, but you don’t”

“I don’t what,” he cut her off.

“You’re so calculated. Everything you share is so measured. It isn’t you, or it isn’t all of you. Its just the parts you think are good enough.”

“You’re so fucking smug, telling me how to open up. Telling me that I haven’t given enough of myself to you.”

“It doesn’t have to be me, Bob. It just has to be someone.”

Silence…

“I see the way you love that nephew. You look at him like he’s your world and you love him like you wish you had been. When you talk people, they will tell you anything, and you always know what to ask to get them to release. I know you do that because you want the same, but you never do. You never open up the way you get people to do to you. You don’t see that people light up when they see you like you light up when you see Teddy.”

Silence…

“Why don’t you let yourself see it?”

“Mal”

“What?”

“I need to get out of here”

And he walked out the door. He pulled it behind him, but, afraid of slamming it, he pulled it too softly. It didn’t latch but slowly swung back open. Mal watched as he walked down the drive. He threw up the collar of the jacket he hadn’t taken off and turned up the street and slowly moved out of sight. Mal was stuck, but the cold stirred her and she moved to close the door.