

Anxious Thoughts From A Reading Imposter By Vivien Janitz

"So, what have you been reading recently?"

The simple question fills me with a subtle sense of dread, making itself at home in the centre of my stomach. I filter through the default responses I have at the ready, wondering whether it would make things awkward if I just came clean about my three-year reading slump.

It probably wouldn't since this stranger doesn't know me. Doesn't know about the identity crisis I've been hiding behind polite smiles ever since calling myself a 'book lover' started to feel like a lie rather than a core part of my personality. A 'reading imposter' seems more fitting. But instead of successfully convincing others about my passion for reading, all I do is deceive myself.

"It doesn't matter, you wouldn't read it anyway."

My sister had given up trying to give me book recommendations. She could see right through my replies of "Oh yes, I'll give it a try" or "When I get the chance, I'll check it out", and saw them for what they really were. Empty promises.

I wanted to prove her wrong so badly. At the same time, I was terrified that I really had lost my ability to enjoy a good book. The guilt I felt looking at my sister's full bookcase, the middle shelf struggling to accommodate her myriad of paperbacks, only felt like a confirmation of my fear.

But I've realised that you can't always trust your worried thoughts. Sometimes they tell lies that have circulated the forefront of your mind for so long that they feel like a reflection of reality.

As easy as it is to believe these anxious thoughts, the illusions they perpetuate are paper-thin and not as opaque as you once thought.

Sometimes, I still feel like a reading imposter. But 'sometimes' is better than 'all the time'.