

## My Sister Lorii

*It's just a branch*— the voice in my head keeps repeating the same sentence over and over again, trying to calm me down. *And it's not very successful in doing so.* Although it's almost winter, the view from my window is as mesmerizing as it has always been. An oak tree, beautiful even now without leaves, reminds me of a perfect place for hiding while playing hide and seek, our favorite childhood game. I used to be brilliant in it and she would always lose, which drove her crazy. *Her.* My sister. We were so close, not only because we were relatives but because we were best friends. She is in the background of every episode of my life and all of her secrets are buried deep in my heart, just as mine are in hers. It's been two years since she died. But the footsteps I hear at night and whisperings that make me shiver are evidence that she never really left me.

"Lorii, are you with me?" I ask with a shaking voice as I'm walking around the room, not sure if I want a response. I can't remember when was the last time I really slept. When was the last time I didn't flinch at every touch or shed a tear at every noise I heard? *I'm so tired.*

"Please, give me a sign if you're here."

*Nothing.*

The hope that this night everything will be fine enters my mind. It's almost morning, she would've already come if she wanted to, right? Maybe I can finally breathe, at least for a little bit. I head towards my bed in order to finally sleep, but something catches my gaze. A pale white figure, standing inside my mirror. Her piercing eyes are staring at me as the reddish liquid pours from them down her cheeks. Her clothes are stained with blood just like her wrists. I've never seen her like that, which terrifies me because I know something is different this time. She visited me many times, gifted me a lot of sleepless nights and created a version of myself who is scared of shadows. But she had never *seemed so real.*

"What do you want from me?" I ask as I'm shakingly standing in front of the mirror, not sure if this is really happening.

She doesn't answer me, but instead starts writing on the mirror with her own blood.

-L-

As I'm trying to figure out what she is going to spell, I notice something else that should be worrying me. The blood from her wrists seeps onto the floor and starts filling the room.

-A-

Please, hurry—the words slip from my lips as the blood reaches my knees.

-K-

And now it's up to my collarbones.

-E-

And now, the blood disappears. And so does she.

I know exactly where she wants me to go. It was our special place. A place where time would lose its purpose and the worries we had would drown in endless joy and laughter. *They would drown thanks*

to her. It had always looked as if it was blooming, no matter the season. Everything felt alive and so did we. I made a promise to myself to never come back to the lake after her death because it reminds me of her so much, but I guess I'll have to break it.

The house screams quietness as I'm carefully descending on the stairs, trying not to wake up my parents. I talked with them about Lorii and they said I'm still grieving for a loved one, so it's okay if I sometimes imagine her. "Your mind is playing tricks on you because ghosts are not real," they told me.

I put on a jacket and slowly unlock the door. Different shades of orange and red that paint the sky want to let me know it's already morning. *And it's so freezing.* Maybe if I do what she wants, she will finally let me live like a normal being. *I'm so, so tired. Is any of this real?*

My steps are crushing the foliage underneath me as I'm walking through the forest. If I didn't know the path I was taking by heart, I would've gotten lost in the fog that suddenly decided to accompany me. Except the fog's not the only one doing that. I can feel her presence.

Wind blows through the forest, its sound merging with the rustling of leaves. And with every step closer to my destination, the song becomes louder.

"Hold on, I'm almost there," I whisper.

The lake lies in the same place as before. A hollow filled with deep blue water surrounded by bushes and trees of all kinds. But something is not right. It looks dead. Withered.

"Where are you?" I ask, my gaze nervously drifting around the lake.

And then I see her. A dead sister. Best friend. Standing in the middle of the lake.

"Do you want to come closer?"

Instead of answering, she holds out her arms as if she wants a hug, and waits for me to approach. My thoughts seem like they want to suffocate me in fear and confusion. But maybe after this I will be free, so I start walking towards the water still questioning my decision and... my sister starts smiling. And now as I see her, the happiest memories of us when we were younger come to my mind. Her smile was a special gift offered in those moments and now—she is giving it to me again. The view of her smiling so brightly suddenly overcomes negative thoughts in me, so I start walking faster. I shiver when I touch water.

"I miss you, Lorii."

Silence responds instead of her, mixing with the cold autumn breeze. With every step deeper into the water, her grin seems to grow more. And my trembling—it's gone. I'm not cold anymore.

"I miss you, too."

*She said something.* Why hadn't she spoken before if she was able to do it? Why use the words now?

My heartbeats are chasing one another.

"I am so sorry for what happened to you. But to have you as a sister was—"

"You still have me," she says, her words showing signs of disappointment and anger.

*I shouldn't have said that.*

“Come to me,” she continues, “I want to feel your touch.”

And in the next moment, I find myself in an embrace that looks so recognizable. All my fears which are hidden in the darkest parts of myself, the ones even my soul cannot find, leave through the narrowest cracks. Hope is growing in me like a tree, trying to reach the sunlight. But it is not sunny today and the leaves won't be dazzled with the shades of yellow. Dead people can get very lonely, so they seek company, someone with whom they can share destiny in their world. In a world made of lost pieces of broken souls you couldn't find and glue together in life, of course you will follow them into death, that feeling of helplessness, betrayal even, never left you.

Water slowly met every part of me, not being cold but warm and welcoming. My vision started to blur. The last thing I saw were leaves falling off trees and finding their place on the surface of the lake. Oak leaves, perhaps. Although the hug was the end for me, for my sister, it was a new beginning in endless suffering. Because from now on, she won't be doing it alone.