

Twisted Sisters

Act I

In the quiet rural town of Aurora, New York, the air was thick, almost as if the city held its breath. On a cloudy Saturday, twin sisters Tessa and Lo found themselves standing in front of their childhood vacation home, where they had summers full of warmth and laughter, but this time it was different. The once cozy and comforting cabin of their childhoods, filled with laughter and delight, was now a haunting and sinister sight, a ghastly reminder of the situation the sisters were faced with. One month prior, Tessa and Lo's parents had vanished. They had left behind nothing indicating their whereabouts, how long they'd be gone, or whether they were even still alive. After weeks of frantic searching and anxiety, the sisters decided to return to the family's cabin in hopes that it would give them answers. Did the girls' parents truly abandon their children? What kind of parents could do that? Or was there something deeper going on? Had the couple been taken? But by whom? And why? What if they were in danger? More importantly, how were the twins supposed to get them back?

With these questions swirling at the forefront of their minds, the two young girls inserted the jagged edge of the housekey into the lock and pushed down on the knob, stepping over the worn out welcome mat placed on the second step of the front porch and into the drafty air of the cabin, taking in the living room that the door opened to. The cushioned rocker by the fireplace that their mom would sit in whilst the family eagerly gathered around the Christmas tree each year, the wooden coffee table in the center of the room at which they played cards every night, surrounded on two sides by the couch that was home to so many memories: the twins' dad reading to them before bed, the smell of their mom's morning cup of coffee as she sat knitting, family movie nights, and so much more. Tessa looked away, eyes welling with tears, while her sister continued to stand in the doorway, masking any emotion with a look of complete detachment. Despite being familiar with their environment, the twins were nowhere near ready for the events of the next two days, ones that would lead them in search of the impossible and alter their lives forever.

Act II

"Pull it together. let's just get this over with." Lo brushed past the sniffing Tessa towards the rest of the house, turning first into the kitchen, finding nothing but stacks of paper plates and cups left behind from previous trips sitting next to a box of the twins' clothes on the marble countertop. Lo stopped for a second, picking a pink t-shirt out of the box and unfolding it. A glittery purple heart was on the front, and what looked like a Nutella stain near the bottom. This had been her favourite shirt as a little girl; she wore it everywhere, and it was in nearly every picture taken of her and her sister at the cabin. As she put it back in the box, Lo spotted something that made her hard exterior falter for the first time since she and her sister had

gotten in the car to make the trip early that morning. A small wooden picture frame peaking out from beneath the piles of shorts and skirts. Lo reached in carefully, already knowing what it was from the haphazardly glued-on seashells and plastic heart gems lining the edges of the frame. It was a candid photo taken by her dad out on the lawn in front of the cabin on the day they had closed the deal on the place many years ago. The shot captured her mother with Lo in her arms, rubbing noses and giggling at each other, and Tessa sticking her tongue out at the camera. Though the moment would've been endearing to remember, Lo's couldn't pull her eyes away from the bottom right corner of the frame, where a little boy was crouching next to the bushes lining the fence outside the house, eyes fixed on a toy firetruck, his curly blond hair covering half his face, and-- "Hey, come help me with this!"

Rounding the corner, Lo found Tessa crouching next to the fireplace, tugging on the handle leading to the basement. The twins had always been scared to go down there, having watched one too many horror movies at a particularly young age. "Why would you- what is that?" As she got closer, Lo noticed what had her sister transfixed on the opening in the ground: an eerie light peeked through the crack between the door and the slats of the hardwood flooring. "I don't know; just help me get it open." The two girls grabbed the metal handle, and though it took them both bracing their feet against the ground and tugging as hard as they could, the wooden panel finally swung upwards, nearly hitting them in the face and revealing the aged wooden stairs leading down into the darkness. "I don't wanna do this." Tessa stepped back, her face worried just as it had been when Lo had suggested going to the cabin earlier that week. "It'll be fine. Follow me; I'll go first." Taking the first step down, Lo tried to push away the same anxiety that was nagging at her sister; she had a bad feeling about this, but the light had to mean something, and although seeming further away now, illuminating something in the back corner of the basement, they couldn't just leave without finding out what it was. Once about halfway down and making sure that Tessa was following her, Lo reached out and tugged on the string hanging from above their heads, a warm light switching on and casting shadows around them. A sigh of relief at not being in the dark caught in her throat, however, when she saw what was waiting for them on the other side of the dimly lit room. The light wasn't coming from an old flashlight or window that had been left uncovered, it was coming from a halo-like circle floating next to the shelves holding her dad's old paint buckets and tools. "Lo... what is that?" "How would I know, Tessa?" It wasn't Tessa's fault, but Lo was just as scared as her sister. Did this have something to do with their parents' disappearance? What should she do? Simply leave it here? No... It's almost as if the light was calling to them, coming closer as they approached it. Not thinking twice, Lo reached out, her fingertips just barely touching the ethereal glow. "Lo, don't--" But she didn't hear her sister as she tumbled forward, pulled almost as if by a gravitational force into the light. Dark patterns swirled around her, dizzying and nauseating her until suddenly, she felt her face hit the ground. Despite the pain taking over her whole body, Lo lifted her head, looking around. She was still at the cabin, but now outside, and the weather had completely shifted to a sweltering summer heat. She was about to get up and go

inside to warn Tessa when she saw something out of the corner of her eye that made her halt completely. A toy firetruck. Left abandoned next to the fence, right where... right where *he* had left it. *Oh no.* “Oof!” A body landed a couple of feet from Lo, brunette hair splayed all over the freshly planted grass. Tessa. She had followed her in. Lo felt anger bubble up inside of her, nerves on high alert and skin practically on fire. This was *her* memory. Only she knew what had happened to that little boy, and she was not about to let Tessa find out. Meanwhile, her sister realised where they were; she remembered that day too, but had a completely different recollection. She sat up, basically in hysterics on the grass, mourning their once-so-happy parents. “God, Tessa, will you just stop? You’re so spoiled it physically hurts.” Lo’s sister looked up at her, teary-eyed still, and snapped back, “Well, maybe if you had an ounce of sympathy or emotion left inside of you, you might understand! Do you even care that Mom and Dad are gone?” That was it. “Of course, I care! But there are other things here you don’t understand!” “Like what? Tell me, what do you have to lose?” Lo’s face finally dropped in defeat. She might as well know, she already thought that Lo was despicable. They had gotten along so well growing up, before the day that they seemed to have been transported to, of course. Now, Lo looked up at the girl who, although riddled with constant anxiety, was still just as innocent as she had been in that picture frame, and simply spoke, “I killed him.” Tessa’s face morphed from one of anger and sadness to confusion. “What? Killed who?” “Our brother.” Lo watched as it dawned on her. Tessa had scraped her knee on the sidewalk, right after the photo in the kitchen was taken, and her parents had gone inside to clean her up while Lo was supposed to be watching their little brother as he played. Except Lo wasn’t watching him. She had been too preoccupied with jealousy over her parents’ clear favouritism of her twin sister and stared through the bay window of the living room as they tended to her cut and wiped her tears away. Too preoccupied to notice that her brother had run into the street, chasing his toy truck, right as some teenagers sped around the corner, revving the engine. Lo had just turned around at the noise when she saw her baby brother fly up onto the windshield of the car, hitting the ground what seemed like hours later with a large *smack*. That sound had played on a loop inside Lo’s head for years after the incident, and she never forgot the look on her parents’ faces as they ran outside to find their baby boy unconscious on the pavement outside their house. “You didn’t kill him, Lo, that car did. Those teens did, I don’t understand.” Lo is pulled back into reality by the sound of her sister’s voice, “But I was supposed to be *watching* Tessa, and I was too busy envying you with mom and dad.” Tessa’s face softens, “That’s not your fault, it was an accident. Have you been blaming yourself this entire time?” Lo looks down with no answer. “Lo, you couldn’t have gotten there in time even if you were paying attention, and we were so young then, you couldn’t have known. You can’t keep carrying this around.” “I ruined their lives, Tessa. I ruined all of our lives.” “No, Lo, you didn’t. I miss him every day, yes, but freak accidents happen, no one blamed you for it.” Lo looked up at her sister again in disbelief. “You should think I’m a monster, I’ve been nothing but cold to you since that day.” Tessa moved closer, hair still a mess, and her pants stained by the lawn. “I know you’re not a monster, Lo, you’re my sister.” Lo finally cracked a smile, feeling a weight she didn’t even know was there lift off her

shoulders. All this time, she had been ridden with too much guilt to let herself get close to her sister again, afraid that she would harm her in some way as well.