

In Hell's Defence

"What is the nature of your emergency?"

A dark figure stands in the shadows of the small room, always watching, always waiting. "No no no no" Mia mumbles to herself "I thought it was over" she whispers into the darkness, the only light squeezing through the gaps in the closet door. She tries to stifle her breath, knowing it won't last, that he will find her, he always did. Her brother had always been sweet and kind, but lately he seemed to get into these terrible moods, he would get so angry he'd see red. It terrified her to see him in such a fit of rage, someone who she had always admired and would always love, no matter what. She knew he would never really hurt her, at the very least she hoped, but sometimes he'd vanish, replaced only by rage, by pure, red-hot rage. It hardly took much, if she said the wrong thing at the wrong time... She wasn't just walking on the ice, she was being plunged into the freezing depths over and over, again and again. Stuck standing in the middle of a frozen lake, never able to reach solid ground.

"Ok, I have dispatched officers and paramedics, stay on the phone and don't leave."

It only took a moment for him to find her, the tell-tale thumping of his fists against the locked bedroom door signalled the ice beginning to crack. Through sheer terror she had hidden in the closet just in case by some twist of fate he got inside the room, but she never truly imagined he'd really break through the door. Peering through the small gap once more, she watches as he stalks toward her, all she can do is hope; hope he stops, hope he turns and leaves, hope he gives up, all she could do was hope, hope and hold her breath. She knew that it was futile, but she always felt hope, a hope which left much easier than it came, escaping in the rush of air as the door swung open. The icy depths surrounding her as she is plunged, yet again into the deep, dark, freezing lake, he grasps her by the hair, dragging her down.

"Thanks Sam, I am here tonight at the site of a horrific tragedy"

This was always the worst part, believing, without reason to, that she was just prolonging the inevitable. Yet she still couldn't do it, *not this time*, she wouldn't, naively believing that she could stop it from happening. Thrown to the ground, the carpet rough on her skin, she couldn't bare the sight of her brother, who she loved, looking at her with such pain, pain concealed by that furious glare. It felt like an eternity, she wished for respite, to float for just one moment, to breathe. Her reverie is broken by the thought every time, that thought, that if she could just make it to the kitchen... "Go on, go! Run! You know you want to, you know you did." spoke a deep, hungry voice from the shadows, a voice she felt she knew, somehow all too well. "Well, if you refuse to do it, I guess we will have to start over." the voice growls.

"just a few hours ago the siblings fought, one fatally stabbing the other"

"What is the nature of your emergency?"

A dark figure stands in the shadows of the small room, always watching, always waiting, ensuring everything proceeds just as it should, just as it did, feeding off an eternity of pain and suffering. In the dark closet, Mia stifles her breathing, it won't last, she knows, he will find her, he always does. It hardly took much, if she didn't do the right thing at the right time... the lake had frozen over, she felt somehow that it had swallowed her *eons* ago, continuing to smother her, torture her for an eternity, no release of death in sight. "You can't die if you're already dead." that horrid voice reverberated through her skull, responding as though it could hear her thoughts, taunting her with an answer cryptic enough that she could continue to avoid the looming question.

"Ok, I have dispatched officers and paramedics, stay on the phone and don't leave "

There it was, the tell-tale thumping, which could only mean one thing. No longer bothering to watch through the gap, she heard his steps as he closed in on her. He would never stop, it would never stop, he always broke through, she had given up on hope, millennia ago. She still liked to imagine it flying away, escaping in a way she never could, but she knew, as she felt that rush of air over and over, it was hopeless. She grew tired of these games, but after so long she was too weak to resist. He grasped her by the hair, dragging her down. Into the cold depths once again.

"Thank you Sam, I am here tonight at the site of a horrific tragedy"

Thrown to the ground, the carpet rough on her skin, looking up at her brother, who she loved, pain concealed by that furious glare. She struggled to breathe, trapped underwater as he stood looming over her, it was pointless to resist. She ran, out the door, toward the kitchen, just as she had done. He seized her by the back of her shirt, pulling her into a chokehold, completely unaware. She felt it, she always did, another form of punishment she presumed, felt it as though it were happening to her and not by her own hand, her own bloody hand. She felt it as she drove the knife through his thigh, felt the blinding pain, the warm blood trickling down as his agonising scream echoed through her head. The noise was unbearable, unavoidable, but worse was the look in his eyes. She felt it as she pulled the knife from the wound, blood pooling around him. Mia sat, frozen in shock at the sight, unable to look away. All she could do was look, in his eyes she saw the betrayal, felt it. Then nothing, as the brother she loved returned, before slipping away, only to be replaced with that cold, lifeless stare. All she could see was the monster, reflecting back at her. That cold, lifeless gaze as the lake's surface froze over, trapping her for an eternity as his body sunk into its depths, resting at the bottom, always watching, always waiting. She sat there, unable to move, feeling the warm liquid pooling on the cold tiles beneath her, the hum of the dishwasher the only sign of time moving on. She sat there, unable to move, only able to stare, she sat there for an eternity.

"Just a few hours ago the siblings fought, one fatally stabbing the other"

"I got pizza for dinner!" a woman called as she walked through the door, her smile fading as she rounded the corner into the kitchen. Her screams and pleas ringing through Mia's ears, crushing her as she sat, unable to move, unable to talk, only able to stare as she sat in the now thick and

cold puddle which surrounded her. After an agonising amount of time, the call finally went through.

“What is the nature of your emergency?”

“My son... he's been stabbed, I think h-he's dead” the featureless woman spoke with such sorrow, such terror, displayed only by her voice, but it was enough. Mia didn't remember why this woman meant so much to her, only remembering that she had once, so long ago.

There Mia was again, stood huddled in that dark closet. Again, the thumping, the rush of air, that shadow, always watching, always waiting, feeding on her pain. She knew, all along she knew, holding it at bay through sheer will and defiance, because as bad as this was, the truth was far worse. She had always known, but had been unable to admit it, till now. “You can't die if you're already dead” she heard herself mutter, the realisation dawning. Succumbing, she was unable to hold back the tears, she sobbed, tears which burned as they ran down her cheeks. She sobbed and sobbed the true depth of it sinking in, “It's never going to end, is it? It's like I'm in hell.” she whimpered, more to herself than anything.

“There's no 'like' about it, Mia” the voice snickered from the shadows. The truth was that she had been here, in this hell, for so long that she couldn't even remember why her brother was sent into this rage. In fact, she couldn't recall anything from her life, except for these few moments, the worst memory. Repeating over and over, again and again, torturing her for the worst of her actions. She no longer knew who her brother was, his name, what he was like outside of these moments and her mother had simply become a blur in her memory, unable to recall a single feature. She no longer knew why she stabbed her brother, why she sat there, unable to move. Left alone with her sins for eternity.

She no longer knew herself.