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**“Lily”**

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I can smell. I can see. I can listen. I can speak. I can feel. I know I can. Can I? ‘Cause whenever I try to, it hurts, it’s painful.

My father used to say I never tried to sense, I never tried to be human. He told me, I let the disease take over me. A disease which made me deficit of emotions. A deficiency which can not be healed by medicine, but patience and love, which my mother reflects on me everyday. But my heart is immune to such affection, such belongingness. A wall I never built, but the wall which kept me away from happiness, sadness and every thing which an organism needs to be called human.

Until came little claws.

Tiny, little claws.

Lily.

She was so small like a newborn rabbit. Her feet, her fingers, they felt so surreal. They felt. They made me feel. Even though it wasn’t happiness, neither sadness, but it felt. They made me feel curious and excited. Emotions which were new to my system. She made me new to myself. I would call her small fingers ‘claws’. Even though she had the smallest nails I could have ever seen. I would compare her to rabbits. I had rabbits. I knew they were soft, I knew how small they looked when they were born. Rabbits were the only thing which made me closer to me. I would see them the whole day. I wouldn’t play with them. I just touched them once or twice. It was so intriguing to see them eat and run. Most of all, their smell, their presence wouldn’t bother me.

Until I realized I never liked them, I couldn’t, neither did it make me come closer to myself. They were just another thing, which made my days go by without any pain. I could feel pain. I think so. Whenever someone would break their boundaries with me, trying to jump past the wall I could sense pain. Not only me, but I think they used to feel hurt too, that’s what my father said. And I

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thought, they used to feel more wounded just because they could feel. And then the rabbits were gone, and so was my father, irritated by my disorder. Yes, he used to say I was not orderly, but I never chose to be like that. I just was suffering from ‘autism’. I never quite get that word.

Autism. Autism. Autism....

To make myself realize it was a disorder and not my fault, I would say it again and again. And yes I never felt bad for not having a father anymore. Neither for the rabbits. I was in the habit of comparing one form of life with another form of life, or things, and that is what I did with Lily. I kept her name. Or at least it was influenced by my normal habit of muttering the same words whose picture I would see. I saw lilies on the internet, beautiful, white, sun-kissed lilies. They weren’t special or anything, they were just stored in my brain, like rabbits were, when my mom thought what I spoke continuously was the remedy for my dangerous disease. Dangerous for other people, people close to me. When they give me their love, but never get a response, or when they try to hurt me, but still never get a response. They feel defeated, which I don’t know is a feeling, or probably don’t understand.

But Lily was special. When she came into our lives, my father got mad at me more often, because the way I looked at her made him think I possessed her and somehow he felt, she will grow like me. Emotionless and inhumanly. He never understood what I was going through, neither did I, but one thing I was sure of was that whatever I was going through is not my mistake. That maybe the marital problems going on in my parents lives is the reason I came out to be like this. That maybe he was the reason I became diseased, his behavior towards my mom affected my internal self. But I would never let Lily grow like me. Even though I can’t love her by myself, I can ask other people to make her feel loved. When my dad got irritated with me and my mom, he left, he was attached with Lily, but he decided to go until it became unbearable for him to see our faces everyday. I didn’t mind him going for me, but I wanted a father for Lily, I wanted her father to love her.

My mom was busy working, she had to earn for us. It was hard for us to even hire a nanny. She worked day and night, when my Aunt Olivia was kind enough to pay for Lily’s nanny, Sister Peggy. My aunt, my mother’s sister, was very rich. She married into a very well off family, who were also humble and loving. I had just met her husband once, he was so unlike the man who gave birth to

me and Lily. He was sophisticated and modest towards his achievements, and had a different way of dealing with children. We met them at a very posh restaurant, when I wore my favorite dress for the first time, silky, pink, gorgeous dress. He gave me a flower when I shook hands with him, and spoke to me so weirdly. Maybe it was normal for elders to speak to little children like that, I was eight then, but my father never talked to me like that, he never talked to me. He spoke about me, when he wanted to blame me for things I never did, or blame me for his unwanted marriage with my mother.

One good thing about being autistic was that I never thought it was bad, but if it's a disorder, isn't it supposed to be bad? I never felt hurt when people used to abuse me, say bad things about me, so I never got a chance to blame me for all the circumstances that happened in my life, or my parents. Aunt Olivia was always helping us in financial situations. His husband never stopped her from giving his money to us. My aunt also used to work. She was a painter. Her paintings were mesmerizing. I never knew what she drew, her purpose for drawing, or as people say 'the hidden emotions behind the beautiful colors'. I never knew that. But just the colors, the way they were complimenting each other, getting mixed into each other, it made me look at it more than once, look at it for hours.

My mom would send me to my Aunt's house very often, letting me see her paintings for the whole day, letting me see her paint, but once I thought I had found all the possible colors in the painting, I would stop looking at that painting. When Lily was born, I started painting myself, I used to paint the most bizarre thing, as my mom would call it. I would paint the whole sheet brown, or black, or red, or any color, and try to draw Lily's 'claws', or nose, or eyes on it. They would never be similar to Lily's features, but whenever, I used to show her the painting, hold it in front of her, she used to laugh, I don't know if she was making fun of my painting, or if it was a joyful laugh, but I thought that my hours of staring at her claws, or nose or eyes didn't get waste, it was utilized in a very productive work, that was to make Lily laugh.

When Sister Peggy came, she was very worried about me. My mom would keep telling her that I am not upset, she would keep explaining to her that I can't be upset, but Sister Peggy still thought that she could make me laugh, or make me feel happiness. She never understood that I am suffering from a disorder which can not be cured. My mother took a lot of time to accept this fact, she still

tries to heal me, but she has given up hope, I guess she has stopped feeling defeated. Lily was a very jolly baby, she would laugh at almost everything that appears in front of her, even if it's someone killing themselves or killing others in a movie, or even if it's the gross smelly dog poop, she would always laugh, she seemed to be unaffected by pain and sadness. She cried when you wouldn't give food to her, or her diaper would get wet, she cried how a normal child does, but she was never unhappy about her surroundings. She was one of those people who always keep smiling, even if they are about to die. I thought such people only exist in television series, but here I found Lily.

Sister Peggy would say, 'Lovely Lily' is always bright because of me, she says she doesn't feel scared in her surroundings because she know that I'll always be there with her, and protect her, and that is when I realized I should keep a distance from her, what if she grows up and become fond of me, she'll tell me everything, depend on me and I won't be able to respond back, because every situation in life seems to work because of emotions, and I am not just lacking in it, I am empty of it. I stopped drawing her beautiful feet, I stopped sitting beside her doing nothing and I stopped even going near her. Every day, once, I would just go and see her, if she was doing fine, if her habit of seeing me, hasn't affected her when I made her distant from me. Her smile satisfied me. Even though my habit of seeing her was a difficult task to break, at that moment I only wanted her to be happy forever.

One day Sister Peggy came to me. It was unexpected because since I wasn't there with Lily, why did she bother herself to come and talk to me. Does she think I am feeling lonely? I hope that she still doesn't have in mind that she can cure me, because by now she should know that I can't feel lonely. She was smiling which indicates she wasn't concerned about me, which made me sigh in relief. But the other reason left for her to come to me was even worse. She was there to chitchat. I can't stand such gibberish noise troubling me in my time of peace. But she was there for Lily, I had to be nice to her, I can't even promise that to myself, but I decided to try my best. She asked me how I was doing and if there is anything new to my life, she said it had been quite some days that she hadn't seen me. I was normal, that is trying to understand the uncanny things happening in my surroundings all the time. I had no idea what was new in my life, if obsessing over hippopotamus from cats is new, then yes, definitely I have something new going on in my life.

And I didn't mind not seeing her for quite some days. This was the truth, but I had to be nice. So, this is how I answered. I was doing good, not fine but good. I didn't really have anything new going on in my life, I was just a little preoccupied with my school's work. The biggest lie, it had been days that I didn't talk to her, and I missed her. Missed her. Something my body never does. It is fine with my own existence, it doesn't want another body to be constantly near it. According to me, lies are never received by the ears of the listener, they are always floating in air, one right blow, and they are caught easily in the fist of victims. I do not know how it would really affect Sister Peggy, maybe it is a big deal, but I would still be in fear of getting caught. The only thought that came to me was, what if she leaves Lily saying I was unreliable for her. I was trying to guess it with her expressions, a medium under emotions, which I am unaware of, and as usual a vacant face was being processed by my brain.

The next words she spoke made me frustrated. They made me feel wrong, I was proved wrong. I wanted to sit, my head was aching, it was about to burst, I was feeling nauseous, on the verge of taking all my inhibitions out. The scariest part was, I still didn't want her to be right and my body started reacting weirdly, I could sense something, pain, physical pain, I was not sure what was happening, here worked my patience. I let my turmoil drain. I stood there sick, until I was used to such sudden change. I let her words absorb me.

She told me that I was feeling unhappy without being near to Lily. She said whenever I was close to her, even though I might have not recognized, I would be smiling, which seems unlikely in my condition, because I was used to having straight lips, neither a frown nor a smile, a pure emotionless face. She said the reason I am not going near Lily is because I am worried. Worried of her being too attached to me when I detached to my feelings. I was excited and curious when she was born, this is something I know. She wasn't just a mere habit of me to obsess over, but someone for whom I did something, that is my first. That moment I realized, I was introduced to so many feelings just because of someone small, so small that if I would have been my normal self, I wouldn't have bothered even recognizing her presence. I was supposed to be happy, because even though it was something really less, but I thought I could feel, my brain would never want me to accept this in the whole of my life because, I never thought of feeling, I was doing fine without it. Until now, when I have a little hope in being orderly. But this is painful. This pain is

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either because of my new emotional status, or the fact that I am not empty of it anymore. I was still unsure, it might be a nightmare or perhaps a beautiful dream, but the constant gurgling in my stomach, asking me to drain it's content out of the heavenly body, touched by hell was proof that everything going on was happening, happening at that time, in the present. This could be another disorder, which is making me sweat, trying to fill an ocean which smells horribly on the surface. I wasn't completely changed, I felt more ridiculous, I was bothered by smell, but not mine, but now I was. Was I being healed or was I getting even worse? I drowned. My patience lost. My head swirling, my body floating on that smelly sweat, my breath still being bothered by my existence. It was painful, and there I completely drowned, still in that sweat of mine. I was unconscious of my own self completely.

I rose, I saved myself from drowning. The smell was gone. I smelled fresh. I smelled soft. I smelled happy. Lily. She was soft. She was happy. She made me soft. She made me happy. I was smiling. My eyes were always comfortable when they were closed, not because of how everyone liked sleeping, but because only the necessary life processes were going on then, and the rest rested in tranquility. I was just alone with my smell, my unheard voice, my skin, my body. The rest was awakening but not concerned by me. Until, I got bothered by my own self, a thing I can't get over with. I smelled of black nail polish, coconut hair and orange skin. The most endearing smell. It made me perturb about my existence. Previously, all this used to happen. But now, I would open my eyes, to see Lily, who smelled of transparent nails, coconut hair and orange skin, but soft, and fresh and enchanting. She was sleeping beside me, with her usual smile and bear claws. I turned my body towards her, when I would always lie straight on my back without moving during my noble sleep. I just kept on seeing her. It wasn't an obsession my mind spoke, it was love. Love. The thing about me was, my mind would speak of sentiments for me, trying to process the unfamiliarity going on. My heart would just disagree. Until now. My heart wasn't beating, neither wasn't it fighting the emotions climbing up the wall. Maybe it went right past the wall, breaking the toughness, and giving it what it really wants. And my heart agreed. This was what I realized back then, before feeling dizzy and passing out. Draining all my energy, my legs felt weak, a sudden change does that to you. Back then, when Sister Peggy made me conceive of my feelings, I wasn't able to register everything. I wanted things to be the way they were, but now lying beside Lily, I think I might like being orderly. I can sense fear now, of being overly dramatic in some

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cases and not being normal, I don't know how I am going to take in having an emotional perspective about each and every situation. But for now, I was happy just lying beside Lily.

When Lily started crying I woke up, Sister Peggy came in with her milk, I was holding Lily in my arms at that time, trying to console her. Sister Peggy gave me a smile, which for once I understood. I felt soft inside. I took the bowl from her hand and started feeding the little thing in my arms. I was so occupied doing this activity, I never realized this was my first time making her drink her milk, and suddenly I felt achieved. That whole day I had Lily with me, I was singing to her, making those creepy drawings again, seeing her laugh, and sleep and cry, like a normal person, the only thing which was different was, I was understanding all the normality. Each day when I would go to school, sitting on the same desk, alone, I never felt lonely, I was the same as before but in a different way. I would be lively and happy. My mom was thrilled. She was so buzzed, that she started crying, I knew she was delighted. If I would have been the old me, I would have thought that she is being weird. But even though I couldn't cry like her, I understood her. Me feeling emotions for now is just understanding them, I can't clearly reciprocate those, or feel them completely by myself, but I can understand what's happening emotionally, which to be honest was better than before. I would smile when Lily would be smiling, I would be worried when she would be crying, I never thought of her frowns or smiles as eerie. They meant something.

My life was so changed from when Lily came and when she was gone.

She was gone, she was happy and lively, but apparently she was weak, one and a half years from now, when I started understanding her cries, and beams, I felt Lily. I felt her. And now, when I still try to rewind her cries and beams, I can feel myself. She made me feel myself, but all I can find inside me is pain. When she wasn't there I was a statue, a living statue, who gets irritated when watched for too long, when she came she melted me, and the crystal inside it, and turned in into a heart, with was filled with her, my love for her, when she is gone it's filled with me, my pain. She came to let me feel, and went to make me feel myself. I never asked for that, I was fine doing alone, I was being that statue, having that wall. My mom would pray everyday for me to be okay, but I was okay. If Lily was just a purpose for me to be human, then I guess I have become one. Humans with pain. A normal human. Every human is pain. That's what I infer from the sad quotes my friends, I made friends, Lily made me have friends, friends with sad quotes, mom with

a broken heart, people with worries, news with repercussions, Lily without a life. If Lily was sent to make me human I am one, but a human who can only feel pain.

My friends with smiles at parties, my mom happy having me, people with hope, news with celebrations, Lily in heaven. Me. An emotionless person, who can only feel pain. I tried to find happiness in those creepy paintings and finite days of memories, but I could never smile, I only thought of how it could never last long and how it is gone. Lily, little Lily, little claws Lily is gone. Addiction, it began again, not with things or creatures but pain, sadness of not being able to see whom you love. If people are sent for you, are they not supposed to be forever? Lily was gone, so was I. Drained of all my emotions once again except pain, my nerves were still, not yet broken, but I couldn't find the reason to let movements, thoughts or life travel through it. She might find innocence after death. She might find peace, solace, tranquility. She might remember me. She might meet me someday. But for now, I can't help to live with lilies in my heart, they were burnt into white ashes, flown with her in the sky. If she came, she should have stayed.

I can smell. I can see. I can listen. I can speak. I can feel. I am sure I can. But only transparent nails, coconut hair and orange skin, whose softness is long gone, woven little claws in memories and weird drawings which have just turned into affliction, melodious cries and funny laughter, which are losing its energy from the molecules, my lullabies, my songs which can't find it's direction to the receiver and worries and hurt and love, which is all agony now.

Lily is gone and so am I.

In the end it's all pain.

It's all unfair.