

“She” written by Cynthia Liu, Age 15

I killed someone three years ago. It wasn't an accident.

She was barely twelve years old when she died. She had long black hair and dark brown eyes. She happened to have the same name as me. She also happens to look very similar to me, so similar many people still mistake us for each other, even though she's long gone.

I didn't hate her. Or, maybe I did. For a while, at least. I hated what she believed. I hated the way she acted. I hated the way she judged everyone for everything. I hated the way her words made others feel. Most of all, though, I hated how she had stolen my life and taken it away from me, living as though I wasn't there all along, scratching away at the darkest corners of her mind, left all alone by myself with no one to help me.

I know she didn't mean to. I know she didn't know any better, the way she was raised. I know she tried her hardest, and that she did what she had to do to survive. But of course, I could never forgive her for what she had done to me. And so one day, when I could no longer take it, when I could no longer bear to live like this, I got my revenge. I ended her.

Part of me wants to believe that right before she died, she finally recognized the error of her ways. She tried her hardest to undo all the damage she had done. But it was far too late. None of it was enough to save her.

I don't think she was meant to be saved.

Maybe she knew that, as she was dying. She knew she would have to die if I were to live on. She must have known there was no place for her, that she was the imposter, the one robbing me of my life. The thought of this saddens me a little. Sometimes, I wonder if things could've been different for her, that perhaps she could've lived a better and more fulfilling life in another universe. Maybe. I guess we'll never know.

She's dead now. She has been for three years. And now, it's finally my turn to live my life, the way I've been wanting to for twelve whole years.

And yet...

She's not dead. She lives on in old portraits and family photos, still hanging on the walls and sitting on coffee tables. She smiles, but it doesn't quite reach her eyes. She lives on in peoples' memories of her, reawakened every time someone tries to talk to her but accidentally talks to me instead. Many of them only ever knew her. And then I have to try my hardest to explain to them that the girl they're trying to find is dead, gone, not coming back. And then, maybe from shock or disbelief, they'll tell me I'm lying. That there's no way she's possibly gone. It's like they always say- denial is the first stage of grief.

Worst of all, though, she lives on in me. I've realized that even though she's dead, she's also alive, because I still have to keep her alive for the sake of other people. Because even though I'm not her, I have to pretend I am. After all, who would want to be friends with a murderer?

Her ghost still haunts me. Sometimes, out of the corner of my eye, I can still see her helping set the table for dinner, spreading newspapers over the surface and carrying bowls of rice. I can still see her sitting down with my sister, going over math problems, sometimes with both of them being confused about how to solve them. And occasionally, I still see her talking to my mom, smiling and laughing. That was probably the only thing she was good at- pleasing my parents, a skill I will never be able to pick up, no matter how hard I try.

Three years ago, I killed her. Three years ago, I thought I would finally get the life I deserved. But she didn't die like I wanted her to. Because if everyone still believes she's alive, is she really dead? Did she ever die?
How foolish I was. Now, I'm only here to finish what she started.