

Chapter 1: A glitch (old version)

You don't expect your sister to disappear from mirrors. Not on a *Tuesday*, not ever. But the first time it happened, the world tilted, and nothing ever quite settled right again.

At first, I didn't notice the changes in her, or in our family. She still left the bathroom light on, still sat too close to the TV, still shouted from the other room to ask where her hoodie went, when it wasn't hers but mine. Always mine, of course. She had a sixth sense for picking the one thing I wanted to wear.

Everything seemed as it should be, yet a faint tremor ran beneath the surface, a discordant hum I couldn't quite place. Like a single note missing from a melody, quiet enough to ignore, until you listened too closely. Then you couldn't unhear it.

It started small. The casual, breathless knocks at my door, followed by a torrent of whatever fleeting thought had seized her, just... stopped coming. She no longer visited me just to spend time together, to burrow under the sheets and watch movies, to gossip and just be in each other's company.

It was the quiet way our parents laid only three plates on the table, their movements unhurried, as if four had never been the norm. The space where hers should have been remained a silent, glaring absence. The plates gave a quiet click against the table, too casual and neat; like a muscle memory rewritten overnight. Yet when I pointed it out, they would stop with a glazed look in their eyes, adding a fourth and act as if the whole thing hadn't happened.

Even last week at the park, our parents gave an absent, still smile at a stranger, their voices too bright as they explained, "- no not really Yui is our only child..." I half turned to Hina waiting for her to snap at them, but she only stood right beside me, peeling the label from her water bottle with meticulous care. Her gaze stayed fixed on something far beyond their words, her brown eyes hazy, lost in some silent world of their own. She gave no sign she'd heard the bizarre statement from them. I turned back to demand they stop. Jokes like this weren't funny. But when I met my mother's eyes, glazed and slack, the words caught in my throat, My tongue burned with a protest I couldn't seem to make.

One afternoon, when our parents were still at work, I found her with her back to me, her voice a soft murmur against the bare white wall. The warm light slanted across it, casting long, thin shadows that stretched over the plaster. No one else was there; no gleam of earbuds hinted at a call. Her words were a low, tidal whisper, rising and falling against the wall. The moment my footfall reached her, she spun. Her face was blank, her small mouth shaped into a mockery of a smile, as if the last minute had been nothing more than a trick of the light.

Three days later, while I was walking down the hallway, the overhead light buzzed faintly, warm and dim. Half-thinking about the tea left cooling on my desk. Hina walked a step behind me.

chattering about the new dress I'd bought. It seemed as if she was herself again. Out of habit, I glanced at the mirror opposite Mom's plant stand. My reflection looked back, dark hair sleep-mussed, I glanced for hers, where she should have been, a step behind. Yet hers was absent. No silhouette beside mine. No blur. No shadow. Nothing.

Nothing. Just space.

It took me a while to tear my eyes away from where she should've been. I turned to look at her again, there she was, still talking. Still holding her phone, and gesturing to the image of the dress.

What? How could this be? My thoughts stuttered, refusing to process the void where her reflection should have been. A glitch. A trick of the light. A hallucination from too many sleepless nights. Yet an icy dread slid in, sharp and undeniable, pressing against the edges of my denial. Perfect, just what I needed. Another thing keeping me up at night.

I edged closer to the mirror, inch by inch. The moment I faced it head-on, Hina's reflection flickered back as if it had never been gone. Slowly, I raised my hand and gave a small wave, waiting for the glass to glitch again. It didn't. The mirror copied me perfectly, ordinary as ever.

Great. Apparently I'm hallucinating now.

I rubbed my dry eyes, pressing until stars sparked against my lids. Too many late nights, too little sleep — it was warping my vision, making me see things that weren't there. I told myself that over and over, clinging to it like a lifeline.

Chapter 1: A glitch (new version)

You don't expect your sister to disappear from mirrors. Not on a *Tuesday*, not ever. But the first time it happened, the world tilted, and nothing since has quite settled right again.

At first I didn't notice the difference, in her, or in us. She still left the bathroom light burning, still sat too close to the TV, still shouted from another room to ask where her hoodie had gone when it was, of course, mine. Always mine. She's always had a knack for finding the one thing I planned to wear, like some sixth sense honed entirely for irritation.

Everything *looked* as it should, yet beneath it ran a faint tremor, a wrong note threading through the day's ordinary hum. It was the sort of flaw you almost miss: quiet enough to ignore until you listen too closely, and then it won't stop echoing.

It began small. The breathless knocks at my door, her chatter spilling in before I could answer, gone. She stopped dropping by to crawl under the sheets and watch movies, to gossip or steal snacks, to simply exist beside me. The silence where she should have been spread through the house like damp seeping into wallpaper.

Our parents didn't mention it. They just set three plates on the table each night, their motions calm, precise, as if four had never been the norm. The click of porcelain on wood sounded too neat, too rehearsed; a muscle memory rewritten overnight. When I pointed it out, they only blinked, slow and vacant, added the fourth plate, and carried on as though the gap had never existed.

Even last week at the park, they smiled too brightly at a stranger and said, "No, not really—Yui is our only child."

I turned to Hina, waiting for her outrage, but she only stood beside me, peeling the label from her water bottle with obsessive care. Her gaze drifted far beyond their words, brown eyes hazy, as though she were watching a world that no one else could see. She didn't react at all. I tried to demand they stop, jokes like that weren't funny, but when I met my mother's eyes, glazed and slack, the words burned out on my tongue.

One afternoon, while they were at work, I found Hina in her room, back to me, murmuring to the bare white wall. The late light slanted across it, throwing thin gold bars over the plaster. No earbuds, no call. Her whisper rose and fell like the tide, too low to catch. When she heard my step, she spun. Her face was blank, her small mouth pulled into a smile that looked rehearsed, as though the last minute had been nothing more than a trick of the light.

Three days later, while I was walking down the hallway, the overhead light buzzed faintly, its glow warm and uneven. Half-thinking about the tea left cooling on my desk.

Hina walked a step behind me, chattering about the new dress I'd bought, her voice tumbling through details the way it always did. For a heartbeat she seemed like herself again, and some small part of me almost believed it.

Out of habit my eyes slid to the mirror opposite Mom's plant stand. My own reflection looked back, dark hair still sleep-mussed, shoulders squared out of habit. I glanced for hers, where she should have been, a step behind. Nothing. No silhouette beside mine. No blur. No shadow. Just space.

It took me a moment to pull my gaze from the empty glass. I turned. There she was, still talking, still holding up her phone, still gesturing at the dress on the screen. My thoughts stuttered like a skipping record, refusing to process the void where her reflection should have been. A glitch, I told myself. A trick of the light. Another hallucination born of sleepless nights. But an icy dread slid in anyway, sharp, undeniable, pressing hard against the edges of my denial.

Perfect. Just what I needed. Another thing that keeps me up at night.

I edged closer to the mirror, inch by inch, like approaching a wild animal. The moment I faced it head-on, Hina's reflection flickered back as though it had never been gone. Slowly I raised my hand and gave a small wave, waiting for the glass to glitch again. It didn't. The mirror copied me perfectly, ordinary as ever.

Great. Apparently I'm hallucinating now.

I rubbed my dry eyes until stars sparked against my lids. Too many late nights, too little sleep — my vision warping, making me see things that weren't there. I told myself that over and over, clinging to it like a lifeline. I must be tired. I forced myself to believe it, to walk away without a backward glance, even as the image of that blank space seared itself behind my eyelids.

The next day I checked again, not on purpose. My steps just slowed as Hina and I passed the hallway mirror on our way to the living room. She walked ahead of me this time, dragging her sock-clad feet, her back slightly bent where Mom's rules usually kept it straight. Hair held in a claw clip, pajamas rumpled, a sight that would normally trigger another of Mom's decorum lectures.

For the briefest blink her reflection lagged. She moved forward but in the glass stayed behind, a stutter in the rhythm of reality. A heartbeat later it caught up, smooth and whole, as if nothing had happened.

My stride faltered mid-step, breath hitching. My heart kicked once, hard, like it had missed a beat, then tried to cover for it by hammering against my ribs, a frantic drum no one else could hear.

No. This isn't possible. Did I imagine it? Surely I did. My mind screamed denial, begging my eyes to believe the lie: her reflection, perfectly in sync, perfectly normal. But I knew what I'd seen. I saw it. I know I did. The certainty clawed through me, desperate and useless against the impossibility of it.