

## Crossing Borders

Five behind, two ahead.

I am standing in front of the lines again. Nothing's surrounding me. I keep seeing the white stripes lined one after another. Meaning of these things is still unknown to me, even though I've already crossed five of them.

Five behind, two ahead.

"Damn!"

I don't even flinch when the sound of a breaking glass reaches my ears. She's just drunk again. Keeping my eyes closed I try to fall asleep, which is hard because my mother keeps on cursing. I wish sis was here.

"Saru! Get off the sofa!" she screams at me. It's no use to try and ignore her but also it's a no go when I try to oppose her. Before she can hit me with something or throw one of our not-broken glasses at me, I get up so she can occupy the only spot in this run-down flat that one can more or less sleep on. The moment I stand up to get out of her way, she falls onto the sofa with a bottle of half-drunk vodka in her hand.

"Get out of my sight, you useless idiot."

I don't reply to this. I've grown tired of her nonsense. So instead of fighting with her, I take my winter jacket and lie down on the floor behind the sofa.

"You're just like your father! Soon you'll also run away like he did! Useless cockroach! Gambler! You're no better! Leaving me all alone! If only you were not born! Everything was great before you!"

Yes, I know. You've told me dozen times, mother, or have you forgotten? Everything that concerns me is a nightmare. I know. The second time you got pregnant, my father lost a bet and you must have named me Saru, which means monkey, otherwise father's 'friends' would have taken our house away.

One behind, six ahead.

Seven years passed, my father disappeared and we lost our home. The only thing he left us was a debt plus some very angry 'friends'. I haven't seen my father since.

Two behind, five ahead.

Being evicted, you fell into depression. If it wasn't for Lily, you would've let me starve to death. We're moving from place to place because you can't hold a job being

the alcoholic you are. I was too young to work so Lily had to quit school at the age of 15 to support you and me. I can't help my sister with anything. She raised me instead of you. She gives me love you never can and never would.

Three behind, four ahead.

Lily is the only person I care about and would do anything for her, but I'm not able to. Forcing me to study, she's working nonstop so the two of us can eat. I hate school. I want to work to help my loving sister. However, if I quit school, Lily will never forgive me. All I want is to see her happy not the smile she forces when she's with me, thinking I'll believe her when she says that she's indeed happy because she has me. I want to make Lily laugh, but I'm unable to. I'm useless to her.

Four behind, three ahead.

At the age of 15, I fell in love with my older sister.

Five behind, two ahead.

"You shithead! Wake up!" a glass hit my head. I touch the place that got hit only to feel blood running down my forehead. "I'm hungry!! Get me something to eat now!!!" mother hits me again. My sight is a bit clouded but it's nothing serious. She is being kind tonight.

"Yes," I answer her before she decides to hit me again. Standing up I head towards the kitchen area. Except broken cupboard, it has one little fridge plus a cooker that looks like it fought in WW2. Opening the fridge, I see that we have one piece of butter, salami and one more bottle of vodka. Quickly taking the butter and salami I, to my surprise, find three rolls.

"Hurry up, you screw up!" mother dictates me from the couch. As fast as possible I make the rolls and bring them to her.

"What took you so long?!" is the only thanks I get from her. While she devours the last food in this one-room flat, I try to pick up the pieces of glass on the floor so when Lily gets home she won't get hurt. After I finish it, I hear snores from the couch.

Mother finally falls asleep. I sit on the floor resting my back against the wall. I wish Lily would come home soon...

"You shouldn't sleep here, Saru. You'll catch a cold."

It takes me few seconds to fully open my eyes only to see my sister.

"Welcome home, Lily," I greet her. She gives me a smile. Her beautiful long brown hair is falling down to her tired blue eyes. With my hand I put it behind her ear touching her cheeks softly.

"Here you go," she hands me a bread with salad inside.

"Thank you."

Still smiling, Lily stands up and goes to our mother. She kisses her on the forehead covering her with a blanket she takes from the closet next to the entrance door.

Doesn't matter how much time passes I still don't understand why Lily can't accept the fact that the mother she once knew is long gone and will never come back. Lily

remembers our mother when she was happy, together with our father, caring and proud of her daughter. That is why she keeps taking care of her. That is why I can never hit my mother back. Because if I did? I would hurt Lily. So I suffer my mother, will never talk back to her so that when my sister comes home she won't have to deal with any more problems.

Lily takes the bottle of vodka and puts it in the fridge. I am about to go and talk to her when somebody knocks on our door.

"I'll get it," I say.

"Thank you, Saru," smiling she goes to our mother who has just woken up. I'm positive she wakes up because she realises that her beloved bottle is gone. It would not be for the first time. Sighing to myself I open the door. Who can it be at this hour?

"Hello, there," a grin is spread across the man's face as he greets me. The moment I lay my eyes on him, a very bad feeling settles in my gut.

"Who are you?" I asked curiously. There are four of them.

"Let's say we are your father's friends," says one of them. "We're in big trouble. I have to protect Lily."

"We don't have anything that will be of any worth to you." Lily is standing protectively in front of our mother as she approaches the four men.

"I think otherwise, beautiful." My eyes go wide as I understand perfectly what this man means. My adrenaline spikes. I have to protect Lily.

"You are not touching Lily!" I say through grind teeth.

"We will see about that, punk," they laugh together. I have no chance against them but if I do nothing then Lily...

As I raise my hand to punch that bastard in the face they push me out of their way by kicking me in the gut.

"Saru!" my sight is blurred. I try to turn to Lily because I have to protect her.

"Two women here. Nice."

"Don't touch me! Saru!"

"No, please let me go! I am old! Take them instead! You can have these two! Please, don't hurt me!"

I still can't really move, but I perfectly understand what they're saying.

"Mum!"

"She does stink and I like this one more."

"Go away, you old hag."

"MUM!"

I am getting on my feet when I see my mother running away. My mother just left Lily to be raped.

Six behind, one ahead.

"Get away from me! Don't...!!!"

"LILY!" I run to them but I get knocked down. One of them is holding me up by my hair and is showing me what they are doing to Lily.

“LET HER GO!” this earns me a punch to the face, a punch that knocks my tooth out. Pain is clouding my eyes but I can still see Lily. Let her go! Please, kill me instead! Please, just let my sister go! Nothing helps. It’s four of them and two of us. They keep beating me. I can’t help Lily. I am useless. Time passes. I see one takes out a knife. NO! In one move he slits Lily’s throat.

“LILY!!!” this is when they let me go. I crawl to her. She is lying lifeless, raped and beaten on the floor.

They weren’t just lines, they were more than that. I know that now, they were my borders. This one, the last one, the seventh one, separates me and the end.

Seven behind, nothing ahead.