

# TWINNING

UPOMA AZIZ

*Day 1*

I walk with my head hung low, my eyes fixated on the gravelly sidewalk, and though I don't look, I can feel their gazes sting on my back. It is almost like the times we went through when Dad passed away, but then I had you to shrug it off; you were always better at this, and at every other damn thing. I curse you under my breath, Natalie, because you really, really got me into a mess this time.

I release a breath I didn't realise I'd been holding as I reach our room, my room now, close the door and slump on the floor. The room looked unnecessarily spacious now that your bed had been moved away. I insisted on keeping your clothes, though – more out of necessity than nostalgia.

I also insisted on keeping your stuff around, alright, maybe nostalgia got me there. I don't know what I'll do with that much junk.

My phone pings and I fish it out of my backpack. It's mum. She's asking whether I wanted to go out tonight, to clear my mind.

That's how I know she isn't holding up nearly as well as she's pretending to. Going out to calm down was your thing, not mine. But I decide I will, more for her sake than mine.

I eye the closet, completely clueless on what I'm expected to wear when I'm grieving for my sister who passed away a week ago, but considering I'm going out to let off some steam – what do I do? Black, but sparkly? I really don't have any idea about this.

I now eye your portion of the closet and find a perfect attire. I hesitate, then I put it on.

I smirk at my reflection in the mirror. "Hey Natalie." I purr, "Oh, wait, you died. You're Natasha. But you sure look like Natalie."

I start giggling like a maniac, and as hot tears sear down my cheeks, I realise, for the first time, that I'm furious at you.

*Day 7*

I wake in a pool of my own sweat. What was that all about?

I must have screamed my throat raw, because as I down a glass of water, it burns down. It's surprising that I didn't wake mum up.

"I am Natasha," I whisper to remind myself, because apparently, I'd dreamt otherwise.

In my dream, I was in a black dress. Natalie's pitch black one, sleek and professional. And I... I was Natalie. It was Natasha, I mean me, who died. I was attending her funeral. My funeral. I was Natalie and I was there at Natasha's funeral.

I think I'm going to go crazy.

"I am Natasha," I remind myself

firmly before crashing back to my bed, already more than sure that I'd spend the rest of the night tossing and turning in bed.

*Day 15*

Today was crap. Again. Miss Abby called your name in class by mistake, and what was even worse that I responded to her. The class looked at me like I was a lunatic, more than they did usually, anyway.

I had been called in the therapist's room, twice, this week. Because I wore your dress at school, Natalie. Can you believe that? Better to wear the dresses than wipe the floor with them, right? At least I thought so. Oh God, I don't need help. I really don't. When are they gonna understand that the perfect way to help me was to leave me alone?

*Day 45*

Dear Natalie, today mum screamed at me. Guess why?

Because I was, supposedly, purposefully 'pretending' to be you. Wearing your clothes, speaking like you, walking like you...

Walking like you? You know I can't do that. You walked like a model on ramp, and I hobble around. You even tried to get me to walk gracefully, like you did. You eventually had to give up on me. And suddenly they think I'm walking like you?

I overheard Miss Abby telling

someone that I'd changed my font to match yours. Now that's bullshit.

And no, the nightmares haven't stopped, thanks for asking. But I've got a better grip on myself. At least I don't wake up screaming. And no, I haven't told them. What's the point?

I'm going to go to sleep now, that is, till you turn up in my nightmare.

*Day 119*

"Natasha?" I hear someone calling, and I freeze.

I consider running, but that'd be silly, so I turn around instead.

It's the redhead from my old neighborhood. We used to play together, but I can't quite remember her name.

"Natasha, I'm so sorry. I only heard about Natalie a few days ago. I would have come earlier." She scratches her head sheepishly, "There's no point in asking how you're holding up, is there?"

I give her a small smile, "I'm sorry, but whoever told you must have messed up. I'm Natalie."

I walk away briskly after a moment of awkward, meaningless conversation. Why do so many people call me Natasha? It's annoying. I shake my head in dismay and walk on.

*Upoma Aziz is a walking-talking-ticking time bomb going off at random detonators. Poke her at your own risk at [www.fb.com/upoma.aziz](http://www.fb.com/upoma.aziz)*

