

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LISA  
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STILL SEE

YOU

EVERYWHERE

A NOVEL

START READING



## PROLOGUE

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**I** still see you everywhere.

*I roam the gray-washed corridors of our old house, peering into shadowed rooms now populated by ghosts. I pass dry-wall still bearing the impact of Daddy's fist. The dingy bathroom where he'd go fill the tub with that look in his eyes, and I knew to run, though I was never fast enough. Here's the entryway where he cracked Mama's prized koa-framed mirror. Here's the dining room where he'd bend me over the chair while snapping out his leather belt.*

*And here's the tiny bedroom where you and I slept together each night, our twin beds so close your outstretched fingertips could brush against mine. I remember your big brown eyes, peering at me solemnly in the dark. Then the sound of your hushed breath as you slowly drifted off, your hand slipping away.*

*I watched you sleep so many nights, your body a still lump under the covers, so unbelievably small. My throat would grow thick, my chest tight. And I'd murmur all sorts of nonsense, that*



*I'd keep you safe, that I'd never let him touch you, that I'd always take care of you.*

*My love for you was an ache in my bones, a buzzing in my head, a terrible, immense sense of wonder that swelled my body and electrified my limbs.*

*No one has ever understood that. They judge me. Call me cold-hearted, evil incarnate. All while they gasp over every scintillating detail of my crimes, feigning horror at the body count, then cheering at the verdict: death sentence for the Beautiful Butcher.*

*And still, I see you everywhere.*

*Now I chase your shadow around a corner. I call out your name and beg you to come back to me. I follow your racing feet into our little room, where I collapse on your bed and fist the corners of your quilt, searching for some sign, some scent, to tell me you're still here. That you haven't left me totally.*

*That I didn't fail you completely.*

*Mama's gone. I didn't cry a drop when I stood next to her grave. Didn't have any tears left in me. Do you know? Are you with her? The two of you huddled together in some heavenly kitchen, where she's braiding your hair and whispering all the secrets she'd never tell me. Have you discovered peace?*

*Because I awake each morning boiling over with pain and rage. Some days I add to Daddy's holes in the walls. Others I clutch your old pajamas and shamelessly beg for your forgiveness. I cry and wail. Then I rock back and forth, crying and wailing some more. I'm not whole. I'm not sane.*

*I live with a hole in my chest and hate in my heart, and come nightfall . . .*

*It's no wonder what I did most nights.*

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*Right after Daddy's passing, I stood in that same horrible bathroom and filled up bucket after bucket with hot water and Pine-Sol. I attacked the entire house. Room by room, mopping the floors, scouring the countertops, scrubbing the walls. Dining room chairs? Threw them into the front yard where I made my own little bonfire that scattered the chickens and made the goats bleat in protest. Daddy's favorite recliner, where he'd lounge every night popping open beers and belching out his opinions? I took an ax to it—nothing like cheap furniture to burn, burn, burn. More skittering chickens and fussing goats.*

*But cleaning wasn't enough. So I went room by room tearing down the heavy drapes and piling them in the corner. Let the light flood in. Let it burn every fucking awful memory from this fucking awful place in this fucking awful town I swore I'd never see again.*

*Later, I changed my mind on that subject. I rehung the musty curtains, added blackout blinds. I came to crave the dark and the secrets it helped me protect.*

*I threw myself into daily life. Brew coffee, eat breakfast, gather eggs. Feed pigs, milk goats, muck stalls. Plant, weed, harvest. Cook, clean, repeat. Pay this bill, pay part of that bill. Buy more pigs, add to the chickens. Work, work, work.*

*Repeat, repeat, repeat.*

*Till sundown comes and there you are, peering at me from down the hall. And no matter how many times I run after you, how many times I try to grab your hand, hold you close . . .*

*You're gone. Disappeared from this earth. And the love I feel for you, the terrible, immense sense of wonder, it shudders*

*through my body, nowhere to go. That's the true emptiness of being alone. Not no one to love me, but no one for me to love. No dark eyes regarding me solemnly in the night. No tiny fingertips brushing against mine. No sound of hushed breathing filling the space beside me.*

*And so I head out on Friday nights, driven by loneliness, fueled by hate, light and dark scissoring through me in equal measure. I sit at the bar. A man offers to buy me a drink. Handsome, ugly, kind, nasty, single, married. Doesn't matter. I touch his arm, smile as he talks, nod my encouragement. I let him think it's his idea to take me home. I pretend to be shy as I lead him to our parents' bedroom and, piece by piece, remove my clothes.*

*And for an hour, I'm no longer alone. There is the touch of fingertips, the sound of breathing in the space around me.*

*But of course, it's not what I really want, and afterward, I cry as the yawning hole once again rips open in my chest. Everyone who has gone. Everyone who never stayed. The true barrenness of my home, my heart, my soul.*

*Now I beg my lover not to leave me. I plead for him to stay. Come back, come back, come back, as he snatches up his clothes and flees for the door.*

*After that, it's easy. No man truly fears a woman.*

*Not even one who is her father's daughter.*

*Once it's done, I drag their bodies to the shed. Daddy taught me to butcher my first chicken there. This isn't much different. And the pigs certainly love the addition to their diet.*

*I learn as time passes. To venture farther afield, so as not to draw too much attention. How to identify strangers just passing through, which provides even more cover. I also learn about my pigs. How they can gnaw right through human bone, but won't*

*touch hair and teeth. They prefer the long bones already broken up. Same with the skull.*

*Soon, people come from all over to buy my pork. Best ribs and bacon around.*

*Your eyes in the dark. Fingertips brushing against my hand. The hushed sound of your breathing. I chase you down the hall. I beg you to come back. I choke on the sourness of my pathetic passion for the person I already failed. Are you with Mama now? Does she hold you close, braid your hair? Do you know peace?*

*I get up each morning, tend to chores, pay the bills. Then, come Friday night, hey there, good-looking, of course you can buy me a drink. Wanna come home with me? I don't mind driving.*

*Saturday morning, I rinse my knives and hose down the stainless steel tables and burn the clothes of men who never should have pretended to care. Another week done, another week begins.*

*I still see you everywhere.*

*When they finally come for me, I don't protest. I watch the long line of police cruisers churn up the dusty road as they snake their way to our farm. I walk out onto the front porch and silently hold out my wrists. Daddy always said I was good for nothing. Turns out, I'm a bit more dangerous than that.*

*Later, I hear that people all over the county vomited upon hearing what was in their locally sourced pork. The media published photos of rows of baby food jars, each filled with a complete set of teeth. Made identifying the victims easier, not that it mattered to me. I confessed from the very beginning. Waived all appeals. I am death. You won't get any apologies from me.*

*When all is said and done, they credit me with eighteen kills.*

*They're off by one, but that's between me and my daddy. I offer no protest when the great state of Texas sentences me to join the other six women on death row. I get to live in the Mountain View Unit with my own special number. It all sounds rather grand if you think about it.*

*Of course, I don't.*

*I loved you from the very first.*

*I will grieve for you to the very last.*

*They will come for me in a matter of weeks. Transfer me to the Walls, where strangers I've never met will protest my execution. Some because of my gender. Some because of my race. Some because of principle. Doesn't matter.*

*I know what's going to happen next. My brief stay in the death-watch cell before I journey to the execution chamber, already strapped to the gurney as a willing sacrifice.*

*I'm not afraid. I'm in that dingy bathroom, filling up the first bucket of water to clean the mess I made. I'm running through the yard, your giggle echoing behind me. I'm grabbing Daddy's hand before he slaps you. I'm seething with rage as Mama once more turns away.*

*I'm tucked in the bedroom, feeling your fingertips resting atop mine.*

*They can tie me down and fill my veins with poison. The witnesses can watch my twitching limbs and gasp in horror or cheer in celebration.*

*I will keep my eyes open. I will stare straight ahead.*

*And I will see you everywhere.*