



# Epilogue

It's late afternoon on a Wednesday. The sunlight is trickling through the trees, like a dappled, swaying curtain on the grass. The park has almost emptied.

"Hey..."

"Hm?" Ori looks up from the fish and chips in her lap.

"I just realised I never answered you properly."

"About what?"

"About whether Jill had a point."

Ducks are paddling across the pond. You realise, for a moment, that you never see the kicking of their legs. That you don't know what the bottom of the pond looks like.

Whether it even exists.

"I think she was wrong."

"Oh?"

"I don't know why she wanted to come to reality. To the outside."

"She wanted a place to mean something. She wanted a place where she could experience everything we could. Isn't that valid?"

"I know, but... I don't know, do you feel like you mean anything here? In this world?"

Ori smiles a little. "Nah. Not really." The smile breaks out into a gentle laugh.

"What're you trying to say?"

"I'm just trying to say that I don't think the Outside is the place Jill thought it was."

You're both quiet for a moment, and the ducks waddle away to the other side of the lake. Past the lake are hills, dense with towering trees from which bird calls can be heard. You wonder how it would feel to take Ori's hand and run together into the forest neither of you had ever been into before.

"I mean, we make stories for a reason, don't we. We make stories to escape from the Outside."

"...yeah, I suppose."

"And she wasn't trapped in her own world. She could go anywhere she wanted. She could have experienced things we never could."

"That's true. But maybe it's just like that old saying, yknow. The grass is greener on the other side. Maybe us making stories and Jill wanting to get out are really just the same things."

"Mm."

You should feel at ease, at home, in a familiar place next to a very familiar face. But still you feel unsure about where you are. Where you're going. Who you'll be.

Josh and Leisl had never returned, at least not as far as you knew. And maybe they weren't trapped. Maybe they just found some world where living was easier. Simpler. And if they were happy there - why come back?

"Ori..."



“Yeah?”

“I’ve been meaning to ask this for a while. You said you don’t feel like you mean much in this world. But you do.”

She looks into your eyes.

“You mean a lot to me, Ori.”

She smiles, but only so slightly, and you can’t help but feel a little upset, immediately.

“Thank you very much. I appreciate that a lot. I really do. And you mean a lot to me, too.” There’s a pause, and both of your eyes travel back to the ducks. “But I think we mean different things to each other.”

“Yeah, totally, that’s okay.” You say. You don’t want to cry.

“Hey.” She says. And gives you a little push. “It’s okay.”

“Yeah.” You smile, without taking your eyes off the ducks.

You don’t know what happens now. It feels like the story you had planned for yourself has just... ended, prematurely. Like all the chapters that you expected, that you were waiting for, that you were hoping for, had been knocked down like a tower of cards.

And for a moment, you feel so small in the world.

The final sighs of the sun turn the lake golden - even the ducks seem to glimmer, unaware of anything beyond this small section of the park.

“It’s really beautiful, isn’t it.” Ori says.

“Yeah.”

The sunset that you’ve seen so many times before, now feels like a final symbol of everything from the past coming to a close.

“Hey...”

You look into her eyes. They, too, are shining.

“...it’ll be alright.”

And you don’t know what’s changed - just a few moments ago, she’d said nearly the exact same words...

...But this time, you believe her.

You really do.