



In conversation with **JIHYUN YUN**, author of *And the River Drags Her Down*

***And the River Drags Her Down* is your debut novel. Why did you decide to write this book for young adults?**

Growing up, I had an unhealthy relationship with loss. Because of that, I wanted to write a book that can be helpful to young adults navigating grief. I wanted to write a coming-of-age through grief book that validates the full messiness and ugliness of that process while gently asserting the necessity of truly facing it rather than turning away.

Soojin Han's ancestral magic gives her the power to bring things back from the dead. Is this a power you'd like to have?

In the past I've wished privately to have the ability to resurrect, but if I were to truly be given the choice to take the power or leave it, I hope I would leave it. Mostly, I would not trust myself to have this power because I'm not confident in my ability to use it responsibly, or if it is even possible for such a power to be used responsibly or ethically.

At its heart, this is the story of two sisters and the lengths they would go to for each other. Is their relationship modeled off one in your real life?

When I was growing up, I was raised with my cousin who is three years older than me. Though I didn't write this cognizant about the parallels, I do think my relationship with my cousin is mirrored by Soojin and Mirae quite a bit. Though she was also young back then, she took care of me while our families were at work. I relied on her a lot. I'm always grateful to my cousin.

Are you a fan of horror stories? Did you turn to any specific ones for inspiration when writing this?

I love horror novels! Particularly those with a gothic flair. While writing, I reread *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia and *She Is a Haunting* by Trang Thanh Tran for their masterful atmosphere building. I also found myself turning to *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness for the way it blended all-consuming grief with horror.



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