The Art Of Loving
by DS_Saotome

Summary

Her name is Sammy, not Samey. But it doesn’t matter anymore. Her life is a daily routine of abuse and ostracism, and it has pushed her to the edge. Sammy will end it all with a single jump. But when she’s about to take her own life, she is saved by a passing stranger and the rest is history.

Notes

Since this is first person, we will be switching POV with every chapter. I freaking hate it when it’s blatantly announced who’s POV it is.
Warning: some dark themes such as suicide, self-harm and bullying will appear in this story so reader discretion is advised.
And Amy’s name “Amelia”? Completely fanmade by me. Just a silly idea of mine to give Amy a “real” name too.
I posted this on FF first and now I'm posting it here.

Also, the title of the story is "taken" from a 1956 book of the same name by Erich Fromm
You won’t believe the number of times I’ve corrected others regarding my name. What an odd thing to say, I know but it is really important to me, so don’t judge. It’s the only proof that I am not a certain someone else. Not that it’s my unwanted nickname or anything. Regardless, let’s get one thing clear, shall we?

My name is Sammy, not Samey. It feels like a needle passes through my heart whenever someone refers to me as ‘Samey’, and it has been such a dominant aspect of my life that my heart probably looks like a pin cushion. It hurts just thinking about it. So much anguish has been brought along with that dreaded name. It eats away of my soul, the identity known as Sammy until I am nothing but an empty husk of hollow blank space called Samey.

It is hard to live a life like this, especially when my entire existence is dictated by someone else. And today is no different. It's afternoon; the sun hangs low in the sky, casting an amber light over the world. It’s winter so the small beams of light warm my body as I walk down the street. A blanket of snow covers everything in a layer of white. The winter snow is a perfect tool for torment. Gently, my fingertips graze the bandage on my forehead. The spot where that snowball hit me. Or rather the rock inside of it.

I don’t want to go home...not anymore.

I stop before the bridge, letting my heart sink to the pit of my stomach as I try to come up with 10 reasons for why I should be alive. My entire life, I have lived in the shadows, being stepped on like I was a fucking doormat. I’m a shadow of someone else; I’m not me so what’s the point? We will all die at one point so what good does it do for me to live in pure misery? What’s the point of dragging it out until the day where I sit with the other old folks of society and rot away as the rest of the world forgets me?

I’m already forgotten so why bother? At this point, I am nothing but a burden; a useless waste of space.

I lean against the reeling and look down at the streaming river beneath the bridge. It's not cold enough to freeze the water so it flows by. Behind me, in the distance, traffic is noisy as ever. The sounds of many cars linger in the background. But they drown before my ears as I feel a sudden buzz from my phone.

I know, it’s her. The bane of my existence that is calling me. Shivers run down my spine and my hands become sweaty as her sneering voice condescends me in my head. I can’t endure another day. The phone keeps buzzing. It vibrates in my pocket with its specific rhythm.

Like Queen’s We Will Rock You.

Surely, she will rock me when I answer. She will blow me to kingdom come ruin and me once again. My hearts pounders harder in my chest and my arms go numb. The fear of the horrors awaiting me at home is enough to completely paralyze me. It’s really pathetic that my own twin sister can get this reaction out of me. But it’s true.

My entire life, I was always number 2. I was always inferior to Amy when compared to her, which everyone in our lives did all the time. But, I thought it was OK. I thought that as long as I did my best and established my own identity, people wouldn’t see me as the lesser twin.
It never happened.

The phone keeps buzzing in my pocket and I seriously fight the urge to throw it into the icy water. But somewhere in this cruel yet beautiful world, some poor kid will probably have more use for it than I. As soon as the buzzing stops, I fetch the device out my pockets.

“I Unanswered call – Amelia” the text flashed over my screen.

Another buzz makes my heart jump to my throat as I see a message had been sent to me by Amy.

“Where are you, Samey?! Get your stupid ass home-“ the text scrolls over the screen but doesn’t convey the rest of the message. I feel the phone slide out of my grasp and hit the concrete ground. The screen is probably cracked but it does not matter anymore. With a callous expression, I just stare at the device on the ground.

The railing of the bridge is low enough for me to climb over. I slowly place my foot on the small space extending from the bridge, which is incredibly slippery. I have to stand on my toes in order to keep my balance. My grip on the railing tightens as I manage to move my leg on the other side. With smooth movements, I stand just above the icy water.

At least, some good came out of me being a cheerleader.

The stream flows idly by. It’s just deep enough for someone to drown it, providing me with the perfect circumstances to die of. It’s the only option. I just have to lean forwards and let gravity take care of the rest. Everything else has been taken care of. I’ve written my letters, said my goodbyes (to no one really) and weighted my options.

And this is the final solution.

I take a deep breath before, letting one foot dangle right above the water. I think drowning here is the perfect way to die. It’s peaceful; I can see myself floating in the dark blue, surrounded by the gentle water. My mind and body becoming one with the deep, dissolving slowly until Sammy is no more. It’s a beautiful death, a death where I can slowly and surely be forgotten by the world. All my sorrows can be drowned while I float to the light; to a place outside of this world. I can almost see the gateway to the other side and feel the wet sensation.

Or is that my tears?

Who knows. All there is to it that my time is done. Little by little, I lose my grip on the railing. It’s getting colder and the water will freeze, sealing me away to rest in peace.

“Don’t jump! Holy crap!” an unfamiliar voice drags me out of my bliss. It can’t be helped that someone would catch me in the act since I’m on a public bridge but holy moly, that guy gave me a heart attack. As I turn to see who he is, I slip on my way. It’s like the whole world goes into slow-motion. You know in movies when someone dies and they see their life flash before their eyes just before the Grim Reaper strikes? That’s what I’m seeing except, this time, it’s all the bad memories; the ones, I’d kill to bury. All the more reason to end it all.

But I can’t. Before I splash into the water, someone grabs my wrist, leaving me slamming against the edge of the bridge. Right on my hips. It’s painful to be perfectly blunt and it will surely leave a huge bruise. Aw shoot.

“Hold on!” he groans and tries to pull me up. And he somehow manages to just that. Granted, being on the cheerleading team has rendered me weightless and agile. This guy is determined to see me alive. I could have pried his fingers off or give him a karate chop to let me go but then, he would
probably call the police or jump in after me, so my plan is basically ruined. The guy stumbles backwards and lands on his butt before he clutches his shoulder. He sits for a bit and then stumbles back to his feet, still clutching that shoulder.

“Are you ok?” I suddenly ask without being aware of it. Stupid me. My brain has completely shut off. Oh well…

“Don’t mind me, what about you? I mean…” He suddenly pauses.

“If you are sad, then death is not the option.” He looks directly at me and I get a better look at him. He has green eyes and dirty blond hair that is neatly combed. He’s very stylish, like the kind of guy Amy would date, around our age too. The type of guy that would add fuel to my torment because he had been blinded by the V. But that’s not what catches my attention. It’s what he said.

Death is not the option, huh?

What in the hell does he know about that? He is a complete stranger and he says that to me?! If he had known what my daily life is, what hell I have to endure every day, he wouldn’t say that. He wouldn’t rob me of my only way out.

I don’t want to thank him. But I can’t find it within me to be angry, even if I felt like punching him in the gut. I just look at him as his wide, green eyes meet mine. He is clearly worried; he just prevented someone from taking their own life. I can’t imagine what he is thinking right now. But I can’t forgive him right away,

Just then, my phone on the ground starts buzzing. It completely takes me aback as a dreadful feeling overtakes me. No, a freaking panic attack consumes me. I see the dreaded name “Amelia” on the screen again and my heart pounders so hard in my chest, it’s about to burst out. My breathing becomes uneven and everything begins to twirl around me. The aching on my hips grows worse. It’s horrible; I’m back at square one. How I wished that he would just leave me alone so I could jump off that damn bridge again and drown.

Before I know it, I’m on my knees. I’m having a freaking panic attack before a stranger, hyperventilating like I just ran a marathon. In the past, I’ve been good at hiding my vicious anxiety but now all the ugly wounds reopen and my true anguish is poured out like a leak in a dam. My nails dig into the snowy ground and tears start falling uncontrollably from my eyes in streams. I can’t imagine the thoughts inside this guy’s head, literally watching some random person having a complete mental breakdown.

I’ve been in this position before, but something is different. I’ve melted down before with someone witnessing the flower of dystopia bloom. A warm hand is suddenly placed on my shoulder, causing me to look upwards. His arm hangs lifelessly close to his body, with my phone in his hand.

“Hey.” he calls softly, stirring something within me. Kindness is so underrated.

“I don’t want to go home.” I slowly whisper. Those six words are the only ones on the tip of my tongue as visions of Amy’s horrors flashes before my eyes.

“I don’t want to…” I whimper. If I had any hopes of controlling myself, then these hopes have been shot and killed like Bambi’s mom. I’m sobbing and crying in such a devastating manner. I had set my hopes so high; I had wished to finally be gone. To disappear from this world and the rotten people of my life was the ultimate dream and now, I’m forced to go back. I can’t deal with it anymore. I’m done in more ways than one.
“…Let’s go to the hospital, then.” He says a little too optimistically for my liking. I can sense a hint of uneasiness and worry.

I don’t really have a choice in the matter. The guy probably hurt himself by saving me and I can’t just do a bitch-move and ditch him. Even if it wasn’t mean to turn out like this, I do still own him. So I, the sobbing mess that I am, nods.

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“What happened?” The nurse asks as she looks at the guy’s arm. She grabs his arm and moves it around for a bit while he is biting his lip in order to contain a scream. Silence befalls the room as no one really wants to answer that. It’s getting increasingly awkward. What should I say? I can’t just say “Hey, I tried to commit suicide and this guy saved me”. Then she would call my mom and everything would go to hell. But I can’t just leave such a question hanging in the air like this either.

“I…” I start with no idea of what to say next.

“She slipped!” The guy suddenly saves my butt. “She slipped outside and I, being the gentleman that I am, tried to save her but fell in the progress.” He flashes the most secure smile, I’ve seen to date.

The nurse buys it. “Well, I guess it can’t be helped with how the weather is at days.” That was appallingly easy.

“You just dislocated your shoulder. Luckily, I would say as many people break stuff, this time around. Please wait here while I get the plaster.” She prances around for a bit before disappearing out of the room and thus another wave of silence enters the room.

I stare at my feet with the guy’s eyes staring at me. I wish he would stop that.

“Uhm… thanks for covering me.” I mumble without looking up. I pull my knees under my chin and the exhaustion washes over me like a shower. My eyelids fight to stay open but they just don’t have the strength anymore. Luckily, there’s a wall to catch my dozing body, so I don’t fall like a dead horse.

“Heh, don’t mention it.” He pauses for a bit. I can hear him smirk nervously but I don’t blame him. It has probably been a bizarre day for him. And that’s putting it mildly.

“The name’s Topher.”

“Samey-Sammy. My name is not Samey, it’s Sammy. Silly me, sorry.” My instincts make me say. I don’t really feel like speaking up or thinking of whatever comes out of my mouth nor do I have the strength to really care.

Topher doesn’t say anything to me at first.

“Cool.” He finally says albeit his voice is a little shaky. In that moment, the nurse arrives to apply the plaster. While she is in the midst of doing so, Topher has his eyes on me. He groans when the nurse is a little too rough but he keeps his façade up. From my half-closed eyelids, I see him shift between the nurse and me. He shouldn’t do that, though; I’m too tired, too empty to attempt anything. Again.

Time suddenly flows away with everything and it feels like I’m disconnecting from the rest of the world. I let my eyes close and close my ears for any sounds around me. I just want to sleep. And never wake up again.

“Hey, I’m done.” Topher is shaking me. The first thing, I see is the sling around his arm is a sling.
My vision is still a bit blurry and my head groggy but regardless, I still find it within myself to stand on my feet and stagger around after him.

If my heart can sink any lower, it would be resting on my feet now. I stare at my own house, ready to go in but my feet won’t take me there. My sinking heart is literally hammering inside me, pumping blood around like an overworked machine and my palms are sweaty. I take a single lick of the soft-ice but it just tastes like air in my mouth. My stomach twists and turns and it feels like I’m about to throw up.

“Sure is a nice house you have.” Topher says with much awe. He has already eaten his ice cream.

“Here, you can have the rest.” I tug my face with my scarf as tears emerge in my eyes. My voice is shaky and I’m pretty sure it would completely crack if I spoke some more. I don’t want to burden him anymore with my problems. Even if he is a complete stranger, he has shown me such kindness, completely alien to my daily life. I wanted to die today but I ended being saved and then treated for ice cream. Who eats ice cream in winter anyways? As if the cold weather wasn’t enough. But I digress. I didn’t want to talk to any more people today but now I find myself grateful. I don’t want to but I can’t help it.

“…can I give you my phone number?”

“Huh?” Did I hear him right?

“Heheh, I’m maybe not the best guy to do this but if you ever feel like talking things over, you can always call me. I always got time to help a damsel in distress.” His voice becomes all confident and borderline smug.

Regardless of the insensitivity, the muscles in my face do some weird contractions. It hurts a bit as it takes me a while to realize that I am actually smirking for the first time in forever. On my own. Not because society expects me to but a true smirk. For such a silly comment, that is mind-blowing. But it’s a tingling feeling that makes my heart slow down a bit.

“Don’t call me that…” I hand him my phone. “Thanks for everything. Sorry that I dislocated your shoulder.” I feel so incredibly guilty now. I literally got Topher dragged into my misery and he ended up injured because of that.

Topher access my phone rather quickly. “Things like that happen. I take it all on the chin.” Within a matter of moments, he is done and hands over my phone again. We switch and he holds the ice-cream. He smiles at me but it’s sincere with no hints of overconfidence. The tears run like streams down my cheeks but are quickly stopped by my scarf.

“Thanks. Again.” I sob, before forcing my feet into hell. I can always try to die another day. He does not know me; he wouldn’t be said if I was gone tomorrow. Putting my phone in my pocket, I step inside the door, trying to brace myself of whatever waits for me inside. But the second, I close the door, my body freezes in place. I’m completely paralyzed by fear because my exact mirror image is standing in the entrance, ready to murder me.

“You have 10 seconds to tell me where you’ve been.” Amy crosses her arms before me with a sullen expression on her face. She glares at me with such an intensity that could just as well have killed me, right where I stand. She slowly takes one step after the other towards me as let her arms fall to her side. Her fist is clenched almost to the point where her knuckles are chalk-white. My heartbeat is dangerously fast; my eyes grow wide. I want to scream on top of my lungs, but my throat is dry. The
words are stuck in my throat as 10 seconds passes by quickly.

*I can’t escape…!*
Rerbirth, I Choose

Chapter Notes

Author’s note: First of all, I’d like to give a big thanks to all who checked out my story and reviewed it. It made me very happy. Second of all, I’ve gotten some messages over confusion in regards to Amy’s “full name”. To put it clearly, it is not canon. It was fanmade by me more or less as a headcanon since Sammy’s full name is “Samantha”. I thought it could be fun to give Amy a “full” name too, even if Amy is a legit first name, which is where “Amelia” comes in play. Also, I now know that “Topher” is a legit first name. But I still decided to give our Topher, the full name “Christopher”. I’m sorry if it may feel like I’m breaking canon. It’s just some headcanons I implemented in my story. Please don’t hate me, I swear, it’ll be important to the story. I now hope that I have explained myself fully. Now please enjoy this chapter as we see things from Topher’s side.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Last night was weird. Really weird. Weird is not really a proper way to describe it. But I can’t bring myself to say that I hated it. The girl that I saved yesterday… how can I describe her? She was very beautiful to put it bluntly. Yeah, shallow but whatever. A girl with solemn teal eyes and blonde hair and that melancholic expression on her face. Her entire disposition was just a big bundle of sadness, the entire time I was with her. The only moments, I saw her remotely happy was when I made that “damsel in distress” remark… and when she was about to jump off that bridge. The image of her standing there and stare longingly after the freezing water haunts my vision every time I close my eyes.

And then her heartbroken expression after I saved her….

Dude, I just saved a girl from suicide, gave her my number and bought her ice-cream. I cannot understate how uncommon that is. But at the same time, I’m kinda pleased with myself. And to be honest, I liked the time, I had. Sure, I dislocated my shoulder but I did a good deed and that’s the important thing. Well, the fact that she may live another day is more important.

I didn’t know what to feel when I walked home. When I heard her chuckle at me being a smartass, I felt like I had made it worth living another day. But seeing her shake as she entered the door to her own home made me uncomfortable. Like, I wanted to grab her hand and take her out to do another round of ice cream. It still bothers me and I wonder if I should have done things differently to ease her pain somehow. But what could I do? I don’t know her; I have no place to ask why she wanted to die in the first place. I don’t even know if she deleted my number and, shit, chugged down a bottle of sleeping pills with tequila. She hasn’t called me or sent me a text. But she didn’t say no to getting my number either…

Dad was pretty damn horrified when I got home with my arm in a sling as you can properly understand. He freaked the heck out, asking me what asshole hit me with his car. Still I wonder if I should have told him the truth. He believed the same cavalier-excuse, I used with the nurse. Golly, I’m that good at lying. But in all honestly, I can’t even begin to imagine the uproar, had my dad learned the true story. He would praise me to the heavens and then turn the planet upside down to find that girl so he could help her somehow.
“Hey dad, I just saved a girl from suicide. Now how was your day?”

Imagine me say that to him. Then imagine him ripping Earth apart to find her. It’d be bizarre to say the least. It’s my dad in a nutshell but he shouldn’t do that in the first place. He has no right to and neither have I, even if it would ease my uncertainty to know if she was alive.

Pieces of bacon gently land on my plate as Dad taps my shoulder. “You should eat your food before it gets cold, son. Gotta get that energy from somewhere, am I right?” He lets out a wholehearted laughter and it makes me chuckle too. “Now, eat up and I’ll drive you to school.”

Perhaps, I should get moving. It’s my first day at my new school after all. About a month ago, Dad and I moved here and automatically, I had to change schools. I clamp down my food faster than I want to and I feel unnaturally stuffed afterwards. Dad has my lunch and my bag while treating me like a princess by opening all doors for me. It’s genuinely nice of him but I got like one functioning arm and what luck; it’s my dominant arm. I clean up after myself as Chef comes walking down the stairs. He has gotten a lot fatter since we moved so it surprising to see him just wander around, sleek like an eel. Granted, he is staggering towards me and slowly grinds himself against my legs while purring. I don’t remember the last time, he was so affectionate but whatever. I give the cat some few strokes before leaving the house.

In the car, Dad rants on about how things are going smoothly at his new job and how everyone is a true buddy. I feel slightly at ease to hear that at least one of us was better off. As I stare out the windows with all of the suburban neighborhoods, I shake a little while a small but sadly familiar anxiety grows within the pit of my stomach.

But I swallow it all and say goodbye to him as if nothing happened. The anxiety boils there but I manage to keep it down. Bless me for doing so because as I enter the school, I am immediately bombarded with thousands of new faces and impressions and a building that made my old school look like some kid’s sand castle in comparison.

It’s scary to be honest but I can’t let it get under my skin. With a confident smile, I quickly try to make way for my class. According to the letter, I received a couple of weeks ago, there are thirteen people in my class. That’s… unnaturally small for a high school. Where I came from, you would get the mean look if your class dared to have 20 people at max because that would automatically indicate that something was wrong with your classmates. But I digress.

*Time to take over the world!*

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Great. I’m lost. I have no idea where I am right now. I know I’m currently standing in the corridor with all the lockers and stuff but I have no idea where I went or where I’m supposed to go. Fan-fucking-tastic.

“Excuse me?” a familiar voice greets me from behind. It’s overly sweet this time around but it stirs something within me, prompting me to turn around with an expression on my face that can only be described as “confused and giddy at the same time”. I think that’s what goldfishes look like.

Sure enough, the girl from yesterday stands in front of me. Same blonde hair, same teal eyes. Just about same appearance. But I can’t remember if she had a mole. Did she? Regardless, I just stare at her with a dumbass-giddy expression while I internally curse myself for thinking that she would kill herself regardless of what I did yesterday.
“Hi!” I just say. I could talk about our first meeting but a; that would be, like the most awkward thing ever and b; I highly doubt she would want to talk about a freaking suicide attempt in the middle of the damn school!

Also, or that just may be me, but she doesn’t seem to remember like at all. I don’t know if that’s an act or whatever but it’s kinda odd that she’s looking at me like I am a complete stranger. But I’m giving her the benefit of the doubt. I can totally get behind and it tugs my heartstrings a bit to see her alive and well, so lively. It’s like what happened never took place. She is brimming with confidence today.

“I’m kinda lost. I’m supposed to be in this class.” I try my best to sound confident and show her my acceptance papers with all of the needed info. She glances at her and I have to make a duel to the death with that tiny little voice in my head wanting to ask her about yesterday.

“So how’s it going?” It suddenly pops out of my mouth. The blonde looks at me with a confused look before sending a sly smirk. “Fine.” She smiles and looks at the papers. Her nails are covered in a strong red nail polish. Lush and vibrant like blood. Ok, that was creepy but it really looks like she painted her nails with blood.

“What is this?” She sounds surprised but happy at the same time. “We’re in the same class!”

“I’m Amy by the way.” She then adds.

Amy? Was that really her name? It’s somewhat similar but I think I heard an “S” in there. I couldn’t fully hear what she said yesterday because she mumbled through her words more noticeably than a drunk sailor. But I do remember hearing an “S” in there.

“Just call me Topher” my nerves are tingling me, telling me that I made a smart move for now. Amy nods at me before she more or less glues herself to my side and drags me along to our class.

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This class that I’m is unnaturally minuscule. There are a lot of empty seats but one particularly catches my eye. And it makes me panic like nobody’s business. But I’m a master of poker faces so I’m not even showing as much as a hint of unease but instead just smile and nod as the teacher introduces me. But all I can ever focus on is that one seat on the rearmost row, next to the window; it is covered with graffiti and crapton of texts. I’m assigned to the seat diagonally across that horrid mess. Nobody has taken particular interest in me except for that one girl who looks a bit like Snow White. Her eyes grew wide as saucers when she saw me. I’m not sure what to feel about that to be honest but it’s my first day so all I can really do is to play the waiting game and hope that I won’t be left out in the cold. But I still wonder who in the world sits there.

Amy sits in the seat, directly in front of me. A scruffy looking dude sits next to my left and another guy with the craziest beard sits to my right. None of them are particularly interested in me but the teacher is in the midst of explaining something about new books which are ready to be picked up, so I suppose that they are more invested in that. Or just the dude with the wild beard as the scruffy one is sketching stuff in a notebook. But I’m curious so I discreetly lean towards him to take a sneak peek.

Is that… a zombie? It’s pretty damn detailed.

“Hey, that looks awesome.” I whisper to him, just low enough to not get any suspicion. He stops drawing and looks at me before smirking a little nervously.
“Thanks, man. I’m just taking notes for the apocalypse. You know, when it happens.” The guy says before returning to his “notes”. That… was unnaturally brief. I barely had a conversation with him. I don’t even think, I managed to leave an impression. So I try to start a conversation with the guy with the beard. I wave at him and he casually waves back but rather hastily turns his attention back to his laptop.

That went swell…

And suddenly, the door opens. Or rather creeks like had a ghost entered the room. A meek presence enters instead. They have a hoodie, pulled over their head and a scarf, I swear that I’ve seen before.

“So sorry, I’m late. I-uh-I didn’t feel too well. Uhm…” They mumble. The voice is clearly feminine so I assume that they are a “she”. She, I hope, quickly walks off before the teacher can say anything and comes closer to the back of the class.

And she takes the desk with all the “beautiful” markings. Silently, she pulls down her hoodie and I think my mind has officially blown. It’s the girl from yesterday! If Oh boy, holy crap, she’s alive! She goes to the same school as I! As much as I could up and down, my heart suddenly stops and my smile slowly descends into an expression of worry and disbelief of the highest degree.

She has a black eye. Like three-thirds of her eye has swollen. It looks like she had been brawling after I took her home! What in the hell happened?! I know, you will under no circumstances get such an injury after falling down the stairs. Someone punched her. Someone fucking sucker punched her in the face for that to happen!

I said that I had no place to stick my nose in her business but honest to God, this is worrying me.

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I can’t find the girl with the black eye anywhere. She was gone with the wind before, I could catch up to her. And the same happened to Amy. But I’ve memorized the location of my classroom so I can wander around the school and eventually find them. I gotta pick up these books sooner or later anyways. I’d like to ignore the killing guilt that I am feeling right now. I left that girl at home only for her to come to school and show her face like this.

But another question then pops up in my head; who in the hell is Amy then? They look eerily alike so her twin? I can’t really think of another solution. Not to mention, she didn’t move a muscle when her sister entered the classroom with a black eye. Let me repeat that, A. Black. Eye. Then again, since they are in public, I suppose they didn’t want the whole school to know about the suicide attempt.

The school has signs to show where all the useful facilities are, so I quickly find my way to the library, where I’m supposed to pick up my books. An incredibly tall, dark-skinned girl offered to help me before I ventured out on my own so now the two of us are on our way to the library. She speaks with a heavy Australian accent and her name is Jasmine. I’m quite pleased with myself that I managed to find a potential friend.

“School sure has been busy lately. To be honest, I’m glad that we are getting new students now and then. Especially in our class because it’s pretty small as you can see. Even the teachers weren’t confident with this year’s freshmen so they were quite reluctant to put me in there, so it took me some time before I got classes to attend. Imagine being an exchange student and you can’t even go to school because no one got faith in your own class.” Jasmine picks up the bundle of books for me while ranting. The library is pretty large, big enough for Jasmine to completely disappear behind some bookshelves but commodious enough for her voice to echo through the place.
The artificial lighting is limited as evident by the few flickering lamps in the ceiling so the library has to rely on big, open windows for any light to get inside. It reminds me of that one franchise of wizard movies. What was it called again…?

“Got it all.” she calls out for me. I haven’t really been doing much besides looking around, listening to tales from the Land Down Under and telling Jasmine about myself when she would ask. Still, it feels like time passed on very quickly, despite the clock telling me that nothing but fifteen minutes has passed.

“Great. Thanks a ton for your help.” I walk towards Jasmine’s voice. It sounds like she is carrying a lot so I should better relieve her of her stress and bring my bag to her. Jasmine meets me on my way over to her and she quickly puts my books in my bag with an incredible speed. Suddenly, something like footsteps is heard behind me. The library is fairly big but I haven’t seen a single soul in here and even if there was someone, they wouldn’t be this quiet.

Am I getting paranoid?

Maybe not because Jasmine quickly picks it up and yells “Hold on!” before she storms off behind me with my bag. I turn around just to see what in the hell set her off like this.

“Sammy! Wait up!” Her tone grows sterner.

That’s the name! That’s the girl, I met yesterday. I remember now, that she mumbled something about her name not being “Samey”! Holy hell, I found her. Immediately, my feet make me run even faster than Jasmine towards the blonde. She is alive and well! Ok, maybe not well but she is alive and that’s what important. But the next topic that takes space in my mind is that black eye. I have no right to ask but silly Christopher doesn’t think and with his functional arm, he grabs the hand of Sammy. Bad move.

I can feel Jasmine’s eyes burning a hole in my back as I stare into Sammy’s, her eyes wide with bewilderment. Now that I finally got her… I have actually no idea what to say to her at first. I just stare at her with a dumbass expression on my face. I got a shitton of stuff, I want to tell her but where do I start?

“You’re alive! Thank God, you’re alive!” it suddenly flies out of my mouth. It’s the first thing I actually wanted to say to her now that I reflect on it. My muscles pull my lips into a wide smile as I let go of her. My heart skips a beat when I see her eyes gleam, only to be shot down like an airplane when her face descends into that familiar solemn expression. The pinnacle of heartbroken sadness.

“Don’t talk to me…anymore, if you know what’s good for you.” And she smiles. Not the type of smile that I’d like to see on her face. Her lips curl up into this horrible mixture of despair and misery. It hurts her to say those words. She is even more filled with misery now than yesterday.

“What? Why?” Is the only thing, I manage to say as a new fear manages to grip me. The anxiety leaves my body tense as I’m left to wonder. “What's good for you”? What in the hell is she talking about?

“Sammy. Don’t do this!” Jasmine reprimands from behind. “You don’t have to.”

Sammy remains silent. She shifts glances between myself and Jasmine before she covers her head with the hoodie and leaves the library in such a hurry, you’d think she was the Road Runner. I barely react to seeing her sprint away from us without a single word being uttered.

But what did Jasmine mean with everything she said? It set Sammy off somehow. Does she know
about the suicide attempt?

“What am I to do…? I want to help her but it’s like she completely shuts off whenever I try.” Jasmine sighs. She looks guilty for a couple of moments before her expression shifts into aggravation. “And Amy is not helping at all.”

“Amy?”

“Yes, her twin sister.”

Guess I was right.

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At lunch time, I am disheartened. Well, that’s one way to put it. My appetite has completely left the building, despite Dad’s godlike skills in making sandwiches lay before me. I can’t get myself to take a single bite and my head begins to hurt from thinking so hard. Dammit, I came in school, hoping to get a new beginning and ended up beating myself up because I may have made a post-suicidal regress into her original wish.

“Hi. Who gave you the blues?” Amy greets me before sitting down next to me. Unlike her sister, who is dressed in a thick dark hoodie, thick black stockings, dark, a huge dark scarf and a dark plaid skirt, Amy is all about girly colors. I didn’t give it much thought before now. Don’t ask me why. Pink sweater, light denim jeans, a light scarf in white, and high heeled boots of all things in a light color. Everything fashionable.

“Hey, can I ask what happened to Sammy’s eye?”

Amy pauses for a bit. It looks like she completely disconnects for a couple of moments and it unnerves me. “Oh that?” she finally said as if nothing happened at all! Flabbergasted and having a hard time believing my ears, I wait for her answer.

“Samey is such a klutz. Last night, when she was heading to the basement to… well I don’t know, she fell down the stairs. Can you believe it?”

No.

She fishes for a lunchbox in her bag, which contains pasta and chicken, drowning in ketchup. Literally. I don’t know what to feel right now. On one hand, Amy downplaying the ordeal makes me very uncomfortable but on the other hand, I can’t get mad at her. Her own twin tried to commit suicide and then got a black eye. I can only imagine her being just as distressed as I am. But damn, if she doesn’t have a good poker face.

Soon enough, a lot of unfamiliar girls surround us and take seats at the table. Amy seems to know them as she immediately shifts her attention from me and to them, chatting with them lively. Compared to Sammy, Amy feels completely normal. There is no actual definition of “normal” but I feel like these two couldn’t be more opposite.

“Oh, that’s my new classmate. Topher.” Amy suddenly says, bringing me back to reality. “Hey.” I try to follow Amy’s behavior and act like nothing faces me at all. But it’s hard. I can’t shake that image of a devastated Sammy out of my head and her teary voice asking me to leave her alone makes my heart feel like a big, lump of lead. I feel like I failed my good deed. And now, when I am in the process of making new friends, all I really do is obsessing over her.

“So, uhm, Topher. Do you, like, got any plans today? There’s a test tomorrow and a study buddy
could totally be useful.” Amy asks with a huge smile on her face. The other girls grow unusually silent for teenagers as they all secretly judge me and expect an answer. I’m quick to answer though I’m wondering when the teacher mentioned any tests.

“Sure.” I try to put on my most smooth voice. Holy hell, I’m getting better at it. And a new thought hits me; I can talk to Sammy again. A friendship with Amy and another prevention of Sammy’s death! I’m killing two birds with one stone.

Chapter End Notes

I love posting on here. It's so swift and easy.

THIS CHAPTER HAS BEEN EDITED AS OF 9/9 2016
Curses! Why the hell did he had to go to the same school as I?! Why, why, why?! This is not good at all. And now I hear his voice from the other side of my wall. I’m shaking. It’s unfolding. The prophecy, so to say. Amy will find some poor fucker and use him as a nuclear A-bomb against me! My broken, meaningless life will look like Chernobyl afterward.

My entire body is shaking like leaves in a stormy night. I have to study for that godforsaken test but all I can do now is to curl up in a ball on top of my bed and secretly die inside. I’m hiding under my bedcovers in a useless attempt to shield myself from the Hell, that I’d like to call life. Who am I kidding, I’m already dead inside. I’m a zombie at this point, Shawn’s drawings are more alive than I am. I’m a walking, breathing, lifeless waste of human flesh.

My eye has been throbbing and sore the entire day, and it feels like I was hit in the head with a hammer. Maybe I was; perhaps Amy was trying out some brass knuckles, received from one of her “friends”. The hell do I know? I was just busy covering in fear and letting the world crash down around me before getting bitch-slapped in tenfold. And then it hit me. Not Amy for once, something else. The punch didn’t hurt. The pain didn’t attack me until this morning where I woke up from what felt a coma. Even if I reacted like a tortured puppy upon being greeted by Amy, I was so drained of energy that not even being called a “cunt” several times and being sucker punched in the face hurt me. I think my inert self bored her so she left me alone. If she can’t get me to beg for my life, then it’s not worth it.

If only I could internally kill myself more often, then I’d only had to worry about my human vessel not being destroyed by unexpected forces. AKA Amy and her band of misfits, Topher when his brainwashing is finished, some drunken driver making me his road kill, literally anything else but my own hands and will.

But right now, in spite of everything I said earlier, I am alive. I feel the anxiety, the pain, the irrational fear, all overwhelm me. All these negative emotions that have haunted me from as long as I can remember are once again eating away at my soul. I’m used to them, so why does it hurt so much this time? Why do they make me tremble this much?

With a shaking hand, I manage to fetch a razor blade underneath my pillow. I’m scared. I’m terrified. Amy has a new ally and it’s someone that I know. It’s someone who showed me kindness when I was in my darkest moments. Empathy should not be an uncommon human reaction but hell; the anxiety would be more endurable if he had treated me like garbage. He looked like the kind of person who could just have done so.

Even if I had the courage to keep him as a friend, it would be futile. Because Amy would without doubt swoop in and make everything descend into chaos. She brings havoc whenever something good happens to me, that could be considered a “better quality” than whatever is going on with her. This is why I can’t have nice things, because Amy will take them. I’m not allowed to have happiness
and honestly, I can’t care anymore. By this point, I’m a broken person with a fucked up life. I don’t deserve happiness, according to fate and my own judgment.

Sorry not sorry, Topher. I’m sure, you’re a good person. I know you are. But I also know, the second Amy got her hands on you, you were corrupted from the beginning. The seed of malice grows big and fast after all. Even if I wanted to kick you in the balls for robbing me of my only escape from this cruel world, I am ultimately grateful to you for saving me. And still showing interest in me. You glued your eyes to me for a good chunk of class and you looked like you could scream when you saw me in the library. Gosh, I sound so stupid for saying all of this; we barely know each other and for the sake of better tomorrow, it should be like that. Even if my misery will tear me apart inside out and you will be another of Amy’s goons, it’s for the best.

I happened to dislocate your shoulder. Trust me when I say that, it won’t be the only damage done if you chose me over Amy. Don’t do that.

Don’t fuck with the status quo.

The razorblade swiftly grazes my wrist as a thin line is drawn in my flesh. The pain is stinging and tiny red orbs begin to develop, growing big enough for the blood to trickle down on the sheet. I hope Mommy will still believe in that “bloody nose” lie. I watch my blood, the proof of my humanity, drain from my body in small portions. It calms my nerves, leading me closer to a disturbing place of bliss.

I can’t explain it. I wonder if I’m a masochist? You know, the people who get off on pain. Nah, I don’t feel aroused. I feel at ease. I don’t know why but feeling the stinging and watching the red liquid makes my anxiety die down a little. The blood is hypnotizing me for all the wrong reasons. To ruin myself is my drug. I’m an addict for self-harm and the sharp edge of a blade is the needle. It’s my sinful escape that will lead me down a path of self-loathing and ecstatic sad happiness; my treasure and my punishment.

If I was dramatic enough, I could slit my wrists deep enough and die from blood loss.

But I can’t do it here because Amy has no respect for individual privacy and she has forbidden me from locking the door, so she can barge in and out as she pleases. I could hang myself but I couldn’t imagine the discomfort of slowly strangling myself and the house has no suitable rooms for a long drop where my neck could snap so hanging is not an option. I could drink bleach if I could stand the taste of Mountain Dew. Speaking of drinking, vodka with a bottle of sleeping pills has potential. If only I could actually stomach anything with alcohol.

I could jump from the tallest building in town in the middle of the night but then imagine my mangled corpse and the horrified expressions of those who would find me. See? Drowning would have been the perfect way to go. Peaceful, beautiful and perfectly timed in the winter months. The ice could have trapped me and I could have ended up somewhere far from home and dissolve with nature.

Another red line is drawn on my wrist.

I’m not dead yet. Right now, all I can do is to destroy myself even more. I feel drowsy now. I should really, like, really study now but I don’t feel like it. But I don’t really have a choice now since, I know for a fact that the bane of my useless existence will kick my door down and demand that I slave for her. Of the two of us, my grades are, to put it simply, ungodly better than hers. Oh joy, one thing, Amy didn’t find worth destroying for me. Well, studying is for losers only according to her.

“So is your sister home?” Topher asks with his smoothest tone. He sits right next to the wall so I can
hear him the clearest. The walls here are as thin as paper. What marvel. Even when I told him to stay away from me, he still wants to be involved me. I'm just a suicidal stranger so what gives?

“…I guess she is. She always goes home early. Wait, not as early Velma Dinkley.”

“Who?”

“You know, the redheaded nerd with the glasses. Scarlett.” Amy snorts with disgust. She is clearly shifting around as evident by the bed creaking. “She’s…odd. You should stay away from her.”

“Oh, if you say so.” Topher releases an awkward laugh before a wave of odd silence befalls the room. It’s unusual for silence to enter Amy’s room. I guess, it’s just because they are studying. Or perhaps not, knowing Amy…

“Oh my gag! These tests! I swear to God, they’re a crime against humanity.” Amy groans loudly.

“Sure is. Makes you wonder what the two and a half year will be like.”

“True. Why waste time on useless bullshit like the Napoleon wars?”

First, “useless bullshit” are called the Napoleonic wars. Second, they were a part of Emperor Napoleon’s ambition to conquer as a sort of continuation of the Revolutionary Wars, which in turn had been more or less inspired by the American Revolution. Liberty was the black during the late 18th century and I’d. love to be liberated myself like the people back then. History is quite interesting and… wait, did I just give a small lecture in history? Oh well.

I’m calm now. Sort of. Somewhat enough to function. I think. I guess? I don’t actually know.

“Wanna watch a movie? I totally can’t concentrate right now.” Amy smiles, shifting some more as Topher holds his answer for a couple of moments. He should know that Amy can never concentrate when it comes to boring stuff such as school. Or hell, domestic choirs.

“Yeah, why not? Whataya got?”

“Uhm…” Amy begins. Her voice now gets a little more unclear and I suspect that she is heading towards her DVD collection. “What about Titanic? It’s historic.”

It’s not relevant. What about Waterloo?

“I’m sure Samey got some notes for us to borrow.” Oh boy, here we go again.

“Let me ask her.” Amy is quick to get off her bum. “But can’t she just study with us?” His question is left to die, unanswered.

As I predicted, Amy stands in my doorway. She glares at me with a condescending, smug face.

“Samey, are you sleeping? I hope, I didn’t disturb you.” My twin speaks rather loudly, every single word of hers is drenched in shallow kindness. But I know her and my senses pick up the snarky undertones of the way, she speaks.

“If you don’t mind, Topher and I would like to borrow your notes. Now.” Sure enough, Amy storms into my room and grabs my bag. It looks like she rips the zipper off before she turns it upside down and pours out all of my books on my bed. I can’t complain. I don’t feel like getting another black eye so automatically, my body freezes in place. I’m scared shitless.
Isn’t that kind of sad? I’m relieving emotional pain by physically hurting myself yet Amy hurts me even more by hurting my feelings and harming my body. It’s a never-ending, evil cycle of violence, misery and self-destruction. I won’t escape it until I die.

My laptop bounces on the bed, along with my sheet of notes. Uhm, I should probably say that I’ve been seething in my despair so much that I haven’t taken a single note in the last two months. The history junk that I know is only due to personal interest.

Amy seems to pick up on this, fast. She flips through the pages of the notebook, frantically searching for anything that could make life easier for her. But I ain’t got anything and it sets her off. Closing my notes, she glares daggers at me; her eyes burning with such an intense fury, telling me that I am done for. Without a word, she hurls the book at me, hitting me square in the face. The distance is mercifully short so I am not really hurt as I’m startled. But my body automatically freezes in place and my instincts prompt me to stay alerted like was I being approached by a ferocious animal.

“Useless sack of shit.” Amy’s eyes burn a hole in my soul as she whispers to me, every word of hers dripping with venomous content. If she could have punched me, she would. With that lovely insult, she leaves my room in a mercifully short amount of time, not even bothering to close the door after herself. I get off my dead ass and close it myself. I have to literally stop my hand from locking the door.

“She was asleep.” Amy says to an unsuspecting Topher, her shift in tone is a complete 180 compared to her hostile approach with me. “Oh, what a shame.” Topher sighs with sincere disappointment. I wish, he’d forget about me. Just let me silently disappear.

“Sure. Anyways let’s watch that film.” My sister shrugs the subject of me away as I hear her pop in the DVD.

Corruption is hard to fight, is it not? I wipe the blood away with some tissues that I hide under my bed before I fetch my phone from the nightstand. Quickly, I find my way to the Contacts tab and scroll my way down to T. Sure enough, Topher’s name is listed there with stars of all things. I tap the name and nothing particularly interesting shows up on my screen except for a nickname described as the “Topher Experience” and a quick selfie of him on the night where he saved me. It’s blurry and in low quality but I don’t find it within me to delete it. So I save the picture and delete the number. Why I did that is because I am a pussy, plain and simple. I don’t know how to describe it otherwise. Eventually, I’ll delete the picture when Topher gets fucked in the head enough for me to bring out the Absolute Vodka and sleeping pills.

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Despite being an empty husk of flesh and blood, I do, after all, need food. Strange, I know. I didn’t get any lunch today and breakfast was honest to God a joke so I’m practically starving. I can hear the movie playing loudly in Amy’s room. Perfect, at least I can quietly sneak my way down to the kitchen. Luckily, our house does not suffer from the unfortunate feature of having squeaky floors and mixed with my weightless self, I can gracefully move my way downstairs.

It’s so lonely without Mommy being around. Around now, she would always be cooking something in the kitchen and have me be her taste buds. Her food always brought a smile to my lips. What a simpler time to be alive, back when my father didn’t have that oh-so “elitist” job that forced him overseas. And for whatever reason, he needed arm candy in the shape of Mommy to show around. How lovely. It was clear as daylight that she would rather watch Teen Mom, something that she absolutely detests, than going on yet another business trip with my father for the sake of being a trophy, he can feel better with himself by showing off.
Gag me.

The fridge is filled with leftovers and fast food, a majority of which is Amy’s because I haven’t got the strength or anything to cook. I probably should go to the freezers and find something for tonight but I simply don’t feel like it. My body is a heavy mess of lead. I got no strength. Maybe because I have barely eaten all day but I digress. I see an egg salad sandwich and decide to take it. Sure, I will look like a panda for this but at this point, I can’t really bring myself to care. My mouth is drooling by the looks of the sandwich.

“Sammy?” A voice suddenly causes my heart to skip a beat. Completely frazzled, I turn around in a clumsy attempt to hide the sandwich. Graceful as a fat swan. It’s Topher, what a surprise. He looks surprised to see me but I can sense a hint of happiness too.

“Hi.” I just nod at him and try my best to find a proper position to signify that I don’t really want to talk to him. “About earlier today… I probably shouldn’t have grabbed you like that.” He clumsily approaches me. If it was his attempt at being cool, he failed epically but I don’t find it within myself to make fun of him. In a way, it’s endearing.

“It’s ok.” I say before trying to leave the scene. This is just getting awkward. I clear my throat and make way with my first actual meal of the day but Topher indirectly won’t let me. He yearns to see me as evident by his awkward but confident smile and his puppy dog eyes.

Avoid all eye contact.

“My sister needs you, right? What are you doing with me then?” I suddenly take note of how gloomy I sound. But it can’t be helped.

“Funny that you ask. I was trying to find the bathroom and saw you.”

“I’m… busy. Sorry.”

“Oh, shoot.” He pauses before speaking again. “We should go out and have ice cream again.”

His words stir something within me, no matter how much I deny it. The contraction of my muscles is so alien to me that I feel completely foreign to this once lost ability called smiling. It’s so rare, I smile that I feel inhuman when I do. And suddenly a nagging guilt begins to emerge within me. I deleted his number.

“It’s a deal then. You don’t have any plans for the weekend, do you?”

“I don’t have your number. My phone had a… black out.” That is an awful lie that I came up with. Hell, that isn’t the biggest problem right now; the real question is why I didn’t just walk away. I have no intention of having anything to do with him; I plan to die soon, so why in the hell am I opening up for him.

“Uhm… sorry, but I really have to go. The bathroom is upstairs, next to my room.” My feet begin to drag me away, God bless them. Without looking up or even trying to think of his expression, I just quickly storm off. I can’t deal with this.

“…Is that a yes?”

No, it is not. I don’t answer him. I can’t deal with heartbroken puppy eyes. But if I could bring myself to speak, my answer would be a hard, cold NO.

“Topher?” Amy’s voice sends chills down my spine as she peeps from the doorway. Her eyes glue
themselves to the sandwich in my hands. Her face is like something out of a serial killer movie. She is smiling like nothing happened but her eyes are burning with a seething rage. The contrast is so staggering that it is scary. This is horror movie quality. And I know that the rage is directed at me. Completely oblivious to the fact that Topher is standing right behind the whole scene, she just glares at me.

“Do you know each other? Samey?”

“Uhm, we just met one day a-and talked. Nothing else.” The panic is nearing boiling point; 100 degrees Celsius of anxiety is building inside of me. My palms begin to sweat and my heart hammers inside of my chest like never before. I’m the worst liar ever and Amy knows this.

“True that. And then she slipped and I dislocated my shoulder, trying to save her.”

“Is that so?” Amy is not happy. At all. “Yep, and then we got some ice cream. And I’d like to take her out again ‘because it was really rad.” Topher continues, giddy as a kid telling about his first day of school.

“I have a better idea.” Amy happily chirps as my appetite rapidly decreases. My hands shake with that stupid sandwich. “Why don’t we all go and I can invite my friends?”

“Sounds like a great idea.” Topher unknowingly throws me to the lions.

“Then it’s settled. It will be totally fun, right Samey?” Amy concludes without even bothering to ask for my opinion. Why should she? Her voice contains a hint of malice and glee over the fact that she can humiliate me in public. Again. I feel like puking my non-existing lunch at the thought of Amy’s goons ruining my life even more than it already is. I’m a broken, unstable mess but they will smash me with a sledgehammer and ruin me even more. Stomp on the pieces until there is nothing but dust.

“Ye-yeah….” I try my best but fail miserably at sounding excited. I can’t bring myself to even pretend to be cheerful. The tears are pressing against my eyeballs like pricking needles and I could just as well fall to my knees and wail like an orphan with depression. I’m about to be out on public display; a freak show treated miserably for the amusements of sadists.

Oh fuck. Shit just hit the fan.
Ugh, I hate having a cold.

The days fly by incredibly fast. I suppose that’s what happens when you’re excited about something. And dead worried at the same time. So worried that consuming every waking moment, you have. It’s Friday and it has been four days since I was at Amy and Sammy’s house and ever since that day, I haven’t seen Sammy. It’s killing me like a black widow’s poison but I’m an expert at hiding it behind a mask known as the “cool Topher”. The same can’t be said for Jasmine however.

“I seriously hope that she’s all right.” The tall girl says, clamping down her lunch. “I’m seeing her tomorrow, I hope. Amy invited me and her friends to a gathering of sorts.”

The mentioning of the twin sister almost causes Jasmine to spit out her sandwich, before her eyes shoot lightning at me. “Amy?!” She hisses. If we weren’t sitting in the school’s cafeteria, she likely would have slammed her hand against the table and give me a lecture in morality and right decisions.

“You do remember that I told you how she is not helping the situation.” For a couple of moments, I just blink and look at her as some unpleasant memories begin to stir in the back of my mind…

“Yeah, I thought that I could talk to Sammy when I was invited to their house.” I speak as I poke Dad’s spaghetti leftovers. It’s all completely drenched in ketchup, like a bloodbath inside a slaughterhouse. “Think about it. Don’t you think that Amy is worried too?”

“No, I don’t.” Jasmine shoots down my proposal like a hunter shoots a duck.

“And you’ll see tomorrow.” She glares at a certain table nearby where Amy and her legion of friends sit. They’re all laughing like nothing in the world could go wrong. I can’t begin to imagine the thoughts of Amy in regards to her sister. Isn’t a twin essentially, one’s other half? Amy is a master of poker faces, even more than I am. Not a hint of unease can be sensed from her so even if she was worried, that anxiety hid absurdly well…

“On a happier note, what’s your weekend plans?” I put on my most smooth approach and Jasmine looks at me with a surprised gaze. She pauses a bit before answering in a much calmer tone, probably her calmest today. “I’m going on a wildness trip with Shawn.”

“In winter?” Who in their right mind go sleeping outside in the middle of January?

“That’s the challenge!” Jasmine does a complete 180 and begins to lecture me about how it challenges the human body and the benefits of winter swimming.

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When I get downstairs, I see eggs and bacon. And pancakes. It’s the only type of breakfast that my dad can cook but I am content with that. If he was not around, I would have been living off
something as mundane and life-draining as oatmeal. Dad smiles when he sees me closing in on the breakfast table. Chef sleeps calmly on one of the chairs that nobody uses. We got four chairs at the table even though we’re only two but I digress.

“Good morning, son.” Dad happily greets me. He’s busy with the last pancakes so, his back is quickly turned to me. Ever since we moved here, he has been floating on cloud nine. Smooth sailing on the job and smooth sailing with his son. The last topic is, of course, the light side of what brought us here originally. I’d like the old man to be truly happy for once but at the same time, I don’t want to see him return to the way, he once was…

Am I feeling chills running down my spine?

“Cristopher.” Dad begins, his sudden shift of voice catches my attention. “I’d like to meet your friends one day. Why don’t you bring them back here?” he returns to his happy demeanor.

“Sure!” I promise. Or not, I don’t know. A familiar panic begins to build up within me again, causing me to chow down my food like was I a hungry child from a third world country.

“Somebody sure is hungry.” Dad laughs and turns a page in the newspaper. My mouth is filled with a butter-covered pancake so I can’t answer. And for whatever reason, I have no idea of what I would say to that.

I get dressed in my favorite coat and a scarf because it’s bitterly cold outside. Even more than the day where I met Sammy. Suddenly, my mind begins to boggle with her attempt of jumping into the river. The water has certainly frozen now and certainly must have been like that for a couple of days now. An uncomfortable image begins to float before my eyes.

It’s a human body with deadly blueish skin.

I rip the door open and quickly closes it again as fast as the ugly image disappears.

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Despite how suburban this town is, it’s apparently big enough to garner itself a mall. Sure, it’s a small place but it exists and I’m here now. And so are a lot of people. It ranges from stressed families trying not to kill each other to bored preteens searching for the nearest candy store; disappointed valley girls who can’t find anything related to Gucci to kids playing Pokémon Go. It’s a melting pot of different people, different reasons to be here and different histories.

In a weird way, it’s fascinating. I’ve always considered myself to be a people’s person, someone whom others could rely on.

“Hi.” A voice cheerfully calls out as my arm is suddenly pulled. Amy is genuinely happy to see me as evident by her huge smile. Even though the place is more or less packed, her overly sweet perfume hits my nostrils. It’s like a thousand flowerbeds and the most sugary of Kool-Aids all mixed into an ocean of sweet scents.

…It’s borderline addicting.

Amy tugs to my arm as she pulls me away from the crowd, to a nearby café smacked down in the middle of the mall. We go to a nearby table where all of her friends sit, waving at me like they’ve known me for years and I casually return the gesture... Just then, I notice a meek presence at the table, squeezed down between a tanned girl with heavy makeup and the craziest bouffant and a brunette who quickly glues her eyes to her newest fancy smartphone with a glittery cover. I can’t remember their names but I remember the girl between them. However unlike the others, Sammy
does not wave at me. She looks threadbare, completely broken down. Dark rings hang under her eyes which seem to stare into the abyss, her skin is eerily pale, and her entire body is positioned in such a way that I swear that she could collapse at any given moments. But no one pays attention to her. The bouffant girl is busy talking about the latest episode of some reality series. Something about Keeping Up With… what again? And the smartphone brunette is trash-talking some ugly soul.

“Uh, is she okay?” I ask and my question comes off as surprising when suddenly all the talking comes to a sudden stop. “It’s a fever. I asked her to stay home but nah, she just had to come.” Amy explains and offers me a seat next to her before a weirdly cheery smile appears on her lips.

“Oh my gosh, you should have seen her. She was literally begging me to come along, like a sick dog.” It’s for her to contain her laughter and the other girls follows suit, all laughing except for myself and Sammy, who finally returns from her daze. Still, she has a distant look in her eyes as she smirks feebly and avoiding eye contact with me at all costs.

“Yeah… silly me.” She whispers under her scarf. Her black eye has somewhat healed but there are still some traces of a bruise.

“Just like how you got that black eye. How you managed to slip and fall in the bathroom is beyond me.”

Wait… wasn’t it on her way to the basement?

The other girls laugh some more at Amy’s words as Sammy slowly seems to sink further down in her chair. She looks like she wants the Earth part in two and swallow her. And it’s odd to speak so carelessly about your own sister’s injury. People deal with trauma differently but this feels wrong.

“It’s good to see that it’s healing.” I interlude. Nobody responds to that but I know that they heard me. Amy pats my shoulder and simply nod with an artificial smile on her lips. Just with that the girls ignore her presence plus my remark and return to talk about the latest gossip and rumors at school. Apparently, there is a rumor about one of the local delinquents being gay with this geek kid?

“I cannot believe that I am paired with Staci of all people for the next group project. She is such a waste of space and have you seen what she was wearing yesterday?” The bouffant girl, known as Anne Maria makes an overdramatic gag before fishing a can of hairspray and spraying her stiff hair. Amazing that she hasn’t gassed herself yet.

“Ugh! I hate school so much!” She concludes.

“At least, you don’t get to work with such an ugly creep like Rodney.” Amy sneers but suddenly changes her demeanor. Her sneering expression changes into a callous stare, directed at her own sister.

“Hey, Samey. Go buy some drinks for us. And remember, diet coke for me.” Her tone grows uncannily cold like Sammy was a completely stranger. I just shrug before I suddenly feel Amy’s hand touch my arm. “What you’d like, guys?” and with that she returns to her happy self.

“Diet coke” it sounds from the other girls, except for Smartphone girl called Taylor who replies with “I’d like a Fanta.” And Anne Marie who simply says “Energy drink.” Suddenly, it’s my turn to say something and I prepare myself to by looking at Sammy. She looks like a zombie.

“Don’t worry about money; Daddy always gives us a lot of money so you can have whatever you like.” Amy’s touch grows more tender and all kinds of feelings begins to bubble inside of me. Suddenly, I don’t see her pretty face; I see Chef purring and I’m getting slightly dizzy from the
intensity of her perfume.

“Just some water.” I shift my attention to Sammy and try to smile. But it only emerges as a grimace. Without a single word, Sammy quickly disappears from. Her pacing is staggering and a little uneven. But sure enough, Sammy returns in record time. She has eight bottles crammed in her arms, which she places in the middle of the table. There is only diet coke. And Amy’s face grows red. Just as red as her nail polish.

“Where’s the water?” Amy finally stops touching me.

“And the Fanta?” Taylor finally looks away from her phone.

“And the energy drink?” Anne Marie finally stops spraying her hair.

“No- enough mo-ey…” Sammy’s voice is hoarse and suddenly disappears mid-sentence.

“Well, you certainly would have if you didn’t waste your money like you always do.” Amy rolls her eye before turning to the other girl. “I’m sorry, girls.”

Anne Marie and Taylor are not pleased in the slightest and they glare at Sammy, who tries to ignore their gazes. The others, who wanted diet coke and Amy take their bottles. Another round of awkward silence befalls the table.

My body forces me to suddenly rise from the table, causing everyone to stare at me. My hands are a little sweaty and I have to stand a little because my head is spinning. Everything grows distorted around me for a couple of seconds because I march over to a silent Sammy and turn to the other girls.

“Don’t worry. I’ll get you something, ladies.” Everyone eye’s grow wide but Amy’s take the cake. I take Sammy’s hand without indicating anything. I can feel Sammy subtly resisting and trying to pull away but I flash my most assuring smile and together we walk towards the coolers.

“Now, I understand why you weren’t at school. Maybe you should have stayed home.” I try to relieve the awkwardness.

“Y-don’t understand.” She mumbles.

“You can always call me.” I get the water, Fanta and some Red Bull relatively fast. Amazing, considerimh I got one functioning arm.

“…I-an’t. Can’t.” Even when I’m standing right next to her, I can barely understand her, leaving me a bit clueless as what to say back.

“Anything you want?” I ask and look around, trying to drag out the time a little. But Sammy remains silent and just follows me around like a lost puppy. “Nothing at all?”

She shakes her head. I’d love to accept that but my protector gene won’t. So I shrug my shoulders and head to the cashier where I pay for all the drinks as well as a cup of hot chocolate. I have to put the other drinks down before I hand the warm cup to Sammy. At first, she stares at it like it was a glowing rock with sparkles, imported from Chernybol. She is reluctant but finally she gives in and takes the cup. I feel my heart flutter a bit as she shows hints of a smile underneath that scarf. I see her alive for the first time in a long time. Or rather the short week that I have known her for.

“-ou didn’t h-ve to.”

“I think I did. Have you listened to yourself?”
She simply nods before stopping abruptly. Her eyes move away to something else, distant and thoughtful. Sammy parts her lips but hesitates before searching through her pocket. And then she pops a very unlikely question. But ironically, those are the clearest words that she has uttered today.

“W-want my number?” her voice croaks, albeit a little nervously as if she is wary of my response.

I must have looked like a Christmas tree with all its lights on at once but I don’t say anything before I offer my phone to her by leaning towards her because I got my arm full. Sammy takes the device from my pocket and quickly manages her way to my list of contacts. And within mere moments, She shoves me the screen before stuffing it back into my pocket.

“Samantha” flashes over my screen. I want to jump up and down like a little girl. Yet I fail to notice that Sammy’s expression grows bitter. Her jerks her head in the direction of the others as reality reminds me that it’s time that we go back. In silence, we go back together but this time, she walks closely beside me and not behind me. Her body is warm from the fever and I can feel the warmth radiating from her. It reminds me the spotlight on a stage. Once, you step out of it, it’s cold and you suddenly find yourself longing for more warmth. And sure enough, I’m basking in her warmth. Though I’d prefer it if she would stay home in her bed. She looks 99% close to fainting.

The girls are in the middle of a conversation, although the atmosphere is tense. Taylor has taken my seat and such, all the girls are huddled together like they’re having a secret meeting. However, they disband quite quickly when I hand the them their drinks with a suave smile before crashing down next to Sammy, who drinks her chocolate with quick sips.

Awkward silences are starting to be a common thing here as another round, you guessed it, decides to pay us a visit. This entire time, I see Amy’s gaze shifting between me and Sammy and coincidently, my eyes meet hers. There is something undefinable in her look and it matches her expression perfectly; a neutral face that shows a complete mosaic of emotions and at the same time manages to conceal them all.

“So what do you plan to do?” I try to break the silence.

Anne Marie is the first to answer. “I’m throwing a party! And you’re all invited.” She is ecstatic and I can’t deny that it affects me too.

“Awesome! Count me in.” I say with the sincerest joy even if it was a really spontaneous invitation. Taylor picks up her phone yet again before mumbling. “I’m coming too.” She tries to sound excited but comes off as extremely bored.

“Amy? Of course, I was going as well.” Amy snorts with a bright smile that quickly drops once she turns to Sammy. “And Samey, I don’t want you there.” She speaks with a mechanic tone.

Sammy only replies with a couple of nods. Her gaze is fixated on the cup in her hands but occasionally, it wanders over to me. Her eyes carry more life and warmth than her body and for a second, I forget the sudden melancholic vibes from her. It’s completely fair that she has to sat alone at home but she needs to rest and get better.

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After the trip to the café, everyone wants to go shopping for the party. I don’t think once would find anything of interest here but I don’t complain. Maybe I can find something for myself, that will fuel my personal interest. As expected, none of the girls can walk past a store without being drawn to it like bees to the flowers. Anne Maria, Taylor and the rest of the girls take the front lane and lastly, Sammy is in the end, being the only girl to ignore the many
clothing stores.

I can feel her presence, even if Amy pretends like she is made out of air. Speaking of Amy, she sure can be the blabbermouth. The amounts of information dump is amazing. I practically know more about Amy than I do of Jasmine.

“Oh hello~!” a familiar voice tweets at us from outside the store. From the corner of my eye, I see Amy roll her eyes and ignore the incoming presence by pretending to look at clothes. Ella comes skipping to me and even courtises at me before testing her vocals by openly breaking out in a brief melody.

“How kind of fate to brought us together.” Her arm movements are hypnotizing and lively. I’ll admit that I haven’t talked much to Ella ever since I started but she seems overall friendly. “Hey. And what brings you here?”

“Oh, I work here.” Ella seems flattered that I bothered to ask. “On the condition that I don’t sing.” Only for her to giggle nervously. She does a twirl before she regains her professional composure and asks “What can I do for you?”

I browse the store from where I stand. Nothing makes peaks my interest so I just answer. “I think the others could your help instead. But thanks anyways.”

Somehow, that causes Ella to hesitate. She smiles some more albeit this time, it’s more uptight. “O-of course. See you at school…”

She flashes a forced smile and walks over to Amy and the others with heavy steps. Like she internally curses the world for what she is about to do. And she is promptly ignored when she, in a shaky voice, asks what she can do for them. Upon hearing her approaches, Taylor dramatically rolls her eyes and forces an annoying expression. I stand and watch the episode while flabbergasted. My muscles tighten and my hearts beats faster. The whole ordeal leaves a repulsively bad taste in my mouth; Ella looks like she is on the verge of crying but two holy angels of mercy in the form of a married couple enters the store and I can breathe again as Ella quickly heads their way.

Suddenly something tugs my sleeve and I see Sammy with a small bag in her hand. Most of her face is covered by that big, dark scar, that contrasts so heavily against her blonde hair. But she says nothing and instead pulls me outside the store in such a manner as if she wanted us to disappear unnoticed. Near a bookstore on the other side of the walkway, we sit down for a bit. I really needed that. My heart is still pounding and the dizziness has returned, causing the entire world to spin like a merry-go-round. Luckily, the cold water helps me keep my breakfast inside.

“I thought you said, you didn’t have any money.” I breathe out as I hear Sammy fish for something in the bag. A note is passed my way but I only notice it when she pokes my arm and points at the table.

“I did. But I wanted to save some so I can explain some things because I’ve concluded that you deserve it. I figured, it would be much easier this way. You know why.”

Her writing is elegant and fluid. Beautiful, I’d say. “All right?” I say and give the paper back to Sammy, who scribbles on it some more.

“For starters, I deleted your number.”

The revelation hits me like a bus and I just stare at her like I was seeing Jesus. It’s not that I’m hurt as I was kinda expecting that but still, I am very surprised. But please explain this subtle stinging that I
am feeling inside. I’m not hurt at all, am I? Sammy’s expression is extremely apologetic while writing some more but I just don’t feel even an ounce of anger towards her.

“Sorry about that. I just thought, that I couldn’t trust you and I thought that it didn’t matter since I was going to die anyways. We’re all going to die but some people’s lives end sooner than others.”

I have no idea what to say to that but my face speaks all the words. The muscles pull themselves into a position that can only be described as “Oh no.” Sammy picks up on this fast as she yet again takes the note and writes some more. Just then, I notice how gracefully her hands are moving across the paper.

“You still tried to be on my good side despite the fact that I asked you to stay the hell away from me. Not many people do that and when they try “outer forces” ruins their progress. That’s why I’m telling you all of this.”

“What about Jasmine?” I ask.

“Amy has forbidden me from ever approaching her.”

I pass the note to Sammy, who quickly writes something again. But this time, her writing is a bad hesitant, like she is thinking about what to write. But I get the feeling that it’s not a question of “what” but a question of “if”. And my very confused look doesn’t help the situation at all.

And then she hands me the paper.

I cannot believe what I just read. The information is so bizarre that I have to reread it a couple of more times before I give the paper back to Sammy. What the actual hell is going on? What is Amy doing? I say nothing but instead stare at her like she told me who killed JFK. My eyes don’t want to read it; my brain doesn’t want to remember this but it’s too late. And thus a morbid curiosity grows within me. Jasmine has mentioned her opinion on Amy several times but it’s does not make a lot of sense. Why isolate a suicidal person? Why trying to make Sammy stay away from someone, who genuinely cared for her wellbeing?

“It looks like I mindfucked you pretty good. Pardon me but you need to know if you really intend to make friends with me. Amy isn’t like you think she is. She is not good…. I wasn’t supposed to tell you that.”
Cruel, Yet Beautiful

Chapter Notes

Author’s note: Ah, it feels good to post and write again.

I wonder if I broke him. Ok, I didn’t break him but I think I enlightened him on the beautiful beast. At least, I accomplished that. Fuck my throat actually… is what I’d like to say but instead I internally bless it. Topher looks like he has seen some shit and I don’t blame him. Amy is a master at keeping a pokerface and a princess of darkness. I guess, I wanted to at least prepare him so that he wouldn’t be surprised when the ugly truth comes oozing through the cracks of Little Miss Perfect, and he drowns in it, only to emerge as a mindless goon. The poisonous sludge that chokes you once, it gets inside you. It’s so alluring and perfect that you won’t notice until it’s too late.

Perfect.

I’m anything but. The thought has always been there but it’s just now that it resurfaces. It makes me wonder why Topher is even interested in me at all. I will die soon but I need to pop some few questions. Gotta end it all with peace in mind, after all.

“Do you pity me?” I write on the note.

He shifts a look between me and the piece of paper before giving me an answer that I don’t want to hear, even if I expected it above anything else. “…I would be lying if I said no.” His expression screams guilt. I know I started it. I know I did. But I’m still fuming. Just a bit. I don’t know why. I’m such a selfish bitch. I rip out anew page from my notebook and proceed to write. My hands are shaking and I’m entering the blue zone again.

“I understand. It can’t be helped.”

Topher isn’t eased in the slightest. It’s only logical to feel like that, when you’re dealing with an emotional train wreckage. Too gruesome to-

Oh yes, something suddenly crosses my mind. The original reason for why we are here in the first place. The damn ice cream! We’ve both been so busy with pleasing Amy that we forgot that the whole thing started out with him asking me out for another round of ice cream. Nobody should eat cold stuff in the winter, especially someone with a sore throat like me. Speaking of sore throat, you’re probably wondering why I’m even here. Well, Amy for once did actually speak some level truth. I did ask to come here, for no other reason than to keep my promise to Topher. But that was merely an afterthought, you know, after being forced along the ride by Amy because she needed the Fool to entertain her. So here I am, ready to get some cold sugary stuff after being publicly embarrassed by my sister. I can’t really care anymore about my physical existence so I can just as well destroy myself slowly before I finally end it all.

I quickly take the paper and write down the question. Time to eat some motherfucking ice cream.

“You owe me ice cream, remember?”

Upon seeing my hasty scribbles, Topher lightens up. His eyes gleam with excitement as he gets up
from his seat, heads over to me and nods eagerly. Sure, why not? At least, it’s more entertaining that following a bunch of half-wits stomp around and treat those beneath them like dirt. Which just happens to be everyone. But enough about that, at least I can do something while I’m here instead of sulking. And keep my word.

Together, Topher and I both leave the table and venture our way through the mall. As expected on a Saturday, there are a buttload of people here; albeit it’s fewer than usual. Or maybe not, the hell do I know? I don’t go to this place very often and when I do, it’s just to shop for some new clothes and even then, I keep my eyes on the ground and concentrate on the matter at hand.

But now I actually see the place. Like seeing how it actually looks like and remember it. You know how you can look at stuff and it’s clear as day but you don’t really see it? Like you look at a tree but you don’t remember seeing it? That’s the mall for me. Until today that is, because right now I see everything. Maybe because Topher is with me, someone who stayed with me despite my sister’s influence. It’s magical.

Oh, was that too cheesy?

In all seriousness, I do mean what I said. All of my life, people have shunned me and declared me an enemy of the people. I’ve been (and still am) this thing that only destroys. I’ve never been able to do anything right and I finally did, Amy took credit for it, leaving me out in cold. And she relished in my uselessness because I lacked the guts to speak my mind. Instead I silently sat by while my life spiraled out of control.

But now, Amy is in the cold. Someone has taken an interest of me. Sure, it’s out of pity but at least, it’s something. I think, I don’t really know. It’s not enough to make me want to live anymore. Unless Topher can make my parents divorce and make Amy and Father move to the other side of the planet while I get to live with Mommy, I’ll be sticking to my initial death wish. Regardless, I’m here to get some ice cream for the last time in my life.

We go to the same café where Amy sat me on a pedestal for people to throw tomatoes at me. My heart sinks a bit as we pass the table where we sat. This is the reason why I’d rather stay in my bedroom all day than to go outside and be…ugh social.

I shrug a bit when Topher goes to the counter and orders some more damage to my throat. I wonder if bleach is effective against tonsillitis. I wonder if it would be less putrid than Mountain Dew Sewage if one mixed in lots and lots of Kool-Aid.

“Don’t drink the Kool-Aid!” they say? Screw that; if it will take me off the face of this planet, then I’d be happy to chug it all down. No time to pounder about that because now though because I see a huge soft ice close to my face. My stomach turns by the sight of it and I’m freezing now. But I take the thing and let out a meek “Thanks.” Oh, look. A coherent word!

Topher is grinning from ear to ear and walks up to my side and we continue our stroll. We don’t say much to each other. It is hard to write when I got ice cream in my hand and my throat prevents me from speaking. But the atmosphere is pleasant and all around alluring. In a way that makes my mind wander a bit on memory lane.

It reminds of the time when we first met. Why is it that I always manage to find a thread of good fortune when I’m at my psychological lowest? It’s happening now and it happened back then.

Especially with that “damsel” line. I can’t believe that it still amuses me but it does. I feel my heart flutter a little every time I think of that day. It’s odd. I used to be so mad that I couldn’t die but now, I’m… enjoying myself. Who would have guessed.
“So how did you do on the test?” Topher randomly asks with his mouth full of vanilla ice. Oh yes, that wretched test. I’ll just put all of my cards on the table and say that I didn’t study for it. So I give him a wavering thump, that can’t decide if it should go up and down. Translation: I passed with a reprimand from our teacher.

“It was quite hard. I passed but only because I sucked Wikipedia dry for information.” He grins with confidence, despite the huge contrast of what he is actually saying. It’s endearing in a way. I use that words way too much but that’s the only way, I can describe Topher; endearing. He tries his best to be reliable, always with a cocky smile. Even when he was dying from anxiety over little pitiful me, he tried his best to be there for me, all while keeping an air of coolness around him. I know why and it’s a reason that makes my heart sink a bit, yet it flutters really because, and this is going to sound weird, I think there is more to it. I can’t explain it though but it’s something more of a spiritual connection. I guess.

What am I even talking about…?

And then it suddenly hits me; we know nothing about each other. And a curiosity grows within me; I have yet to see his weaker side. I wonder how it’s like though when his suave façade cracks. Is he moody? Angry? Does he jam to Linkin Park and Marilyn Manson all day? Does he cry bitter tears of teenage angst and first world problems?

Who is the real Topher?

Then again, you can turn the question around and ask “Who is the real Sammy?” Who is Sammy when she is not drowning herself in depressing thoughts and dreams about suicide? Is she a happy girl? Does she smile to people on the street? Does she have any friends? The ability to make her father not hate her? Have you ever met the real Sammy?

No. No, you haven’t. Because she is dead. She died a long time ago; an early death for a girl her age. 13 years does not leave much to the quality of life. And after her death, the person you see right now took over. A sulky, depressed, moody shut-in. Samey, if you will.

“This place has a karaoke bar? Holy shit, complete with green screen.” Topher speaks with much awe and effectively bringing me out of my sneaking depressed state. He sees the bar, all right. It’s quote ironic that it takes up a lot of space, yet its only means of profit are Ella, who can finally sing without getting a spitball to the back of her head courtesy of Sugar and Lenard and his girlfriend, who can use the green screen to realize their RPG fantasies. Or that’s what I’ve heard. I certainly don’t go there. I don’t even come to the city very often. I’m a hermit, I’m a shut-in, who would rather stay confined to her bedroom than leave her house.

I nod at Topher and his eyes gleam with childlike giddy. “Awesome. We should totally go there one day. Then you’d get a taste of the Topher Experience.” And he looks directly at me. It’s unnerving; I’ve never liked it when people looked at me, especially not when they had so close as Topher is now. I certainly don’t go there. I don’t even come to the city very often. I’m a hermit, I’m a shut-in, who would rather stay confined to her bedroom than leave her house.

Again, we take a walk in silence lane. I wonder if Topher enjoys this; walking around with a silent enigma. I wonder if I’m boring. But he smiles so everlasting brightly and confidently that I doubt that he is bored. The mood is good, really good and I guess I feel alive enough to say that I like this.

That is until everything comes crashing down as the bane of my existence has arrived. My heart drops to my feet and I suddenly feel the ice cream slip out of my grasp.

“What are you doing? Samey, why are you trying to force Topher to do whatever you want to?” Amy glares at me when she arrives with 10 tons of bags dangling from her arms. She would have
punched me in the face had we not been in public but instead, she berates me like I was the very prime example of useless filthy trash and greedy intentions.

“I can’t believe you. You’re always like this, trying to get pity points!” She opens her yap and more hateful words fly out of her mouth. Fuck me silly and leave me for dead. Who am I kidding, I’m already dead. There is an alien look on Amy’s eyes. But I know that it glowing anger. If humans could express themselves with colors, Amy would be glowing the brightest red known to the color spectrum.

“Amy, it’s not like-“ Topher tries to explain to no avail.

“Topher, I’m so sorry for my sister’s behavior.” Amy tries too hard to be comforting and sincere as she brutally interrupts him. “She does the weirdest things to get attention. All the fucking time!” The last part is hissed at me.

“I think it’s time to go home.” Amy dictates it all. And everyone rolls over for her dictatorship because it’s Amy, the saint who can do no wrong, twin sister of Samey, the gloomy, immature, useless attention-whore. The one, who can never do anything right. That is what the world has been lead to believe and for a while, I did as well. Ever since that day, the day when I quit the cheerleading squad, I believed it. I thought that everything that had happened up until then was my fault. It happened because I couldn’t fix it when I was supposed to. I couldn’t be Amy the saint, who swooped in and made everything right again. On that day, I realized how wasteful I was as everyone turned against me…

The entire day right now is a melting pot of fiascos. Anne Marie, Taylor and the rest of the devils look disappointed in me for no particular reason, Topher is confused beyond wording and Amy is radiating with ferocious wrath. Our friend date is completely ruined, my ice cream is melting on the floor and I’m being pushed to my downfall. In the midst of all the forces turning against me, a buzz from my phone frees me from the lion’s den. I quickly pick up the device only to see a message that leaves my gloomy self somewhere in the middle.

“Hi sweetie. We’ll be home tonight.” A text from Mommy. My heart lifts itself up a bit and I’m relieved to say the least. And then my heart sinks a little more when it suddenly hits ma that Dad will be back as well. So currently, my emotions are a mosaic of excitement and absolute dread. I want to reply but time and events fly by so fast that I don’t even find a proper moment to do it. Before I’m aware of it, Amy has said her hasty goodbyes to her friends and Topher before she literally grabs my arm with such a force and decides to drag me away. I can see Topher trying his best to explain himself once more but the verdict has passed, my judge, jury and executioner has spoken and our time is up.

I’m sorry that I’m useless. Again, I’m powerless to do anything.

There is a burning pain in my scalp as my hair is pulled. From the corner of my eye, I can see Amy smile her trademark wicked smile at the sight of my torture. She relishes in the misery that she can bring upon me but I know her preferences so well. And thus, I know that she is a massive sadist. Like, it wasn’t enough to see me depressed. No, violence is the way to go. But I don’t shed any tears. I can feel that Amy is starting to get bored. Thank the deities.

I suppose that’s what happens when you have no will or strength to fight back.

“Stupid little whore! Did you give him a blowjob too?” One of the girls spit in my face while she yanks my head. I don’t answer her and that pisses her off. She lets go of my hair but before I can even think to sit up, her fist is planted in my jaw, sending me flying to the ground. My entire face is
pounding and everything spins around me. It feels like the punch broke my connection with the rest of the world. I feel my body on all four but everything else fading away. Until a sharp taste of blood enters my mouth…

“C’mon, we don’t have time for this.” Amy sighs. “Anne Marie’s party is starting soon. And I’d rather be drinking that to waste any more time on this skank.”

From the corner of my eye, I see the other girl shrugging with major disappointment. She strokes a lock of brown hair behind her ear. “Dammit, I’d love to beat some more sense into her.”

“She’ll get what’s coming to her. That’s what happens when you spread lies about people.” Amy smirks and the pair decides to walk away, leaving me to clean up all of my bloody mess. Just when my eye was finally healing, she had to ruin it all by letting her lackey tenderize my face like a steak. It’s hurting so goddamn much… wait, why can’t I smell anything but blood?

Did she break my nose?

I’m still dizzy but somehow manages to crawl and stagger my way to the bathroom. Despite the fact that she let someone beat me pretty badly, I must thank Amy for letting it all happen when we got home. At least, I escaped showing my latest volume of humiliation to the public.

What I see in the mirror is like something out of a horror film. Or someone, who just survived a car crash. My face and clothes for that matter is smeared in crimson red. My eyes aren’t bruised up thankfully but I still look like shit. Not to mention that I feel exactly like that.

I’m used to it. It’s sad to say that I’m used to being the personal punching bag of a person, who is supposed to treat me relatively decently but sadly it’s not like that. It’s a neverending cycle of violence, as I said before. It’s like an eternal nightmare, where you’re drowning in hate and malice and your voice is rendered useless except for

As I clean up my battered face, my phone suddenly vibrates in my pocket. I can tell from the buzzes that it’s not a call, thank heavens so I pick it up without much hesitation.

It’s a selfie of Topher with two beer cans. Ew. Ok, not entirely because Topher is smiling brightly at the camera. The angle is a little weird and his face looks oddly disproportioned. He’s sending a thumps up to the camera and I can see his plaster from the corner of the picture. It seemed that he put it on auto shoot and just managed

Another buzz and a message soon follows.

“Hey! Thought I’d take two for U. Sorry about 2day. It wasn’t ur fault.”

I don’t need to tell you about those strange contraptions that my muscles are doing right now. As of late, I’m oddly familiar with them. I thought that I could never really smile again, not out of my own nonexistent feelings of happiness. But here I am, smiling like a goofy idiot with blood smeared in my face.

I’ve barely known the guy for a week but already, I kinda feel like I’m… being lifted from my initial death wish? I honest to God don’t know. Reaching for a clean cloth, I cleanse my face. But the tears won’t stop flowing. I can’t stop crying. And it’s not because of Topher’s horrible text language.

I used to think that I have no tears left. That I have cried so much about my miserable existence, my tear ducts must be worn out by now. But now, I’m crying again. My hands bury my eyes as loud sounds escapes my throat. I don’t know why I’m even crying. I just randomly broke down and teared my heart out.
“Sammy? Sweetie, are you in there?” Mommy knocks softly on the door. Shoot. I hastily tidy myself up and unlock the door, speaking with my sore throat.

“I’m good, Mommy.” I croak out with a failed smile on my face. And it doesn’t help that my mother’s face loses all of its colors. And to top it all off, she looks like she was a witness to murder. She drops all of her bags as her body completely freezes.

“Sweet baby Jesus, what happened to your face? Are you all right? Does it hurt?”

“Just an accident. Nothing to worry about.” I close the door to the bathroom.

“Samantha.” My toes curl by the voice of my father and I feel like throwing up the digested remains of ice cream in my bowels. “Where is Amy?” His voice is cold and nonchalant. I guess, it cannot be helped when he is forced to interact with his least favorite daughter. My mother gently takes my arm and lead me down the stairs. My father’s reaction to my tenderized face is exactly as I would have imagined it to be.

Indifference. Of course. Because my name doesn’t start with an “A”, it doesn’t really matter if I come home with my decapitated head under my arm. He would not bathe an eye.

“At a party.” I croak dryly, awaiting another tirade of how disappointed he is that I’m not Amy 2.0. I smile to Mommy, who brings a bag of ice to me.

“And why don’t you ever pull yourself together and get out of the house for once?” Fucking called it.

“Because of this, George!” Mommy snarls at him, pointing to my face. “Have you heard her voice as well? Your daughter is sick!”

I really, really want dear Gaia to get me away from this and drag me to the center of the Earth. I hate my father and I love Mommy but I absolutely loathe their arguments. I adore Mommy when she stands up to my father but I cannot bear the sensation of their voices screaming at each other.

“She always is! I’m beginning to think that she is a hypochondriac!”

“Did you even hear yourself right now? I’m beginning to see why Amelia is this way!”

Great. My parents just got home from God knows where and already, they’re tearing each other’s throat out. I wonder how their vacation has been when I was not the topic of the arguments for once. I want to talk to Mommy, letting her hold my hand and speak to me in that slivery, light voice of hers. But I can’t because now, her voice is no longer calm and soothing. It’s shrill and loud, cracking several places. As my parents bicker some more, I sneak up the stairs and lock myself in my room. My safe haven when Amy is not around.

Gotta answer Topher somehow before I go and kill myself. I’m still going to miss Mommy and I’m sorry that she will be stuck with Amy, to deliver her grandchildren.
Despite it being early January, Anne Marie has decided to hold her part in a tent, located in the rather small backyard. As a result, it’s brutally cold here. Yet no one seems to be bothered by the bitter cold. The music blasts through the thin fabric of the tent. Anne Marie is busy twerking to “My Dick” with some sort of cocktail in her hand. It’s neutral in color but filled with an impossible amount of carbon dioxide and she drinks of it every other second. Not surprising, she refills now and then.

Taylor and some other girls are loudly cheering her on, letting the energy drink and vodka cocktail be her reward. Other people dance to the loud music but their careful moves don’t garner any attention. In a corner somewhere, a couple of chairs, pillows and fatboys have been thrown into a corner.

That’s where I sit. And have been doing so ever since alcohol entered everyone’s system. I’m no saint myself; I’ve had a couple of beers and the ember ignited in the pit of my stomach. It’s odd actually; all day, I’ve been excited to go out and blow some steam but now, when I actually have the chance, I feel no joy. And I can’t really blame it on my shoulders; or maybe I can since, Dad warned me against being too wild.

Maybe it’s because no one really wants to talk. I went here in hopes of getting to know some few people but either I’m naïve and dumb or just have too high expectations to the youths of today. Is it because I’m not shithoused?

Why is there no soda anyways? I intended to drink with moderation, not ending up with alcohol poisoning. Most because, and this is going to sound stupid but, I’m not a drinker. Dumb, I know but hear me out. Back where I came from, to that place I don’t really want to talk about, I never drank. Primarily because I was confined to my house, trying to calm a storm. And when I finally got my ass moving, I got scared. I got scared because the people, whom I thought I knew were totally different once alcohol entered their system.

Simply put, I don’t like the idea of me drunk. I don’t like the possibility of me being out of control. Someone has to be reliable for the others after all.

Why did Sammy have to get sick? She doesn’t seem like the typical party girl or maybe that’s just when she is depressed. How is happy Sammy? I’d rather go drinking with Sammy than to be here.

“Hey.” I hear a familiar voice greet me and I hear the sound of a fatboy being pressed. Amy sits right next to me. In her hand is a Budweiser lemonade mix. She smiles at me, tilting her head so her giant heart shaped earrings move along with her actions. She is wearing a black, tight low cut dress. It’s fairly short as well or maybe that’s because of her crossed legs. Either, it looks well on her and she knows it.

“Aren’t you having fun?”

“Yeah…” Not really, but I can’t tell her that. But it doesn’t really matter since Amy is less than convicted of my meek answer. She leans closer to me and takes my hand. Her skin is warm and soft like a feather on a summer’s day.

“I know the feeling.” She says, still smiling. And suddenly, her fingers brush against my skin and draw lines alongside my bones. She has positioned herself in such a way that I can see right between her cleavage and frankly, there’s little left to the imagination.
“Wanna get some fresh air?”

It’s not like I got better stuff to do, so I nod and she takes me outside, still holding my hand. The bitter winter cold chills to the bone and I regret that I left my jacket in the tent. I’m shivering like a furless husky. Amy, on the other hand, is unfazed by the cold, walking around like was she taking a stroll in Central Park. And she is wearing less clothes than me!

Though it baffles me how she adapted to the climate so quickly, it doesn’t bother me too much. Not compared to how Sammy must be sulking at home all alone. I know Amy ordered her to not show up but still, I can’t imagine something duller than to sit at home on a Saturday night.

Something warm and soft presses itself against my healthy arm and I notice that Amy is climbing me like a spider monkey. When it hits her that I’d like some answers, she smiles with pure innocence.

“You were shivering.” She presses harder. Amy is soft. Too soft. Like a plushy made of jelly. Our faces are practically inches apart and I can smell the Budweiser lemonade scent coming from her lips. And somehow, she moves closer; so close that her blonde strains of hair tickle my face. It’s too much; way too much. I’d like a girlfriend but something about this feels wrong. I can’t put my finger on it, but somehow I feel this was not supposed to happen.

“Ooooh, what are you two doing?” A blonde girl with stilettos comes casually walking towards us, earning a death’s glare from Amy. My holy angel of mercy seems completely oblivious to the fact that Amy was trying to kiss me. She comes closer to us, looking genuinely unaware. However, Amy is not pleased with that and looks to me for an explanation. Though she tries to smile, it only emerges as a grimace.

I believe that I have seen the blonde girl at my school. The stilettos are quite recognizable and her big, blue eyes are hard to forget. Manly because they hold a certain level of innocence and oblivion to the cruel world that they witness. I She is one of the seniors though and I don’t really have a name for her pretty face. I remember seeing her from time to time at the school with some jock eating her face regardless of the audience.

“Just hanging around.” I take a few steps away from Amy and the cold begins to bite me again. I’m shivering like a hairless puppy on the artic but at least, I feel better about it.

“Oh cool! Can I, like, join you while I wait for my boyfriend?” The blondie closes in on us and I internally welcome her with open arms. Amy, on the other hand, is fuming like Mount Vesuvius and she glares death and agony at the girl, who is completely unaware of the wrath, she unknowingly unleashed.

And a strange thought suddenly crosses my mind.

“I’m Lindsay, by the way.” She walks up next to me, chatting away like nothing was wrong in the world. Amy snaps her lips silent and looks at us with an angry stare. She crosses her arms in defiance.

“Topher.” I just say, trying to ignore the unnerving anxiety that slowly eats away at the carefree atmosphere, though Lindsay’s endless stream of chit-chat and shit nobody cares about is like a symphony in my ears and it keeps the anxiety at bay. Partly. I take a quick glance at Amy, who continues to stare angrily at Lindsay. She really is pissed about our “moment” being ruined. Nearby, the honking of a car echoes through the neighborhood and Lindsay gallops to the source of the sound, prompting me to follow. I guess, it’s her boyfriend who has arrived. Amy refuses to follow and instead stomps away towards the party tent where some generic dance song blasts through the speakers. A loud cheer is heard and someone shouts “Amy is back! Body Tequila everyone!” and
people cheer one my time.

Lindsay makes a sharp turn by the corner of the house and nears the front door when she manages to trip over her own feet and I, being a few feet away from her, manages to grab her wrist before she smashes her face against the pavement. I pull her back onto her feet and she thanks me with wide blue eyes.

She is still out of it so we sit down on the doorstep. There is a piece of roof that covers the steps from the snow. The air is colder and Lindsay’s boyfriend is nowhere to be seen yet. The honking proved to be some stranger picking someone else up from a house nearby.

“Are you already going home?” I try to count the number of snowflakes that fall to the ground, just to do something. Lindsay claps her heels against the pavement and she tilts her head from side to side in rhythm.

“Yeah. My boyfriend texted me about a party elsewhere. Where I know people. I think.”

“So why are you here?” I ask.

Lindsay looks at me, resembling someone who’s very much hurt of what I just said.

“No, I didn’t mean it like that. I meant, if you would rather be there, why did you come to Anne Marie’s?”

“I dunno. Why are you here with me? Weren’t you about to kiss Amy?” She applies some more lip-gloss and what other types of make-up, women like and use. Her question unnerves me and I gotta think hard of a proper answer.

I know, it’s going to sound weird but I do have the answer. But I can’t quite put words to it. I can feel it within my body

I’m a party animal. I’m the cool guy whom everyone wants to get drunk with. I’m the one everyone can rely on; the one with no problems so come and pour your hearts out to me. Spit me in the face and treat me like garbage because your life is shit, I won’t mind; I’m here for you to cry on.

And yet, I’m none of that. I’m vulnerable, I’m saving others because I couldn’t save myself or the ones who needed me the most. I was excited to go to that patty but my glee soon died down like a weak flame. I had hoped, I would get to know people some more but when I arrived, I realized that the groups had already been established and cemented. Even for someone like me, it was hard to get just a temporarily seat in their ranks.

Not to mention that there was only one guy present. One of the sophomores, whom Anne Marie tried too hard to impress. I guess I, being the other male around, threatened his position as alpha male. Meh. But it’s ok. At, I don’t have to submit to public pressure and get shitfaced. Right?

“You can come along if you want. You looked really, like, really bored on that sack-chair thingy,” Lindsay continues her rhythmic movements.

“You mean a fatboy?”

“So that’s what they’re called.” Lindsay says, enlightened.

“You know… I think, I’ll be joining you.”

“Great. It’ll be, like, so awesome! But…” Her movements stop and she looks at me, deadly serious.
“What about Amy?” she says after presumably weighing her words. But to be honest, I don’t think that she is the type of girl to think hard about stuff. And when she does, it probably isn’t on the same level like rocket science or something.

“Aren’t you two dating?” she continues, looking awfully thoughtful and guilty.

“She’ll be fine. And no, we’re just friends.” I say. And I regret nothing. It’s not that I don’t like Amy.

Another car honks in the distance before it pulls up right before the front door. Some brunette waves at us. He is wearing a headband of all things but that doesn’t garner Lindsay’s attention. His very existence does. The blonde girl springs up like a jack in a box and proceeds to run over to the car, tripping on her way. I measly follows, waving at the guy.

“Hi Taylor!” Lindsay moves directly to the driver, almost cramming her entire body inside the window.

“It’s Tyler.” His smile wavers a bit as his girlfriend kiss him. Well, that must be sad. I stand and awkwardly watch the couple smooch and whatnot before they both realize that I’m present.

“Oh, this is Topher. He’s a newbie but he totally wants to join our party. Can he, huh, babe?” Lindsay jumps up and down like a child, begging a poor set of parents for more candy. Tyler looks at me, his stare seems to be just as oblivious to basic stuff as his girlfriend’s and if he was suspicious in any way, he hid it quite well. Honestly, I don’t feel threatened in the slightest.

“Anything for you, baby. Hop in.” He sends me a thumps up but it’s not a surprise that I wasn’t “baby” in this case, thank the lord. Lindsay escorts me to the car because it’s one of those models with just two doors. So I’m crammed in the back.

Right then, my cellphone buzzes and I manage to pick it up from my pocket. It’s a text from Amy and I feel a little guilty. In the front seats, Lindsay and Tyler are talking about some rumors at school and what they plan in the future but I don’t really hear what they say exactly.

“What are you?” it flashes across my screen with Amy’s name floating above the message.

What in the hell am I supposed to tell her? Every possible action will result in a shitty outcome and me being an asshole. There is no subtle way around it! Or is there? Maybe if I…

“Got ill. Going home. Sorry.” What a shitty liar that I am. I’m sure that she demands an explanation from me and I have to come up with a proper excuse without sounding like a complete douche. My anxiety level has crossed the limit of the green zone and now closes in on the yellow zone.

Dammit, I need some booze to keep my mind from exploding. Luckily, Tyler probably has psychic powers and he starts the car before we drive off into the night.

I wonder what Sammy is doing. So I text her. Close to where we are, music blasts through the night. It’s still the same music, Anne Marie had in her party tent so on that department, I am less than impressed. On the other hand,

The party is being held at a freaking mansion! Just kidding. It’s an ordinary house though it looks like a mansion from the inside. There is an exotic feel to it complete with wood furniture, chandeliers, animal rugs and lots and lots of paintings.

The host’s name is Alejandro, a Hispanic Casanova who got all the ladies melting. I can’t believe that he is walking around with an open blouse in the middle of winter. Sure, it’s long-sleeved and rather thick in fabric but I bet that the guy is freezing his butt off. Do all Hispanic dudes prance
around with an open blouse?

No stereotype intended.

Anyways, Alejandro here got lots and lots of booze stacked up in ice buckets all over the house. And it’s all the expensive brands like Crystal and whatnot. Whereas a majority of the girls were impressed by Alejandro himself, the guys are now head over heels for the many types of alcohol present. I, for one, remains indifferent; I just needed an excuse to get away from Anne Marie’s party. And Amy. Just for now. My phone buzzes and I pick it up, hoping that it’s Sammy. But my heart sinks a bit when I see who it really is.

“R U mad???” The text says.

Another buzz.

“Im sorry!!”

Yet another one. It never seems to end,

“Topher?! Can we talk?!”

The buzzing never ceases as new messages come spamming to my inbox like a swarm of locus. I don’t manage to read all of them because there is so many. I just gawk at my phone in pure disbelief and bewilderment. What the hell am I even supposed to do when a girl is desperately trying to get me? What am I supposed to do when the guilt is choking me to unconsciousness?

I need a drink.

Tired of life, I make way to the Alejandro, who is busy flirting with some girl of Asian descent. Needless to say, the chemistry is blooming like a flower behind the girl’s cold exterior. But their romance is cut short when Alejandro shifts his attention to me.

“Enjoying the party?” He leans over the counter, flashing his manly chest. Not an ounce of hair is present. I wonder if he waxes himself.

“Sure. It’s great. Uhm…” I try to ignore the girl’s judgmental stare. “Could you fix a drink for me? Something strong?”

Alejandro frowns at me, looking at his girlfriend before he responds to my request. “You look kinda green. And what I got isn’t for green souls. Sure, you can take it?”

I just nod at him, my patience running thin all of a sudden. Alejandro is not convinced in the slightest but he submits to my command and prepares me a drink of some sorts. I don’t know what he even puts in there but I can tell that’s some strong stuff as evident by the powerful scent.

“Drink up, amigo.” He serves me the drink complete with ice cubes. I swear, all that is missing is a tiny umbrella. Or does that belong to another drink? I grab the glass and is immediately startled by the cold hitting my glass and I can tell by the sly smile before me that Ale over here is enjoying himself. He merely sits and waits while I proceed to drink.

Suddenly, I cough and wheeze as the strong liquor is burning through my throat like an inferno. My sleeve stinks the same way as the drink does and I’m pretty sure that I spat all over the counter. A low, soft chuckle escapes Alejandro and I glare at him with red eyes. His girlfriend snorts at me before leaving the scene altogether. Thank goodness, I don’t need her input either.
“Told you so. How about you get some experience before you try playing with the big boys?”

I don’t know what’s happening to me but right now, I am fuming. I still glare at Alejandro but trust me when I say that it’s just a matter of time before I bash his face in. I’m not that violent, not at all but now, I have zero patience and zero tolerance for anyone and anything. All because of emotional suppressed feelings and sexual frustrations. Oh, did I say that out loud? What a great night, this turned out to be.

Golly, am I getting sick and tired of winter.
The Other Direction

Chapter Notes

Apologies for all the hating on Mountain Dew. Personally I love it! Well, the green one only though. Don’t get me started on the red one, ewwwww. Anyways, this chapter went up later than expected due to school and for that, I apologize.

I didn’t kill myself this time either and when I finally got a chance to end it all, I can’t. I fucking can’t because I’m weak. I’m useless and weak. It’s frustrating and infuriating that I have the tools but not a fraction of the will to just fucking end it all. If it wasn’t because my parents came home, I would have run downstairs, grab a kitchen knife and stab myself until I lay dying and bleeding all over the kitchen floor. Good luck cleaning my body, Amy! Can’t wait for the world to see your true colors when my suicide note is found. Don’t worry about destroying it, it has been hidden so you won’t find it right away. I’ll leave law enforcement to that. Welcome to hell, Amy.

But it will never happen.

I’m standing in the kitchen, next to Mommy because my bodily needs demanded water and as my shity shitty shit luck would have it, my father has decided to chastise me purely based on my very existence. Even when I do something productive, it’s not good enough. Everything I did was never good enough. I’m not good enough.

“Samey, go outside and stop clinging to your mother like a child.”

“George, she is only 16. And besides, we’ve been gone for one and a half month. You can’t expect a girl her age to not miss her parents.” Mommy fixes some snacks for me, adding a little extra dip to the mozzarella sticks. I’ve barely eating because my appetite has decided to leave my body for a while but now, I’m drooling like a starved dog.

“You mean yourself.” My father sneers, preparing some expresso coffee. He and Amy are the only people who uses that thing and even so, it’s so rare. I wonder why we even have that monstrosity in the kitchen.

“George.” Mommy is in no mood to fight. She shakes her head exhaustedly and hands me the basket with a weary smile.

“Here you go, sweetie.”

“Thanks.”

Our tired smiles match each other. They are both evidence of a tiresome life; they depict the current state of two souls, worn down and used without mercy. When I look at Mommy’s smile, I wonder why she risked her prestige and respect from my father for the sake of me. Ever since that day where everything that could go wrong, did go wrong, she has been by my side, earning verbal beat downs from not only her husband but her oldest daughter as well. Mommy is my father’s trophy and Amy’s punching bag, a fate that she doomed herself to for the sake of me. Every time, I see her treated like dirt, it triggers something within me; it pushes we over the edge to the other side of my misery spectrum; rage.
And the cherry on top? My father hates me. Like that wasn’t obvious from the lovely reunion.

You’re probably wondering what in the hell I’m currently doing downstairs if I didn’t chug down the Mountain Drew: Extreme Bleach. Well… I’m having a screaming match with my father while Mommy tries to calm the cyclone that has hit our house. I’m barely in condition to do that, let alone speak but he has seriously pushed my buttons. Scratch that, he has smashed them with a sledgehammer and decided to run them over with a steamroller. Right now, he is jumping on the sad pieces, just to see how much fury he can bring out of me, so he can use it as a weapon to voice his disappointments in me. And maybe, just maybe, turn Mommy against me. Gotta torment the black sheep somehow.

Did I mention that he calls me “Samey” and not “Sammy”? Because his princess does it and the princess of Darkness always knows better?

His intention was the bring the worst out of me and he succeeded. I’m meek as a mouse but right now, I’m raging like a ferocious lion. Yet my glass heart is breaking with every passing moment. I’m silently dying and breaking down from the inside. If I win this, it will be no victory.

“Why are you always slacking off and laze around at home instead of being more like your sister?!” My father slams his cup against the kitchen counter and the black liquid spills out drips on the wooden surface.

“Because I’m not her!”

“I can see that. You are disgrace to the family! All you ever do is complaining and whine, like the world owes you everything!”

“Well, I’m sorry that I’m not good enough!”

“Samantha!” Mommy tries to calm me down and from the corner of my eye, I can see her sending my father a death’s glare. Yet he is relentless and without mercy, utilizing this moment to ruin me even further.

“Well, so am I!” he snaps before finally pausing. But that only lasts for a couple of seconds because I can see by the small vibrations of his lips that he thinks of what to say. What could he possibly say to ruin me anymore? Does he take the chance of verbal abuse and a possible divorce?

“I wish you never had been born. This family would have been so much better without you!”

I feel utterly defeated, I’ve lost. I stare at my father, stunned. There is a deafening silence in the room as the uttered words sink in. Mommy’s eyes are wide and hints of tears form right beneath them. She looks at me, on the verge of crying as my father seems to celebrate his victory. And I’d hate to admit this but he earned it. He degraded himself and murdered any last pieces of dignity left but he won. Now, the tears are threatening me as a familiar stinging emerges in my eyes. I put the basket down on the counter and stomp my way outside. I can’t begin to explain what I’m feeling right now. If I felt like shit since my failed suicide, I’m beyond feces and decomposing sludge. I’m the filmiest scum out there.

“How… how could you?” Mommy’s voice cracks and I seriously hate it when that happens. Then, there is no doubt that her limit has been reached as well.

“Don’t be so melodramatic. She has done nothing to this family so why are you acting like she is worth anything?”

On a snowy Saturday evening, I wander outside without shoes on. My socks are already soaked by
the few first steps but I walk some more regardless. The snow falls gently and lands on my head. Maybe I should wipe my eyes so my tears don’t freeze to ice, although I’d be doing that nonstop because the tears can’t stop flowing. The words that my dad said to me and him standing by them cut a deep hole into my heart. I’ve resented him for a long time, yet somehow I’ve never felt so crushed by someone verbally abusing me. All the things that Amy and her goons have said to me pale in comparison.

A buzz from my phone doesn’t really bring me out of my new misery but I do check it regardless. I’m expecting to see a plea from Mommy, begging me to go home but instead, it’s Topher, asking how I feel. Oh, if only he knew. But I don’t feel like typing down the feeling of being unloved by your own parent and how much it hurts to be told that by said parent so instead I lie through my teeth and type.

“I’m doing good.”

The cold eats away at my body heat and chills my bones. I feel like a popsicle and it’s amazing that I haven’t died yet, considering that I didn’t bring a coat let alone shoes. Ugh, I’m such a weak cunt; I’ve been crying myself to sleep for years now, I’ve planned my death over and over and yet when I finally get the courage to end it all, I back out like a bitch. I’m at the bridge where I tried to kill myself. The water has frozen and I suddenly feel like I missed some grand event. I could have been floating there. I could have found happiness in my ice-cold grave. And here I stand, watching over what could have been.

In the distance, music echoes through the sky from several directions. I’m sure Topher and Amy are in one of those junction points. The city is rather small so it’s inevitable that you hear loud music when some frat kids decide to overwork their speakers.

I don’t want to go home.

So, I walk away. Further away. Maybe to one of the music points; I don’t know really. And honestly, I don’t care. I mean, how can I when the second ingredient to my existence implicitly threw me out of his life? My own father, as the fucking asshole that he is, threw me under the bus and decided to run me over a couple of times. Not to mention that he honked his own horn, like an egocentric Roman king. Tiberius, is that you?

Happy fucking Father’s Day.

Oh, look, the shop where Topher treated me for ice cream is open. My stomach suddenly growls and I guess that I am hungry. I don’t really know. Ow, my feet are freezing. I wonder if they have frostbite. I don’t know.

I don’t know anything. I don’t know why the tears won’t stop falling. I don’t know why I’ve fallen to my knees and am currently wailing like a tortured child. I don’t know why I am even here. I don’t know where to go. I don’t know who my allies are. A sudden buzz comes from my phone, and I pick it up, ready to smash it against the ground.

“Samantha, sweetie. Please come home. “

No, no. I won’t. I don’t belong there. I’m sorry, Mommy but your dickhorse of a husband banished me from my own home. I leave the message unanswered and put the cellphone in my pocket. I’m almost freezing to death and I guess it’s time that I find someplace called shelter.

I wander aimlessly through the night with zero purpose. Every now and then, my phone buzzes and I know Mommy is trying to reach her. I don’t feel like being near another living person; I’m tired of
“Sammy?” Someone taps my shoulder and I turn around even though, I don’t want to. And I didn’t expect Topher to stand there and look directly at me right now. But I’m not dreaming and this is real. He looks at me, wide-eyed before he kneels before me. His eyes lack focus and his breath stinks of really. Strong. Booze. Like the type that’s allowed to sit in a corner for half a decade. I don’t answer him right away since I have zero idea what to do. What is he even doing here and where’s Amy? Why isn’t she storming towards me to bring more shame my way?

“You’re freezing cold.” He gives me his jacket and helps me stand up although I didn’t ask for it. Oh, look. There’s a car near us and I guess that Topher drove with someone. Somehow, I get the feeling that Amy is not there.

“Hey Topher? What’s going on? Who’s your lady friend?” A stranger says from the car and the window is rolled down. Tyler and Lindsay are there; the most popular of the senior couples. My interactions with them is limited to seeing them each other’s breakfast through the mouth. Lovely. Topher refrains from answering Tyler and instead takes me to the car. Lindsay’s eyes grow big when she sees that I am wearing next to nothing.

“What are you doing out here?”

“I should ask you the same thing. And where’s Amy?”

“With Anne Maria. I think. I got, uh, bored so I went to Alejandro’s party and well, then I got drunk sort of and as you can see, I’m getting a lift home.”

I get the feeling that there is much more to the story than just that but knowing Topher, I bet he didn’t want to worry anyone by saying something grimdark. He’s the kind of person likes to please everybody… on behalf of his own happiness. Or that’s what I think.

I, however, don’t have the courtesy of revealing why I’m out here in the first place. It’s not something that I wish to elaborate on and knowing my company, especially Lindsay, my miserable life won’t be much of a secret any longer. Sure, my entire class knows the tiny bits if the whole story but what my father did to me… I can’t even begin to explain how heartbreaking that is. Better sweep it under the rug for now. Besides, Lindsay, despite her good intentions, is too dumb to keep a secret.

I take a seat the backseat and soon, we drive away. Where? I have no idea. Tyler’s car is pretty dam old, you know, like the type where you must wind the window up and down. However, it’s small and warmth teleports well in warm cars so my frozen body is slowly getting dried up. In the front seats, Tyler and Lindsay are talking lively about rumors at school, while calling each other names like “muffin” and “bae’. What’s a bae? Never mind, in the meantime, there is a grave silence between Topher and I. From the corner of my eye, I see him glancing at me in such a manner that he thinks that I haven’t noticed it by now.

“I’m going to take you home…” Topher suddenly says, his breath still reeking strongly so I had to turn away. “Uh, to my place.”

Oh, at least I have a proper excuse for not going home. I silently nod at him and stare out the window for the remaining of the ride. Occasionally Topher gives directions, all with this chummy smile on his face. I recognize it from that day when he saved me and I can’t find it within myself to suspect him of having any ulterior motives.

Besides, if he wanted ass, he could have gone to Amy.
The suggestion makes the front seats curiously quiet as we drive off.

No longer after, we stop outside a small house with a grey old car parked in the open garage. The gate to the garage is missing so snow is pouring right in. I take it that this is Topher’s house. It got a cozy feel to it though. Topher and I step out of the car into the bitter cold. His coat isn’t doing much for me but it’s better than nothing.

A light is turned on as Topher bids his goodbye and the couple drives off. After mere moments, the door quickly opens itself and a man steps out, looking wide eyed at me and then at Topher, who looks eerily like him; like a younger version almost except for the fact that the man has brown eyes and messy hair, complete with grey streaks and a stub.

“Hi Dad.” Topher says, swaying a little towards me. “I hope, you don’t mind that I brought a friend home. Uh, this is Sammy.”

The man just blinks for a couple of seconds before a bright smile pulls over his face and he backs away from the door.

“Of course not.” He says and manages to get eye contact with me. “James, but you can call me Jim.” I simply nod and give him a meek smile before following Topher inside the house. From what I can see of it, it’s very cramped. Not because that there is a lot of junk all over the place but rather because the house’s structure. What drunk architect designed this?

“Thanks and goodnight.” Topher staggers towards the very uneven staircase. It creeks underneath his food and I’d be dammed if it wouldn’t be the first thing to break in hurricane. It looks old and it smells old. A small meowing suddenly emerges from the top of the small staircase as I follow Topher. Not surprisingly, it’s a cat; a red cat. It looks like Garfield, fat and fuzzy. It keeps stroking itself against my legs and its warm body makes me wanna hug it.

“Hey, Chef.” He says and opens the door to his bedroom. It’s quite small but cozy with a soft carpet floor, a large window and maroon colored walls. There are photos of family here and there as well some action movie poster featuring cars and musclebound men. Also… is that a picture of Chris McLean? Topher being a pretty boy with a lust for gossip is starting to make sense now. I always thought that Chris only made girls cream their undergarments but I digress.

Despite the small size if the bedroom, Topher manages to keep a couch and a bed in here. Luckily, it’s a single bed so I don’t have to sleep next to him… to be honest the idea is not a bad-what am even saying? Let’s forget that. I take the couch. There are blankets and pillows for me to use, so my sleeping demands are met pretty quickly. I manage to pack myself up and watch Topher prepare for bed. His arm is no longer in the sling but he still needs to keep in bandaged, it seems. It’s a bit… awkward to be honest, although I couldn’t tell you if I wanted. I don’t know if the alcohol dulled his common sense but he’s literally. Fucking. Stripping. In front of me, like I wasn’t even here. I’ve seen naked boy chests several times in my life before but only this time, has it had any effect on me. I shouldn’t be staring but I just can’t avert my eyes. My vision is practically glued to his body like the camera from Spring Breakers and I feel like such a rapist. What in the hell is going on with me all of a sudden-oh shit, he dropped his pants. I really, like, really should not say this but my goodness I’d be dammed if I said that he wasn’t well build. Topher is by no means a gymbunny like Lightning but he is not a boiled asparagus like Shawn either. He’s just… normal. Lean but normal.

From the corner of my eye, I can see that Chef has taken its place in the window shelf. Luckily, I manage to fixate my gaze on the cat. Somewhere along the line, it must have occurred to my body that I was exhausted and I soon fall asleep without noticing it. How that is possible, is beyond me. Nevertheless, it’s better than lying awake and shame myself for gawking at some teenage boy chest.
Hi, everyone! So sorry for my absence. You see, my laptop was hacked and I was unable to update, let alone write for months!! It was awful, lemme tell ya! Anyways, I’ve finally received a new laptop for my birthday nonetheless so there’s that. Now I can write again! Also, I’m planning a new two-part story which should come up before the end of this month so be excited!

The first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is to give Sammy, some slippers that I never use. She is quite surprised by this but genuinely happy. We head downstairs, following the smell of breakfast. I’m sure, Dad has been hard at work and frankly, I’m starving.

It’s odd but I feel good today. Considering the power of whatever I drank last night, I don’t have much of a hangover right now and I’m not even nauseous. Sammy eats like a bird or more like a rabbit. Everything in small portions and no matter how much my dad keeps pestering her, she refuses to eat more. To be honest, I have never seen Sammy with anything but big loose clothes and she’s not even remotely cubby either so I can only guess that she’s thinner than a Gucci model.

“So, did you kids sleep well?” Dad asks me while filling my plate with another pancake. Without asking he fills Sammy’s glass with juice once more.

“He didn’t snore too loudly, did he?”

“Dad!” I glare at him. I don’t snore! All the time. As embarrassing as it is, it amuses Sammy who simply releases a low chuckle. She looks at me briefly and behind her loose strains of hair, I see… blushing?

“No, not at all.”

Simply put, I cannot explain this fuzzy feeling bubbling inside me. For the sole sake of empathy, I feel high on emotions whenever I see her smile. For the sake of empathy only or…?

And it dawns me that I know next to nothing about her home life, let alone why she was outside in the freezing cold without shoes or a coat. Amy wasn’t home to do whatever and she said to me that she was fine but when I found her, her eyes were red from crying. There is something seriously wrong here.

“I should better get home. Thanks for everything.” She says but I get the feeling that she is only sincere about the latter. I give her a pair of old sneakers because slippers can’t keep your feet dry and warm for long.

“No problem. Feel free to drop by whenever you want. There’s always room for three!” Dad waves from the kitchen, making sure that Chef doesn’t eat any leftovers. It’s funny and tragic to see how the cat had troubles getting up on the chairs.

Sammy takes the shoes on, rather slowly only to stand and look at me awkwardly. I can tell that she
wants to say something but the grinding gears keep her distracted from speaking. So, I help her out.

“I mean… you can always come back if you want.”

“…I’d love to.”

More awkward silence as I struggle to leave her side. I feel as if something bad will happen if I do.

“Do you mind if I, well, walk you home?”

“No.” She answers with a hint of a smile.

We depart from my house and head over to hers. On this particularly freezing morning, no one is present. The neighborhood is deader than a morgue. It’s not even that early either.

“You know, it’s the most fun, I’ve had in a long time. Being with you, that is. Even if you were sober as a judge.” She speaks lowly, so low in fact that no ordinary person could hear what she said.

“Wait, what?”

“It means being drunk. It’s supposed to be ironic.”

“Sammy,” I begin, taking a deep breath to address the elephant in the room. “What happened yesterday?”

In the distance, I recognize the top of her house but we have since stopped walking and instead, she stares at me like I said something ludicrous. I can’t determine her current emotion as half of her face is hidden behind blonde bangs.

And then, the tears came. Still completely motionless, she keeps standing and staring at me but the salty drops run endlessly down her cheeks.

“…I can’t tell you.” She finally says. Her eyes dart downwards to the ground but it serves no effect against hiding her misery.

“Sammy…”

“I’m sorry.”

Her entire body is shivering, yet she stands strong but I can see the cracks widening with every second. I can’t bear to see her like this; it reminds me too much of my Dad three years ago. I wonder if she will hate me afterwards.

So, I hug her. I can’t bear to see hear like this. It hurts too much. Her pain is my anguish. Sammy’s body goes completely limp in my arms and she wails loudly, letting all of her suffering loose. She wraps her arms around me with her hands clawing at my jacket.

“Samantha? Sweetie?” A woman says in the distance. I hear footsteps closing in on us and turn my head to see a woman running towards us. Her resemblance to Sammy is uncanny and I can only assume that it’s her mother.

“Where have you been?!?” the woman’s eyes tear up with relief but she quickly rubs them before any tears can fall and look at me. “Thank you so much.”

“No problem.” I let go of Sammy who walks over to her mother, who embraces her like she was Jesus if he returned from Jerusalem.
“Are you two…?”

“N-no, I’m her classmate, Topher.” I can already tell what she was about to say. Although

“How can I ever thank you?”

“Make her smile and remind her that she is a good person.” That is perhaps the cheesiest thing I’ve ever said and 10 years from now, I’ll kick myself in the dick for speaking like I came out of a Disney movie. I can laugh at it then, no matter how much I mean it now.

However, mother dearest doesn’t laugh at me right away; instead, she smiles and nods at me. She believes in those words. She believes in me.

It’s time for school again and for once I did my damnest on today’s homework. As I get closer to the classroom, proud like a father, I notice the obscene noise level coming from behind the door. Noise is nothing new but the deafening silence that follows when I enter the door, sure is. Everyone is staring at me and the silence is so overwhelming you can hear a pin drop to the floor.

Suddenly something bumps into me from behind, and I see a hooded figure looking just as confused as I am. The mysterious figure takes part of the hood off to reveal that it’s Sammy and I’m somewhat relieved but also beyond puzzled.

“Topher,” a familiar voice greets me and I get the sudden urge to take Sammy’s hand and run away. “Where did you go?” Amy rises from her seat, snappily dressed to look like a supermodel.

Where did I go? Oh, that’s right. I ditched her when she tried to sexually assault me. “I, uh, I didn’t feel too good.” That is partly true. The rest of the truth is that I simply don’t want to lock tongues with her. The idea of teens going to parties is getting shitfaced and boning each other and I’m not going to denounce that. However, at that moment there was something very wrong about that moment in the garden. And it wasn’t just me being sober, it was something else. Something very, very awful.

“Don’t you know, it’s rude to run away from your girlfriend?” She coaxes, slick like a cat. She stands directly between Sammy and me, rubbing my shoulder but I don’t pay attention to that. Instead, I focus on the implication. Girlfriend? I… what the hell is the meaning of this?

“Girlfriend?” Sammy asks, her voice off-tune with disbelief. She’s just as baffled as I am but even worse so; disappointed. My heart sinks to my feet as I look at her. I want to answer her but I have no idea of what to tell her.

“Yes, Samey. Girlfriend! Girlfriend! I’m Topher’s girlfriend. We are dating. Capice?” Amy sounds slightly aggravated but her face tells another story as she has this wide smile on her face. Whatever it is that she’s doing, her strategy is causing havoc and I need to fix this before all hell is loose.

“Amy, we didn’t-“

Sammy’s bag falls to the floor in such a dramatic way. I see the tears building in her eyes as she sends me this deadly glare that can only promise scorn and spite. If eyes could kill, I’d be dead six times by now. How ironic that I told her mother to make her smile and yet I’m standing here, watching her unravel. She steps back and prepares to leave, no wait, she runs. She runs as if the Grim Reaper was after her. I try to follow her but Amy catches my arm and I almost fall over my own feet. My arm may be independent of that sling but it still hurts.

“Wait, Sammy-“ I call out, in one last attempt to fix whatever the hell went wrong.
But she’s already gone.

“Don’t worry about her, Topher.” Amy purr again, tightening her grip on me. The classroom is completely silent, save for some small whispers but I don’t know what they are saying. All I do know is this seething rage that grows within me. I like to think of myself as a cool guy; someone who’s reliable and suave. A person who never loses his head.

But I fail, time and time again. I can’t fix anything! I never could! I couldn’t fix my parent’s divorce, I couldn’t fix Dad’s depression and suicide attempt, I couldn’t fix anything and now, after everything I’ve fought for, it’s all falling to pieces. And it’s pissing me off, quite frankly.

Amy’s fingers start caressing my shoulder “You got-“

“Shut the fuck up! I snap at her, seeing red for the first time in a long time. Amy is absolutely horrified. She steps back, letting out an overdramatic gasp. And within a matter of seconds, her horror turns into fury. Her brows arch down into a deep scowl and her lips form a thin line.

“What good is she to you, huh? She’s just a whore!” my protective gene kicks in at just the right moment, preventing me from outright slapping her across the face. Instead, I do a literal heel turn and run like I’ve never run before. I’m sure, I just passed my teacher but I can’t get myself to care. Honestly, I have zero idea where Sammy went but if I’m not mistaken, she’d probably be in the library. So, I sprint there like the Road Runner, earning a few curious glances from the librarian. Lo and behold, Sammy is there, staring into a book. I recognize that hood everywhere. It comes with being a guardian angel, I suppose.

“Sammy, I’m sorry but it’s not what you think.” I say and she looks up, still very angry. She slams to book closed and throws it on the floor before standing up before me.

“What is? That you and the princess of Darkness are dating? That you won’t rally against me and fuck my life even more?! Her voice is still suffering from her illness so it breaks here and there. But the matter of the problem is that she ate up Amy’s ludicrous idea raw.

“We’re not! She’s bullshitting you! And me for that matter!”

“How? How do you expect me to believe that!”

I don’t. But I have a crazy idea that might help. She’ll hate me for this and so will my common since, but my heart will not. Instead of putting words into my answer, I catch her arms and pull her into am akward kiss. I expected her to struggle but she doesn’t. Her body is completely limp and even after I pull back, she remains motionless. My heart is pounding like mad inside my chest and I don’t know if I’ve fucked up or struck gold. As with the time when I walked her home, she has this anxiously undefinable expression, that only heightens my anxiety further.

“…Did you have to assault me to prove your point?” She asks calmly. Ouch, that stung. And it cements the fact that I absolutely messed up big time. I let go of her and struggles to explain myself.

“Well, yes but you see-“ But before I come up with a proper excuse, she grabs the color of my shirt and pulls me close again. Our faces are inches away from each other and if I wanted to, I could kiss her again.

Her cheeks turn red. I’m about to smile when suddenly a crushing pain hits my face like a bus and I stumble backwards into a nearby table. The pain aches in my nose and it doesn’t subdue itself any time soon. A wet sensation hit my nostrils and I hold my hand under my nose to see… blood. Sammy is absolutely horrified and I would be lying if I said, I wasn’t. What the hell was the point of
“I’m sorry. I forgive you now.” Her voice is shrill and she looks like she just committed a horrible murder.

“Why did you do that?” I screech. I don’t to sound this angry though.

“You… I didn’t mean to. I got scared.”

There is a cold truth to what she is saying, even if the punch felt beyond unnecessary. I didn’t need to kiss her and she didn’t need to take it. I don’t blame her.

“Ok, I get your point.” Ugh, the pain hurts like a motherfucker. I’m dripping blood everywhere. A handkerchief is sent my way and I take it without a hint of hesitation. For someone as petite as Sammy, she sure packs a mean fist.

Afterwards, we decide to skip school for the day. It’s the first time that I’ve ever skipped school but man, it’s a great feeling. On the realistic side though, I’m sure that neither Sammy nor I would be welcome in class after that stunt, I pulled. We go to the park, near the place where Sammy attempted to jump off the bridge. I’ve never taken my time exploring the park so it surprises me to see that it’s bigger than I expected. Between the bridge and the main road, there’s a detour that will lead to a small pond, surrounded by benches. The pond is frozen solid but I believe that this place is meant for feeding ducks during the warmer seasons.

“And then you told her to shut up,” Sammy asks after I’ve explained the entirety of Anne Marie’s party, the incident in the garden and me getting hammered at Alejandro’s place before getting a ride home by Lindsay and Tyler.

“I didn’t mean to be that vulgar. She got pretty angry though.” This sends Sammy into a fit of small laughter and it feels great hearing her laugh again. Her voice is terribly hoarse though and shouting at me in the library has returned to haunt her.

“About what happened in the library… Could we please forget that? I’m not ready to do that. Yet.”

“Sure.”

Another round of awkward silence follows and I get to reflect on my emotions. I’m not even angry or disappointed. My goal was to make her see the truth and at least, I accomplished that.

“You know that you just unleashed the beast.” She says while playing with the strap of her hoodie.

“Yeah, I thought so.” But it begs the obvious question. “What’s her deal with you anyway?”

“Topher, there’s a lot of things that you don’t know about her or me for that matter. But because you took a punch from me and treated me with empathy, I guess I own you.” She says while curling into a ball. “My father disowned me and that’s why I ran away.”

“Wait, your father disowned you?!”

Instead of answering, she stares at the pond and nods. I notice the tears swelling up in her eyes and she hides it poorly by burying her face into her knees. Although it explains why she was running around aimlessly in the cold in the first place, I get the feeling that it’s just the tip of the iceberg. It doesn’t explain Amy’s bitterness, or why her father threw her away in the first place or what lead her
to suicide.

*Just, what is going on in Sammy’s life?*
Aahahaha, it's been so long! I'm so sorry! Here you go, my beloved readers!

“You father disowned you? That’s fucked up!” Topher looks at me in pure horror. He looks ready to cry on my behalf. As someone, whose sense of life died long ago, it’s rather endearing. I can’t fault him for his golden heart; if I had to be honest, I’m glad that he stopped me from killing myself. Talking to someone that probably hasn’t gone through half the hell that I’ve been through and yet still tries his best to understand, makes me flutter somewhat. I may be dead inside but apparently, I’m able to feel bits of joy.

Who would have thought?

“No shit.” I say. It’s not my intention to be sarcastic but I can’t help myself. I suppose that’s what happens when your own life fucks you over so royally that you can’t help but wonder why you’re not dead yet. With each fuckup, a part of my soul was taken away so it surprises me that there is still something left.

“So, what happened when you got home?” Topher asks like a child listening to a horror story. His childish curiosity and sympathy compels me to continue and I venture further into the depths of secrets and horror that is my life.

“Well, he called me a baby and left. At this point, he’s dead to me but my mom still sees something in him so a huge argument happened between them and sort of still goes on right now.” I say. It sounds pretty shitty and short but that’s the truth. My father has been avoiding me like the plague while his love and affection all went to the Princess of Darkness. Meanwhile, Mommy has become more miserable, like me but tries to comfort me with the best of her abilities while having frequent screaming matches with my father. My house is starting to lose its identity as a family home and instead become a battlefield like Americans versus loyalists, cribs versus bloods. In a way, I hope this will lead to my parents finally divorcing but on the other hand, I can’t shake the feeling of guilt, that’s currently eating away at me from the inside. My mom threw away her entire life in favor of a marriage, she couldn’t possibly have predicted would lead to so much misery. My mother did fall for my father and they did marry out of love but for said love to continue, one had to sacrifice everything and that burden was Mommy’s to take.

And now, because of me, all of her sacrifices will be in vain.

“Fuck me.” Topher says in shock. The look on his face screams disappointment. I can only guess because he is living alone with his father, who is kindness incarnate and the idea of a father mistreating his own daughter sounds otherworldly to him. Which reminds me; I never saw one single picture of the mother while I was there.

I do wonder what happened to Topher’s mom though.

A moment of silent befalls the small pond, as I wonder whether or not, I should pop the question.

“Topher,” I begin. Part of me is already regretting this decision but another part of me knows that I
will never get any sort of peace if I don’t get this off my chest. Besides, it’s only fair after I spilled some beans about myself and Topher doesn’t seem like the type of person to get triggered easily.

“Where’s your mother?” I ask. I have no idea how sincere, my tone of voice is. I probably sound way more direct that I intend and I feel as if I may have set him off, regardless his forgiving nature.

“In Vancouver.” He answers with an uncharacteristic coldness as he looks away. A dreadful feeling tells me that this obviously hit a nerve. But at the same time, I’m very curious now and I already opened Pandora’s box after all. Might as well deal with the chaos that ensues.

“Why?”

“She did some… terrible things to me and my dad.” He says, the bitterness dripping from his voice like pure venom. I wonder if he experienced a situation similarly to mine. Judging from his reaction, his mother obviously didn’t disown him but then again, she obviously isn’t dead either. My only guess is that Topher’s parents had a messy divorce, thus the frigid air around the overall subject. After that bit of awkwardness, we sit and stare emptily at the pond as we probably both wonder what the fuck to do with the of the day. However, it is Topher who manages to break the silence as he looks at me. For whatever reason, it feels like such a long time since he has done that.

“Do you like Amy-err, when she’s nice?” he asks me, rather cautiously almost as if he wants to change the subject right away but doesn’t want to be a dick about it. What chivalry.

“Does she have any nice sides?” I answer him although I’m already aware of the actual answer. No, Amy has no good sides. There is nothing “good” about her aside from maybe her tits, I don’t know. Seeing how Amy has zero ability to keep a long-term relationship but yet has charisma to let any decent-looking guy get a piece of that ass, it wouldn’t surprise me. Not to mention the band of sluts, she hangs out with.

“I don’t know. That’s why I’m asking you.” Topher says, looking mildly disappointed. I can’t really get mad at him for it. But it confuses me as to why he’d ask me of all people. Do I look like the type of person who knows Amy good side? If by “good side” does he mean her façade of an infallible princess? It seems like I’m the only one who knows her true self and I sometimes wonder if that’s more of a burden than a privilege.

“Well, you’re her friend, right? Why don’t you ask yourself this?” I say. I can feel the events of these last few days

“Because as kind as she appears, I’m not too sure. I mean, she treats you like garbage but she’s nice to me and anyone else.” He says, although hesitantly. I might be imagining it but I can’t help but to feel somewhat targeted, almost as if…

“…Are you suggesting that I’m the problem?”

“No, that’s not what I mean. I-I meant that there’s probably-“ Topher’s eyes grow wide and he holds his hands up in a defense manner but his choice of words does not help the general spiral of depression and negative thoughts that begin to manifest within me.

“Some level of truth to her behavior?” I say with a hostile tone. My throat still hurts like a motherfucker but what am I to do? I can’t just sit here and let myself take the blame for the behavior of a demon among men.

The look on Topher’s face scream frustration and he looks at me with eyes of lightning. I’m angry and I know he’s angry as well. We have a staring contest that lasts a few milliseconds before he
finally snaps at me.

“No! Stop fucking interrupting me! I mean that there is something fishy going on!” He growls at me before immediately calming down and looking like he just killed a puppy and feels bad about it.

I immediately pull away from him. I understand where he’s coming from and I don’t blame him but I’m just tired. I’m tired of getting yelled at and seeing others yell in each other’s faces. It’s draining and I would even call it physically painful. Like if the sheer volume level is enough to shatter my body.

I didn’t choose to be miserable and I certainly didn’t choose to drag other along my misery business. What I want is the sweet release of death and the truth of Amy coming out perhaps. I don’t know. I don’t even know if I’m capable of it yet. Would anyone believe me? Would anyone trust the suicide novel hidden deep within my room?

I don’t know anything and sometimes it scares me.

“…Sorry.” Topher says. I can feel his hand over mine as I sit motionless and stare at nothing. I have no words and I must speak. But I can’t. Because I don’t know what to do. I’m weak and useless and all around a waste of space. I’m a burden to all who try and help me. I can’t even help myself, let alone attempt to make myself feel better and any shape of form.

“Sammy?” he asks me but there’s no response from me. Instead there are the tears. The endless streams that run down my cheeks as I slowly start to unravel. It feels like I’m dissolving; drowning in a sea of dark that will eventually devour me and erase my existence. No matter how you look at it, it’s for the better but why haven’t I died yet?

“Aw shit. I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to.” I feel Topher suddenly hug me as I cry a bit for strange reasons. I can’t even word my own emotions anymore.

And then it hit me. The only reason why I am still alive in general is thanks to Topher. We may have just fought but everything he ever did was for my sake and no matter how much bullshit, I drag him through, he’d stick with me. I mean, he did dislocate his shoulder for my sake after all. And he had the gull to even kiss me.

I still don’t know what to feel about it but if one had to twist my arm and force me to answer, I guess I’m happy that he did. That said, I’m far from girlfriend material. I may be more trustworthy than Amy but what difference does it make?

I’m broken; I’m tarnished. I’m not worth my life or anything really, let alone love. He said he did it to convince me to believe him but somehow, I can’t help but to feel that there is another layer to it. I guess that’s why I punched him like a professional boxer back then? Because I instinctively rejected his feeling due to my own misery.

I’m sorry Topher but I’m not that type of girl. I’m not worth your time. What in blazes could someone like me offer you? A relationship goes two ways; one has to give in order to receive and I have nothing to give you other than dislocated shoulders.

“You... you don’t hate me, do you?” he asks me if he was a dog who pissed on the carpet and wants to make sure that his owner still loves him.

“No.” I say rather nonchalantly.

The smile on Topher’s face is bright enough to illuminate a small city. He pulls a bit away from me but still has his arms around me, protectively as we sit in utter silence. In the pond, ducks have begun
to gather, staring at us longingly as they wonder if we have any food for them.

“But why is Amy…?”

“…When we were thirteen, we…” I stop myself. I have never been able to cope with the events back then, let alone being able to talk about it. This is a time that continues to haunt me until I die, no matter how much I want to forget about it. It my life forever and for the worse; it made me stop cheerleading, although that was a sport that I never had any interest for. What this shitfest boils down to is my father believing that twins think alike and forced me to join in on the action alongside his favorite. Although I did well, things began to go downhill thanks to Amy and my own weakness.

I was unable to stand up for myself or the other members that Amy bullied. Eventually things… things got literally deadly and terrible blood was shed. And yet, somehow, everything was blamed on me. The guilt, the shame… no matter how much time passes, it can’t erase anything and certainly not the memories.

Some people say that time heals all wounds. I would like to disagree as I am living proof that some wounds will ever fully heal.

I look at Topher. “Let’s say inflated egos don’t mesh well with hormones.”

Seeing how I already blew his mind with my father’s disowning, I feel like his entire head would explode if I told him about the incident three years ago and the series of unfortunate events that followed. All the sadness and the death and the animosity.

Sometimes, I still can’t believe it.

I’m tired. I always am to be honest but today has presented a special level of exhaustion for me. I return home directly after my meeting with Topher so I can sleep the day away. Once I enter the kitchen, I see Mommy busy with her heads in the pots, cooking for what seems like an entire army. It’s not until she leaves the pots to take a break that she finally notices me standing and looking at the orgy of food.

“Oh, it’s for tonight. Your father is having his friends and their wives from his university class in Toronto.”

“Samantha?! What are you doing here? Don’t you have school?”

“Hi Mommy. I, uh, I don’t feel well. So, I called it a day.” I lie. Lying feels too natural for me but I have zero shame left to internally punch myself in the gut over it. Besides, I lie to prevent others from descending further into the rabbit hole of distress that is my life. I don’t think that’s a proper justification for lying as much as I do but I don’t really have a choice in the matter.

Beggars can’t be choosers after all.

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I’m tired. I always am to be honest but today has presented a special level of exhaustion for me. I return home directly after my meeting with Topher so I can sleep the day away. Once I enter the kitchen, I see Mommy busy with her heads in the pots, cooking for what seems like an entire army. It’s not until she leaves the pots to take a break that she finally notices me standing and looking at the orgy of food.

“Oh, it’s for tonight. Your father is having his friends and their wives from his university class in Toronto.”

Oh yeah. A bunch of prissy assholes, weak enough to kiss the egotistical cold-hearted ass that belongs to the man who co-created me. A bitter taste in my mouth emerges as I try to remember the last time, I saw any of the rich fart gentleman’s club. Good thing that they are bringing their trophy wives. I wonder if their kids will come along too.

“I hope, you’re feeling better tonight. Taylor is coming too.” Mommy looks at me and smile although her face screams for a bed to be brought to her so she can sleep. I can only guess, she is stressing herself out because she wants to gain some respect now when her husband doesn’t give her any.
I’d like to join that sleep though just to avoid people like Taylor. As one of Amy’s goons and a rightful bitch on her own, I’d rather kiss Topher ten times than be in the same room with her.

…Did I say that? Let’s forget that I said that.

I bid my mom farewell and head up the staircase to my room. It looks exactly like how I left it this morning; a mess. I haven’t bothered to clean it in what seems like forever and it shows with laundry literally thrown all over the place and my bed being partly filled with books and historical movies.

All of the medals and trophies that prove my inferiority to Amy have been packed away and forgotten in a box underneath my bed where I prefer that they stay forever and until the end of all things, presumably my life. Without much energy to spare, I throw myself on the bed like a sloth and fall into a deep slumber…
Hello all! I’m so so sooooooooo sorry for the hiatus. I’ve been really busy with school. People say that the second year of high school is the hardest and they are damn tight. Holy horses! Anyhoo, I hope that you enjoy this chapter.

It’s funny, is it not? The great difference among humans. On hand, we are the most advanced species on the planet and we have literally changed and defined the world through centuries. We made God our bitch and yet… we don’t get any sense of unity. We wage war, we kill, and we hurt each other. It’s sad really and the biggest tragedy is how there is no answer to it all. Likewise, I believe that there is no definitive answer as to why twins would hurt each other. Or hell any kind of family.

Then again, I should know the insincerities of families and how the ties that bind break. Some families stick together through thick and thin, others crash and burn; mine crashed pretty badly and here I am, living alone with my dad because our mother abandoned us when we were at our weakest.

Damn, I’m getting philosophical again, ain’t I?

It’s OK though, as reflecting on your thoughts is a good thing once in a while. I haven’t done that to myself in a long time as most of my recent thoughts revolved around Sammy. I was happier than ten orphans experiencing Christmas for the first time, when she gave me her number again. I didn’t mind the blood pouring out of my nose, even when it left such a mess and Dad was close to getting a heart attack upon seeing it. I didn’t even mind feeling the uncomfortable mix of anger and disbelief upon hearing all the horrors in Sammy’s life; everything was all right because in the end, it made her happy and subsequently, it made me happy. Although her home situation is more severe than I could ever imagine, I get the feeling that I showed her a hint of light; that there was a hand reaching out to her amidst the darkness. That way, she would luckily not try to kill herself again.

“So tell me what happened, son.” Dad asks and places the bag of frozen peas on my nightstand. Going back to school and ignoring the death stare from Amy while pretending nothing ever happened was hard enough and to make shit even worse, the chill of the winter froze the blood and when I tried free my nose from literal ice, my wound burst open and blood fossed out of my nose.

Thankfully, my father did take a doctor’s degree in college and therefore had the expertise to stitch my nose together.

I simply look at him while placing the peas on my face. The icy chill is borderline agonizing at first until the initial pain smothers itself and is replaced by a sense of relief.

“I had a little accident.” I simply say. How in the hell am I supposed to tell him that I got decked in the face by a friend of mine, for acting out on my most primal urges and kissing her so she wouldn’t be mad at me anymore? Never, that’s how. In this case, ignorance is bliss and I’m OK with that for now. So, I cook up some story about how I got smashed in the face by a ball in PE and he buys it.
Lying doesn’t feel good, at all. It feels weirdly and uncomfortably unnatural, as if I have just committed a great sin, that would send me to the clutches of the Vatican, only to be handed over to the Spanish Inquisition where I’d get burned at the stake.

I send my father an insecure smile and he simply pats my shoulder.

“You never were Michael Jordan anyways.” He laughs wholeheartedly. It warms my heart to see him laugh like that. It took him an eternity to get his lifeforce back and remember what it felt to be alive. After this, he leaves my room and I fetch my phone, only to see 20 unanswered calls and 60 text messages. All from Amy.

Oh yeah, there is still the issue of her and how I basically ditched her. With a heavy heart, I tap the call symbol, expecting the worst.

“Topher? Topher!” Amy voice screeches in the other end. Her voice is shrill and off-tone, almost as if she is repressing the next great definition of wrath.

“Hi. Err, sorry about earlier. I uh, I had some business with Sammy.” That was probably the worst excuse since the “ball to the face” explanation but what else could I do? I can’t help but to get the feeling that I’d open Pandora’s box if I dared to tell the honest, naked truth. Once more, ignorance is bliss.

“…Samey is an evil person, Topher. I don’t know if I can forgive you for giving in to her evil charms this easily.” She says with the coldness of an angry mother.

“Uhm…” I begin, my hand shaking. I struggle to find the words; any words that can mediate this calm before the storm.

“Cause baby, now we’ve got bad blood. You know it used to be mad love. So, take a look what you’ve done.”

“Uh, Amy? What are you…” I begin as Amy starts humming and singing. Her voice is incredibly false but that is not what makes me sit here in utter disbelief. The fact that she is singing Taylor Swift of all things. Hell, just randomly singing of all things.

“Now we’ve got problems, and I don’t think we can solve ‘em. You made a really deep cut, and baby, now we’ve got bad blood, hey!” She finishes her little performance with a deep sigh, apparently satisfied.

“Do you understand now, Topher? You did something inexcusable and you hurt me. Very badly. Do not ever talk to Samey again.” Her tone is sugary and sweet, but I can tell that there is rage looming underneath by the restricted huskiness of her words.

“Amy,“ I begin trying to muster up as much courage as I can. There is still so much that I want to say but the only thing that ever leave the edge of my lips is the word “Why?”

“Because she will ruin your life. Besides, you belong to me, do you not?”

“No” I say, sounding more confident than I could ever be in a situation like this. But I won’t allow myself to be pushed around like this anymore. Amy has done nothing to me personally but there’s something fishy about their home situation and I can’t help but feel like Amy is the mastermind of all things. Quietly, I remove the phone from my ear and tap the “speaker” icon, waiting for death and scorn to erupt from my phone.

“Topher… you don’t want to defy me. You will regret it.” Amy’s voice is low, and growling, like an
enraged animal in the dark. I sink a lump in my throat gather even more courage to stand up to the fury of a scorned woman.

“…I don’t think so, Amy. The way that you treat Sammy is not OK. I don’t know what the heck happened between you two, but this is not right!”

“A lot of things happened but it’s none of your business. You went against me, and now you ought to face the consequences. I will make you kill yourself. And then you can live happily ever after with that pathetic little waste of space, Samey.” And she hangs up. A monotone tune plays as I let go of the phone, laying down as my heart rate slows down from its height. It feels like a giant rock has been lifted off my shoulder; for once I feel free.

Then again, I also have the intense sense that I may have signed my own death sentence.

The rest of the week, I’ve officially gone into ninja-mode. Amy, however, is nowhere to be seen and it leaves me a little worried; not for her but for what she might be planning. Still, it leaves me a little less guilty when I eventually walk up to Sammy’s desk. Her head hangs lover over her desk as she is busy writing down stuff for today’s lesson. Her face is obscured by her blonde hair that seems to be more disserved than usual. I gently poke her on the shoulder and she looks up, first glaring at me until she realizes that it’s just me. However, upon seeing her, my heart sinks to my stomach. Her bottom lip has been busted pretty badly and she has a black eye, again plus some grim bruises all over her face.

“Your face…”

“Things at home have been chaotic. This was inevitable.” She says as a matter of fact. Part of my dies a little inside when I see her become this desensitized towards her injuries. She sends me a meek smile, but I can pick up the sadness behind it. Sammy packs her things and soon follows e as we are about to leave the classroom. She quickly pulls her hoodie over her head, despite being indoors.

“Samantha.” Our teacher calls out and we stop as he heads over to us, or more like Sammy. “Drop by the nurse’s office before you go home, will you?”

Silent as the grave, she nods once before she heads over to me and we exit the classroom together. The hallway is packed with students leaving to enjoy the weekend and Sammy is already so petite, it’s hard for me to follow her through the crowd. Before I see her completely vanish in the sea of people, I feel something grab my hand and pull me towards a set of stairs. The stream of students is less powerful here but it still takes us a longer time than usual to get to the nurse’s office but after what seems like forever, we finally reach our destination. All this, while Sammy’s warm is hand placed in mine; her fingers are so thin, it’s as if I would break them by accident. By now, I have told her pretty much everything that has happened between me and Sammy; from the way, she talked about Sammy, to that incident at the party, to my latest phone call with her.

“So, you stood up to her… you have guts. I applaud you for that.” Sammy says, rather nonchalantly. I guess, she’s not thrilled by visiting the nurse’s office. Slowly, she lets go of my hand before walking towards the door but before she can knock, I briefly interrupt her with a bombshell of a question.

“Sammy, did…did Amy do this to you? Did your father do it?” I grab her shoulder and she turns towards me, her eyes wide with shock over my question.

“No one did.” Her voice is so low, it’s almost a whisper. But I can clearly hear what she says, and I am not satisfied. Even she didn’t sound confident in her non-explanation and we both know that
what she said is bullshit.

“Sammy, please. You can’t go on like this.” I say with a tad more urgency. However, she turns away from me, staring at nothing to avoid my gaze.

“It’s a long story that will mostly bore you.”

“Nothing about you bores me, dammit!”

And finally, she looks at me again, looking borderline offended at me. Her lips from a thin line and she backs away a bit, so I can’t reach her anymore.

“You don’t know that…”

“You’re right, I don’t know. Because I don’t know anything about you!”

“It’s better that way.”

“I only want to help you. I already saved your life, might as well relieve you of any pain.”

“Samantha?” Suddenly the nurse is standing in the doorway, looking mildly confused. She looks at me before turning her gaze to Sammy before inviting us both inside. In the infirmary, she orders the blonde to sit down near a sink while she prepares a medical kit. I am placed in the corner somewhere. The nurse takes care of the wounds, placing band-aids on the lip and cuts.

“Oh Samantha. What in heaven happened to you?”

“…I fell.”

“Again?” The nurse asks, somewhat outraged. She sighs deeply while she heads to the cabinet to get some appliances for the black eye.

“It’s a slippery season, miss.”

The nurse shakes her head and prepares a wet cloth for the black eye. Carefully, she places it on the blonde girl’s eye before patching it up with a large band-aid. “…You ought to be careful. You were lucky this time, but your eye may become involuntarily lazy or even blind if you’re not careful.”

Quietly she looks at me. We both know that’s not the truth but there’s nothing we can do. Sammy is not budging, no matter how much we try. But I won’t give up. I care about her too much for that.

As we walk home from school, there is nothing but silence between Sammy and I. By the time that have finally left the nurse’s office, the school has been vacant, save for the janitor, for some time, which is a blessing. No more streams of humans. I can’t see her face as she got her hood pulled up but the fact that she has not said one word to me since we left school was more jarring. From the outside, I might appear cool as ice but on the inside, my internals are screaming in agony. However, the uncomfortable tickling comes to a halt when we cross the bridge; where we first met, and she turns to me, her eyes well hidden behind long bangs.

“Why are you so hellbent on helping me?”

I withhold my answer. During this whole time, I’ve reflected on my thoughts, the good and the bad, my position in life and most importantly; Sammy. When I kissed her back then, I mostly did so to convince her to believe me. But when I think back to it now, it occurs to me that the other reason why I did so was…
“Because I love you.”

“You don’t mean that.” Sammy is quick to say, underneath her scarf. Something tells me that it was more like a jerk reaction than her actual thoughts. But I won’t back down that easily. I don’t expect her to jump in my arms like a princess in another castle, I simply want her to trust me.

“You don’t know that.”

Still not convinced, she backs away from me in an act of defiance, out of arm’s reach. So, I channel my inner sincerity and speak the most heartfelt words ever since I last saw my mother.

“…I don’t expect you to feel the same way. But I want you to know that I care about you, and I love being around you and I wanna eat ice cream in the winter with you. The world is fucked, and people are bad, and everything is falling to pieces but in the middle of the shitstorm, I’m here and I’ll stay here with you. For you.”

Sammy shakes her head as a muffled chuckle escapes her scarf.

“That is the cheesiest thing I’ve ever heard.” She says with much sarcasm as her tired self can muster. She crosses her arms and looks over the bridge into the frozen water.

“I know, I know. But I can’t really word It differently.”

“But what can I offer you then? I’m nothing but scum.”

“Your existence is enough.”

“That…” She stops herself before burying her face in her hands, sobbing quietly. It’s been a while, since someone has told her that, hell anything like that. But she needed it and I’d be more than obliged to give her that.

“Do you want me to hug you?”

“Y-yes please.”

So, I hugged her small frame and we stayed there for what felt like a long time, but I don’t mind. If it can show her even a little glimmer of hope in life, I don’t mind at all. I don’t know how successful I am at making myself happy, but I will stop at nothing to give others a better quality of life; they deserve it. But for now, all I want to do is to focus on Sammy. If no one is there for her, then I am.
WARNING: We’re entering rape and non-con territories. DO NOT READ THIS CHAPTER IF YOU ARE OFFENDED BY SUCH.

It’s partly the reason why, this chapter has taken me so long to write because I was unsure of how to go about this. I knew I wanted to keep it in the story for the sake of narrative and character development but more often than not, one comes across fanfiction with the issue of rape and it is handled so poorly, it feels like you got hit in the face with a sledgehammer and I didn’t want to contribute to that. Therefore, I wanted to handle it with as much maturity as possible. Anyway, please enjoy and take my warning as well as this author’s note into consideration before you continue reading.

Anyhoo, now that I finally updated this, it's time to work on Broken Little Toys because dammit, the people really like that one lol.

Dammit.

Dammit, dammit, dammit.

What am I doing?

I should have punched him and run away. Why am I giving in to this? Why am I letting my feelings speak for me? I don’t deserve this; it hurts when people care, it hurts when he cares. It just hurts. It’s a wonderful feeling that hurts so much, like a whip against some masochist’s ass. I’m not a masochist. I don’t want this. It hurts and yet it feels good. Like drugs. Like the most addictive of cocaine but it’s just gonna ruin me in the end. It’s gonna ruin the both of us.

I’m too broken for him and even myself. So instinctively, I push him away.

“Sammy…” Topher looks at me with confusion in his eyes and I can’t stand to look at him. It feels so wrong and I feel so guilty about it. I wish he would stop looking at me like an abused puppy looking for love.

“I can’t… accept your feelings.” I say. If I wanted to sound tough, I failed miserably. Just pathetic. Topher tries to force a smile and he comes a bit closer to me.

“That’s o-ok. I told you, right?”

“I… like you a lot too.” So, I do, I guess.

Topher’s face immediately darkens into an intense red and he opens and closes his mouth like a fish. Endearing and yet…”That’s why it hurts when you do this. And knowing how much you care… it’s not worth it.”

“It is! For me! I can’t stand watching you be like this, man.” Topher’s smile breaks as he intensely grabs my hand, giving it a tight squeeze. Dammit, he is really serious about this. What am I to do.

“…Just friends.”
“Just friends. That’s perfectly fine.” Topher tightly squeezes my hand.

It still hurts and I feel horrible. There’s a terrible aching and everything around seems to stagnate, like the entire world freezes over, everywhere, anywhere. It feels like the air around us is stagnating and I guess I should be happy but… why do I feel like some gruesome, horrible fate looms in the dark?

“Best friends?” Topher asks with a sly smile on his face and I allow myself to chuckle a bit and swat his arm.

“Don’t push your luck.” I probably don’t mean that. The feeling of dread still lingers heavily but I guess, I can no longer allow myself to shut off the world. His kindness is like cocaine but in the moment, it is like a blessing. I suppose the reason why I allow myself to have a laugh and be content for once is because, when all is said and done, I am lonely. I have no one, not even a proper family.

Nothing. Except for Topher now. Who would have thought.

We begin to walk home and true to the winter weather, it’s already beginning to get dark. As we walk home, Topher is mostly blabbing on about some reality TV show that is mostly popular among the dumb, the shallow and the curious and I believe Topher belongs to the latter group.

Soon, we find ourselves at a crossroad and I realize that we have to part ways now.

“You don’t mind me coming over this weekend, do you?”

“…If anything, I’d rather visit you. My family is…”

“I know I know. I just wanted to uppercut your dad into the sun.” he says and I can’t help but smile a bit over that.

“I would pay every penny I own to see that.”

“Oh but you’d be the VIP with free entrance!”

“Goodnight Topher.” I nod at him, still smiling. Odd how I feel so at ease now. Crap, I just can’t sort out my emotions, can I?

We part ways and little by little, I begin to feel the cold world breaching the barriers, he put up for me.

Since we were at the park, I have a longer walk home. I would rather not go but I guess I don’t have a choice. The roads tonight are eerily empty and few households have signs of life. I don’t really think much about it because I am nothing to these people and vice versa but I can’t help but find it strange. Suddenly, I hear the engine of a car in the distance behind me and I can calm myself down a little more, knowing this isn’t 28 Days Later. I pay no mind to the car as I walk but it slowly occurs to me that the car draws unnaturally slowly. There’s no sirens or blaring lights so it’s not a police officer, so what the hell are they doing?

I hurry my pace a little, praying for some sort of backally, I consider hiding because the dread begins to eat bigger chunks of my soul. I doubt that whoever is driving wants anything to do with me so I shouldn’t worry but I’m proven horrible wrong when the vehicle suddenly drives up to my right side and the windows rolls down. I see a young man, some asshat, that I have never in my life seen before.

“Hey beautiful.” Some doucheface says to me. In the car, there’s four other asshats with him and they all stink of douche cologne. I promptly ignore them and keep walking, continuously looking to
my left to see if there’s any place, I can run off to.

“I see you got rid of that mole of yours.”

A sense of shock washes over him as I’m compelled to look at him. This guy is involved with my sister but… how?

“I’m not her! I’m not my sister, so leave me alone.” I say as confidently as I can but it only amounts into a meek whisper. A weird smile appears on the driver’s face and he turns and whispers some words to his fellow douchebags while chills run down my spine.

“Oh? Don’t be like that. I’m sure, we can get greatly acquainted with each other just like with your ‘sis’. Why don’t you join us for a ride?”

The anxiety level is reaching lethal levels here and I’m certain my voice would be shaky and quivering with nervousness alone, so I hurry my pace even more instead of asking him to fuck off. In my pocket, I clutch my only sense of defense, my cellphone. Further up ahead, I see another set of crossroads and I quickly jog to it as if it’s my lord and savior. However, suddenly the car door opens and one asshole grabs my arm and tries to pull me into the car.

“Let me go!”

Instead, the men laugh as I’m helplessly dragged into the vehicle. I have no energy usually but today I feel like I suddenly turned into Supergirl. My inner rage takes control and I kick and flail as much as I possibly can while the door behind me is closed. Even though there are three pairs of man hands holding me down, I still manage to kick one of them in the face and bite another when he tries to put his hand over my face.

I don’t know who they are or how they know Amy. All I know that I want to survive. I wonder of that intense dread was foreshadowing this. My doom, my death. Whatever the hell this is. Suddenly a sharp pain emerges in my shoulder and I manage to turn around just enough to see a syringe jammed into me, through my hoodie. My eyes fill with tears as my body becomes heavy and I no longer have the energy to keep fighting.

When I open my eyes, I find myself bounded and gagged on a hard floor. The only source of light is a single lamp that hangs from the ceiling. My body is still heavy from the drugs and I’m unable to move yet. My heart is beating in horrific anticipation while I lie here and wait. Suddenly the men from before circle around me like vultures before one of them comes closer to me. If I could move, I likely would have kicked him in the face. Amy may have ruined my life but she had taught me a thing or two about fighting.

The guy reaches out for me and grabs my leg before pulling me towards him and it’s at that moment, I realize that I’m only wearing my underwear. I try to scream but a gag in my mouth prevents me from doing so.

“Don’t look at me like that, bitch. You asked for this, Amelia.”

It seems that Amy has some unfinished business with these guys and not of the most savory kind but what does that have to do with me? I wriggle around on the floor, trying to release myself from the grip of that man but it’s like the bite of a dog; all too powerful than it has any right to be. Soon the guy literally sits on me while his goons pinned me to the floor.

Back in my cheerleader days, there was this one girl who managed to get on our team for whatever reason. She was a big girl and rather immobile due to her weight but it didn’t seem to bother her; she
was just happy to be there. She would always talk to an annoying degree and come up with the most outrageous stories about her family or bloodline. She really stuck out like a sore thump there, but she wanted to fit in, eventually growing so attached to us, that everyone was convinced she was a dyke. For someone as immobile as her, the power of potential friendship made her strong as an ox. Years later, I found her attending my high school and I saw that she hasn’t changed one bit, even after the incident that split the entire cheerleading team apart. She was still fat and still annoying but she still had the strengths of an ox, which would occasionally show up whenever someone acknowledged her.

I wish I had her strength. Gym class always killed me despite my athleticism. I don’t know why I’m remembering this now; perhaps it is my way of escaping this nightmare of the man panting and raving on about how I owe him my body before showering me with insults.

It hurts so very much but I can’t feel anything anymore. I have cried so many times, been depressed so much that this, the ultimate of horrible tragedies, can’t face me directly. I can hear myself scream in pain, I can feel the tears running down my face, I feel gross, disgusting, ruined.

And yet I feel nothing. It’s like what remains of my soul was ripped out of me, the second they defiled me like this. Dammit, who am I kidding? I did this to myself, did I not?

Everything that went wrong for me is my fault, and this is my punishment, is it not?

Is it not because I am the worst?

Is it not because I’ve less dignity than trash?

“I’ve always wanted to fuck you silly.” Another guy says after they switch turns.

I’ve always wanted to die, I realize now.

It hurts.

Everything hurts.

Everything turns black.

Everything…

I don’t know how long this nightmare went on as my perception of time has been glitched up the ass by the time, they drop me off in the middle of nowhere. Somewhere along the line I blacked out after all of my senses were numbed. I look down at myself and see that my clothes have figuratively tossed onto me. There’s an uncomfortable sticky feeling between my legs. Between that and the freezing cold, I’d much rather just have my legs chopped off. My head is groggy and I taste the metallic sensation of blood on my unnaturally dry lips.

My feet are completely senseless from the cold as I begin the long walk home. Reaching through my pocket, I find my cellphone and I see a dozen of missed calls from Mommy and a few texts from Topher. I can’t look at them anymore, for the tears that begin to build in my eyes.

As I walk, I soon come across familiar territory as I realize that I’m in neighborhood. I feel so awful. Well awful is putting it lightly. I don’t think words can describe how I feel. I don’t want to think about how I feel. I just want to sleep forever. Like Sleeping Beauty with no prince wanting to touch her disgusting body with a ten-foot pole.
I make way to my house and pretty much just drag myself inside, just as they are all finished with dinner. I’m not hungry; in reality, I’m ready to throw up.

“Sammy!” Mommy shrieks in horror as she drops whatever she’s carrying and runs over to me, grabbing my shoulders before I collapse on the floor. I close my eyes as I hear her horrified cries for help and demands of the man who used to be my father calls an ambulance. I can’t hear what they are saying anymore as the voices get drowned out.
Sammy didn’t come for the next three days of school, nor did she ever come by my house. Somehow, my intuition tells me that something is not right; it’s echoed by a gut-wrenching feeling I get, whenever I look at her empty desk at school. Amy, on the other hand, is there and when she’s not staring daggers at me or trash-talking me to her friends, I presume, she’s unusually quiet. I guess it’s because Sammy isn’t here.

So, for the first half of the week, I’m left wondering if I should call her phone and with my heart in my throat, I head outside, to a private corner of the football field. In the distance, some of the jocks are busy playing or rather trying soccer. Football is the name of the game usually but thanks to some big tournament coming up, soccer is the new black. I shake my head and try to concentrate on my current objective.

“Hello?” an unfamiliar voice says at the other end. I try to decipher it until I realize that I have heard this voice before.

“Yes, this is Topher. I…I wanted to hear if Samm-Samantha is all right” I say with a trembling voice. I internally scold myself for not using my full name until I remember why I don’t use it, to begin with.

“Oh…” the woman says before a low humming emerges from her. The humming soon turns into soft sobbing and I’m left feeling incredibly awkward. She stops sobbing and finishes with a big sigh. “She’s in the hospital. I-I don’t know if she wants to see anyone but you’re welcome to visit her.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” I say as all senses, but an aching numbness leaves my body. Chills run down my spine and I almost let my phone slide out of my hand. First, the numbness and then the crushing guilt overtakes me. It makes my heart ache. Sammy, she was fine when we saw each other last time.
Perhaps it’s nothing less than a dislocated shoulder but somehow, I can’t help but to feel that it’s not that simple. No, something feels horrible.

Upon setting foot in the hospital, I come to remember how much I hate the smell here. That thick, constant, synthetic stench badly masking the smell of death; just enough to make itself apparent, that people died here. People go to die here.

People failed to die so they go here.

I go to the reception and quickly ask for Sammy and the nurse directs me to the second floor. To make this a quick ride, I take the elevator, a decision I regret somewhat as a nurse enters with a sickly man in a wheelchair. The nurse speaks kind words to him, that I can’t be bothered to remember but the man looks at me instead. His eyes keep staring at me, pleading for something. A kind soul to tell him it’s not the end yet. That everything will be all right.

I can’t.

I want to hurl.

I take a deep inhale of the flowers that I carry with me, just to keep myself somewhat sane.

On the hallway, I see three people; two of which I’ve met before. A middle-aged couple and a girl, who looks identical to Sammy except for the mole under her eye. I guess, correctly so that the man is the dad; I don’t like the look on his face. It borders between nonchalant and bored as if he doesn’t care. He sits stiffly in his chair, not bothering to confront his wife, who has buried her face in her hands. Amy, on the other hand, is busy on the phone and for one I’m glad, she hasn’t noticed me.

With weary steps, I approach the family and introduces myself as Sammy’s friend and classmate.

“Oh, you’re that boy!” The woman tries to smile through endless streams of tears and runny mascara. Amy looks up and her eyes shoot lightning. Without saying a word, she gets up and approaches me. Her perfume cuts through the air like a hot knife and her hot breath tickles my ear as she whispers “Hope you like used, dirty socks” before storming off. No one says anything due to the tension filling the hallway but the mother nods at me with a meek smile and I guess it’s my cue to enter the hospital room.

Pushing the door aside, I have a flashback of a few too many unpleasant memories that mirrors this moment too much. The dread and anticipation of having to visit a loved one to see how they are with tubes and machines hooked all over their body or a heart monitor.

Worst case would be the soulless stare they give you. I’d rather watch them sleep with an oxygen mask.

I am relieved to not see such a medieval torture device hooked into Sammy, but I do find her sitting on the bed with her knees under her chin. Her eyes are red and puffy, but what concerns me is the emptiness behind those teal hues. I grab a vase, fill it with water and put the flowers in it before heading to the bed and sitting down next to her. Her lack of reaction alarms me. I want to say something, anything! But my words are caught in my throat.

“You know, don’t you?” she says in a whisper. Her voice is raspy.

“Not really but you don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to,” I say and put an arm around her shoulder. She says nothing but instead leans into me and closes her eyes with the tears running down
her cheeks. We sit there in silence with the occasional noise, such a sterile hellhole would allow. Suddenly loud voices emerge from the hallway, through the door.

“What in blazes are you talking about?!” Sammy’s mother is hissing hysterically.

“You heard me; if she hadn’t run around outside with strange men, she wouldn’t be in this predicament. She only got herself to blame.” Her father, on the other hand, says, sternly but controlled.

I look at Sammy and she looks at me. “Usual business,” she says. Her mother snarls and shouts something back at him along the lines of “How dare you! You know she would never do such a thing! The police said it themselves! She was drugged! She fought for her life!”

I can’t stand to hear it. I can’t keep sitting here and listening to her father talk smack about her while she’s right next door. So, I get up from the bed, ignoring the tucking at my sleeves. I know, Sammy wants me to stay put and wait until it blows over, but I can’t. I give her hand a tight squeeze and go out of the room right into a verbal war with the father dropping a hurtful bomb.

“Did she really? If she was a proper, responsible young lady like her sister, she wouldn’t have ended up like such a harlot.” He scoffs.

The woman opens her mouth to say something but snaps it shut again with the streams of tears running down her cheeks. She looks as wounded as someone could possibly be. Utterly defeated.

“You know, I’m right. Stop cuddling her and get her home. I feel embarrassed to be here.” He says with the tiniest of hints at pride over his conquest. And this is where I have enough.

“She’s your daughter! How can you say something like that?” I jeer at him and he turns to me with the coldest look that makes my blood boil.

“Stay out of it, you brat.”

“You… you disgusting…! It's people like you, that pushed her over the edge and caused her to almost kill herself!” I hear myself yell and cover my mouth. Everyone in the hallway stares at me wide-eyed and my ears turn hot. And it is at that moment, I realize that I’ve fucked up. Big time.

The father glares at me briefly before he grabs the collar of my shirt and pulls me so close to his face, I can see the many wrinkles on his face and the graying strains on his sideburns. Milliseconds pass before a loud smack makes my whole head spin. Powerful stinging knocks in my cheek me of my feet and I fall to my knees, glaring at the man, who had the gall to slap a kid in public.

“You do not know my family, boy. But know this; if she was a useful child, she would have taken it on the chin and gotten over whatever petty feelings, she’d cry over.” He flips his jacket and looks at me with murderous rage in his eyes. There’s an uncomfortable silence in the hallway; it’s so quiet you can hear a pin drop.

That is, until a body dressed in blue floats in between us. Through the welling tears in my eyes, I see strains of blonde come to my aid and then disappear again at the blink of an eye.

“Stop! Just.. stop.” Sammy speaks softly.

“Sammy?”

“Please leave, Topher.” She says and it shatters my heart. I stare at her in disbelief as I stand up. My cheek is aching but my heart hurts way more by the things she is about to say.
“He’s right. I am a useless sack of wasted space that deserves all the bad shit.” She says in such a manner that suggests she was forced to believe such things about herself. “You really have to go. But know that it’s not your fault.”

“But it’s not yours either!”

“If he won’t leave, then I will.” The man flips his jacket before looking at his wife. “I’ll be waiting in the car.”

And with that, the man is gone. His abandoned wife falls to her knees and looks at Sammy with dead eyes “Please don’t listen to him, honey. Geo-he didn’t mean-“

“I know he meant it. But I’m not bothered by the fact he hates me so much. Mommy, you don’t have to stay with him to make me happy. People like you, good people, have the right to be selfish, just once in a while“ Sammy says nonchalantly. She tries to smile but it breaks and she hurries away into her room.

Defeated and ruined, I make my leave. I feel like I have been enlightened but on the other hand, it came at a great price. It is not before I’m about to enter the elevator that I realize that I’m in the psychiatric department.

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On the way home, I sit in the back of the bus, freezing and lonely. The bus drives through the city, to the urban areas. On one of the stops, a bunch of people enters the bus and I seat myself to one of the sides so that I’m not stuck in the middle.

“Outward appearances suggest that you are depressed. Do you have any objections against me temporarily planting my physical form here?” a voice says to me and I look up to see a redhead green eyes hidden behind round glasses. I simply look at her because I have no fucking idea of what she just said. This seems to annoy her a bit so she sighs before rephrasing herself.

“Can I sit here?” she says, less enthusiastic.

“Yes,” I say tiredly. Scarlet sits down quite stiffly. I never talk to Scarlet, even though we share math classes together. In fact, I never thought about her that much. I know she is too intelligent to still be in high school and this seems to alienate her from everyone except for a rich kid named Max. In all honesty, I only know her name and the fact that she is too smart for her own good. So, therefore, it’s a surprise that she is talking to me right now. Maybe Max fucked off to oblivion.

Scarlet leans closer to me and I can see, she’s curious to know my predicament. I likely have no right to tell anyone about any of this but if it can help Sammy and expose the evils of Amy, I guess it’s a plus. I suppose one has to break some eggs in order to make an omelet. I just hope she can forgive me afterward. So I tell her everything; from the night where I met Sammy, to the trip to the mall, to the time misunderstanding of Amy dating me. Everything really.

“…And now she’s in the hospital.” I finish my tale. Scarlet blinks, seemingly taken it all in before she grabs my shoulder and gives it a reassuring squeeze.

“No need to tell me more. I am willing to put my high intelligence to the test and try and found out who did it.”

“What?”

“After you suddenly eschewed today’s lesson, the principal arrived at each class, talking to everyone
about sexual assault and what to do if you’re a victim. No one suspected Samey—“

“Sammy.” I correctly and she looks at me with a stiff gaze.

“Right.” She replies sharply before continuing. “No one suspected her being a victim as she never left much of a presence and people forget about the quiet, non-obnoxious but it is a little… coincidental that she ends up hospitalized right when our principal gives everyone a fair warning.”

“You don’t mean that she—“

“Do not fret, fratboy. In cases such as these, law enforcement is of little help,” Scarlet interrupts and pushes her glasses to the bridge of her nose. There’s a shift of tone in her voice; it’s trembling and dark. Not with sadness but restrained anger. “Rarely, they take the side of the woman, so we must become vigilant and take justice in our own hands. Dangerous, perhaps even illegal. But what other choice do certain ones have if they ever want to be happy?”

My heart breaks as everything begins to make sense now. A hole grows in my stomach and I feel weak. Had I not been sitting down, I would have fallen to my knees.

“I want to help her but I don’t know what to do.”

“I commend your empathetic levels. I for one is unable to understand such notions and for that, and to satisfy my curiosity, I want to help as well.”

“But why?”

“I seldom spoke to her but from what little our few interactions offered, I quickly discovered that I prefer her over her sister. Imperious as Amy is, I too was fooled. But I am a much wiser woman and I recognize certain patterns. Thusly I’ve answered your question as to why.”

This whole day feels like the worst kind of rebound; being knocked over and over again and yet still coming back up, only to be knocked down again, rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat. I guess the only good thing that has come out of it, was Scarlet apparently seeing Amy’s true colors and helping me. I kinda regret not talking to her more often.

Suddenly Scarlet looks around as if to make sure, no one is eavesdropping. Then she leans closer to me, so close in fact that I see the subtle shades of red in her orange hair and the faintest dust of freckles right underneath the frame of her glasses. By all account, Scarlet is much more prettier than she would have people believe. There’s a twinkle in her eye as she speaks. “Because I have a theory, outrageous as it is.”

Chapter End Notes

Endnote: I like hospitals. They are quite important in our daily lives. Topher, on the other hand, does not, for reasons that will be explained when this mini-arc ends.

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