

# Difference

Von june-flower

## OneShot

The hot water stung.

The rushing sound of the shower and the blood rushing in her ears drowned out everything else. The mirror was coated in steam, the floor probably already slippery from the water droplets forming on the cold tiles.

The water in the drain was brown and red with dirt.

*Blood.*

*Water.*

Runs hot in my veins.

*Wash away my sins.*

Her eyes were closed. Standing under the stream of scalding water, Rese didn't move at all. She just let the acid run over her face, her shoulders and her entire body. Where it touched the wounds, it stung. She ignored it. Physical pain was something she could handle.

She would never leave this room. She would stay under the hot water forever, until she felt warm again, until the horrible cold had drained from her body, from her bones and from her heart. Until the chill receded, the trembling stopped. Until she could *feel* something again.

Her fingers were numb. Her shoulders felt stiff, but there was no pain in them. Or, if there was, she didn't feel it. There should have been. She should be able to feel the hurt in her dislocated shoulder, the stings of the hot water in the many wounds on her body, the crackling ache in her twisted ankle. The bruise forming on her cheekbone should hurt. Her torn and bleeding lips should hurt. The shallow cut on her lower left arm should hurt. Or, at least, she should be able to feel the heat of the water.

Nothing.

Water. Water. She wouldn't leave the room until...

*Knocking.*

"Rese? Are you alright?"

*Terrence.*

Slowly waking from her stupor, she stretched her arms until she could feel the handle of the water tap. Then, slowly, she turned off the running water. When she stepped out of the shower, the cold should have hit her like a solid fist. She still didn't feel anything. She felt as cold as the stone tiles under her naked feet as she grabbed a towel, her hair dripping all over the floor.

"Rese?"

He wouldn't go away until she answered.

"Yeah."

*Silence.*

Rese stood in front of the mirror, looking at her image and yet looking through it. She didn't see anything. Her fingers rubbed her arms, her face, but there was nothing left to wash away. Still, the feeling of the dried blood on her skin remained. She rubbed harder, her nails breaking open bruised skin, leaving red marks. *Claw marks.* With the memory, the memory of the sight of blood, red and hot on her skin, returned. She scratched harder, finally feeling a dim pain explode in her brain. Nails brushed against skin and dug into it. Blood dribbled out of the cuts, the sweet, irony smell overwhelming.

*It's just blood.*

Her own blood. There was no problem with that.

She sank to the ground, clutching the towel, hugging her bleeding arms around herself, pressing her eyes shut and trying to forget everything else. Her surroundings. Terrence in front of the door. Marina and Ten and Nadya in the kitchen. Jaq and Jay in the living-room. She tried to push it aside, to will it into nonexistence. Her surroundings. Her senses. *Herself.*

The door opens quietly. Terrence crouches down next to her and pulls her upright, carefully hugging her to him. He smells clean, soapy, nothing like the scent she still can smell on herself.

*Blood.*

The smell that lingered in the night air, the stench pestering her nose, making her gag and want to throw up. She never had a problem with blood before.

Why now?

Terrence wraps his arms around her. He has never held her like that before, not in the eleven years she has known him. Suddenly she realizes he's like a brother to her, but the thought melts away at the sudden, overwhelming wave of pain that crashes over her as her senses and her feelings return abruptly.

She can still feel the blood on her skin. She can still smell it, see it, *taste it.* It's normal blood, the same she has seen and smelled and felt many times before. There is just

one difference.

This time, it's Cassidy's blood.