

Soup

She sat at the table by the window, too upset to even stir the steaming bowl of soup in front of her. Apple imagined ripping the gingham cloth off the surface off of the wood, sending the bowl and spoon and stupid freaking flowers flying, splattering the broth across the glass and floor as she wrapped it around her. She saw the reflection of her face in the window, one ghost before the death of winter. She was crying. Apple wiped away her tears, rubbing them off of her cheeks as if she could scrub the last few days from existence. She thought that a bowl of soup would make things better, warm her up the way that she was before- Apple slammed down the spoon, bothered even by the slight echo of the sound. Apple wanted to run. She wanted to leave and never come back, out of the Warehouse, out of this apartment, and just be gone. She wanted to fill the holes in her with new experiences and tequila. She wanted to be free from her life and the people she knew. She wanted to throw on some clothes, leopard and leather, beat her face, rubies and rouge, and have a night out on the town. A girl gone wild, bathed in neon strobes and wreaking colourful havoc, ready for smashing bottles, hearts and rules alike. She wanted to feel the adrenaline pulsing through her, alcohol bleeding through her pores, high on the feeling of youthful freedom.

But in reality, she was stuck. Trapped. Before she had known why she sang despite her cage, but now she was left against the cold and barbed bars of the cage she had let herself be pulled into, pressed into them by the all consuming emptiness of her once home. Empty of course, except for this bowl of freaking soup. Why was she there? Alone? She had once been able to have anyone that she wanted, after all, she had landed Richard and Suzanne with naught but a dance and a date. She had been a lady killer, a maneater, a cold hearted creature of the night, but she had been softened by them. Her wings clipped by Richard's sharp wit, her claws and teeth dulled by Suzanne's weathering company. She had been

bested by a jerk and a criminal. Apple knew she couldn't go anywhere. Jacob and the rest of the house would never let her out, both from their care and their presence. Apple knew that she had to stay for him, and for Richard if ever they could be in the same room again without arguing. Apple had responsibilities that she had willingly saddled herself with and she had to deal with them. Maybe if she threw herself into the kitchen more, learned harder recipes, stayed in the Warehouse's garden, maybe she would feel more full. She could distract herself until Suzanne got out. She could distract herself until she forgave Richard and Jacob. She could distract herself until all of her problems solved themselves.

Apple threw herself back in her chair, resolved to burn herself out until she could do nothing but sleep. She yanked the bowl of soup off of the table and left it on the counter, stomped over to her closet, ripped off her 2-day old pajamas, and squeezed herself into that little black dress in the back of her section. She paused as soon as she had finished fiddling with the back straps. The closet had been divided into three sections. Richards had taken his with him when she had thrown him out, but Suzanne's was still there. A plethora of plain t-shirts and a couple floral dresses hung there, waiting for the soft tan skin of their owner to warm their fabrics. The cheerful colours seemed off putting on a rack, but Suzanne had worn them as if they had only added to the carefree atmosphere of fun she had always carried around her. Apple reached out a hand to touch the fabric of Suzanne's favorite shirt, her 'lucky' shirt, the one that had been worn to countless dates and exams and days of tribulation. She stopped herself from taking it off of the hanger because she knew that she would bury her face in it, trying to breathe in the scent of a lover lost. She knew that she would fall apart, and she couldn't fall apart. She couldn't. There was too much for her to do, and if she fell apart she would just let her pieces scatter. She wouldn't save herself because that would mean feeling all of the pain, all of the loss and betrayal. Suzanne had betrayed her, and Richard, being the way he is, just had to make things worse by agreeing with Suzanne's

decision. Why hadn't she just listened? Why hadn't he back her up? Why did they both cut her out of the relationship, out of their lives?

Apple shut her eyes, silencing her thoughts with a sharp breath. She had asked herself these questions countless times, trying to reason with fate or whatever had led her to them, whatever had kept them all alive and happy. Apple was losing the faith that things would all be okay in the end. Things didn't have to work out. Life isn't a play that some writer composes to be happy. Happy endings don't exist in real life. People and systems are corrupt and the best people get the worst and the worst people get the best. Maybe that was how she had gotten to be with Suzanne and Richard for as long as she did.

She wasn't with either of them anymore, though. They had made their choices, and she had tried to save them, and that was all that mattered. But she failed to keep the relationship in one piece and she was left without either lover. She was left in the crater of the calamity that was that one job. She was left with nothing but scorch marks from love that burned so bright in joy, to something that seared through them, sharp and acrid, like hot battery acid. She was left alone. She had no friends in the Warehouse, but she could try to find one. Apple stood up straighter, pulling her hair out of the braid it was in, shaking her head until the black waves flowed over her shoulders, down her back like a sea of ink. She entered the bathroom, pulling her weapons from the drawer they were in, laying them across the counter where she could see them all, taking stock of the shimmers and shadows, glosses and creams. Apple took a look at herself, wrinkled, worn, and so she got to work.

In less than half an hour, she deemed her look to be complete. Dark red lips that sought attention were armed with sharp wings of eyeliner, and there was no evidence that she had been crying earlier. Apple smiled at herself in the mirror, practicing her signature smirk, but something seemed off. Maybe she should just stay in that night, reheat the soup and watch a movie. Apple shook her head. She had put all of this on, so she may as well let the world see it.