

## Chapter 2 : Neither were valuable to her.

Anaya spent the entire evening in the basement. She fell asleep soon after she laid down and woke up naturally a few hours later. No one came up banging on her door to wake her up or called her to do chores. It only meant that she wasn't needed yet.

Even after waking up at night, Anaya didn't go back outside. She could hear some music playing upstairs. It was the birthday song that the other kids were singing for Charlotte.

Anaya sat up with some difficulty. The blood on her back had already dried and pulled at her skin. It was painful but nothing Anaya had not felt before. Pain was the only familiar sensation she felt these days.

Anaya slowly hummed the song in the basement. Her low voice echoed after the song. It made the basement even more gloomy and sad. Anaya drew a small cake shape into the dirt with her finger and blew on it when the song finished.

She was social sixteen today.

"Happy birthday Arnold." Anaya whispered, "I miss you."

There wasn't a single day in Amara's life when she was reminded of her brother. Everytime she looked into the mirror, everytime her parents looked at her with displeasure. It always reminded Anaya that Arnold was not here anymore.

Anaya wasn't too bothered by the change in her parents behaviour after Arnold died. She was just ve at that time. She didn't understand anything, let alone the deep emotions of mourning and hate. She was told that she was too much like Arnold and she reminded them of him. Anaya could understand that. She also felt guilty and accepted her life as it came.

But after Charlotte was born, Anaya had the epiphany.

Charlotte looked like Anaya too. She also took after their mother. But Charlotte was treated like a princess. Why so? Wasn't she also just like Arnold?

"Charlotte is given to us in exchange of Arnold. The goddess does pity us and she has given us his soul back. Look, isn't she just like Arnold? Her smile is just like his!" Her father had spoken those words while he played with his two month old Charlotte. Anaya had listened in. Her six year old self was left confused.

As Anaya grew up she nally completely understood. They hated her for taking away Arnold and treated Charlotte as the goddess gift and a replacement of their son.

Anaya was not loved or wanted in the house. She might as well have died in that rogue attack that killed her brother. At least in that way her parents might be a bit remorseful towards her.

The singing had come to an end. In fact, more than two hours had passed and Anaya didn't realise.

Anaya sighed and wore her sweater. It was too late to think about those things now. Since she didn't die at that time, Anaya had no plans to die anytime soon. Although the pain and suffering seemed endless now, it wasn't really forever.

Anaya knew there will be a day when she won't have to suffer like this. When she will be free from this prison and y up in the sky like a free bird. She didn't know when that day will arrive, but she was looking forward to it.

Anaya's bones were left with the aftershocks and it became hard to walk. She somehow went to the door and opened it. Outside was quiet and dark. She crept her way out and went back into the attic.

Everyone was asleep by now. It was already midnight.

In the attic, Anaya latched the door and changed our of her sweater. Her camisole was ruined. With her naked back exposed to the chilly night air, the wound didn't feel so painful anymore.

Anaya used a spatula to apply ointment on her back and clumsily wrapped a roll of bandage over it to help the ointment seep in. Then she changed into a thin tshirt and a pair of old cotton pants and laid down on the mattress with her stomach down.

The mattress had two pillows and a good enough quilt to cover her up on chilly nights like these. But Anaya liked the cold. It made her numb to everything. She only wished it numbed away her thoughts and emotions as well. It would have been better if the cold away her breath and soul too.

Anaya had vowed to never take her own life. No matter how hard it gets, no matter how much she suffered, she had promised herself that the life she had was in exchange of her brother's.

But the euphoria of death was tempting. It lured her towards itself and away from life countless times. Anaya resisted to give in. But she hoped that something, or someone would take her life away so she won't have to.

Anaya was just like this. She would be thinking of a bright future and then about the happiness of death. She found the line between life and death almost as thin as a strand of hair. Neither were valuable to her and both were precious.

These thoughts were depressing but true to her. They were what made her nightmares and the daydreams. Anaya hummed to herself in the lonely night. Her birthday had passed. She had wished Arnold but no one wished her.

Teardrops soaked the single pillow under her head. Anaya didn't stop the tears anymore. When no one was around, she let go of the control over the tears and let them ow. Only by releasing them now she will be able to control them tomorrow.

The night owls hooted at a distance, telling her that the night was still long. Anaya wiped her tears and pulled the other pillow under her face.

Anaya felt drowsy from sleep. Her eyes were blur due to tears and sleep. She was a blink away from sleeping when a voice whispered into her heart. Very gentle and soft, it sounded like comfort that Anaya craved.

'Happy Birthday Anaya.' Her wolf wished in a very gentle tone.

Anaya smiled and said, 'Thanks wolfy.' before sleep took over her consciousness.

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I accidentally skipped a chapter so putting it up here :)