***SOMEONE LIKE ME***

This autumn was very cold. The strong wind played with the sapless branches of the trees down the road. The moon was full, hidden partly by the thick layer of black clouds, covering the night sky. The streets were empty and the only thing to be heard was the barking of a lonely street dog.

I wrapped myself tighter in my long white coat and sped up my pace. Just before the end of the street I turned into a dark alley between two old buildings. I went in the one on the left through the big heavy wooden door and headed for the last floor. Just as I reached it I noticed the door to the apartment I lived in was slightly ajar. Stepping in through the doorway, I heard my beloved aunt Sharon scream:

“Where have you been? Do you have any idea what time it is?”

I didn’t find it necessary to answer, so I just moved past her, taking my coat off. I heard Sharon walk behind me, grumbling:

“I assume my sister is asleep.” I sighed, not turning around to face her.

“She sure is! It’s one in the morning for Christ’s sake!” my aunt raised her voice “What are you doing this late, wandering out on the streets? You’re seeing those hooligans you call your friends, aren’t you?”

God! What was her problem? Why did she hate me so much? I had never done anything to her… Only, of course, I wasn’t doing anything she liked, either. I gritted my teeth and curled my fingers into fists. That woman was really testing my temper. I was well aware I was dependent on her, but I feared I wouldn’t be able to restrain from the urge to teach her a lesson for much longer.

“What about it? What if I do go out with them?” I turned around and gave my aunt an angry look.

She was taller and larger than me. Her hair, as always, was thoroughly combed and coated with at least five layers of hair gel, giving her curls a quite fake look. There was ton of makeup on her face and jewelry on her hands, and she was dressed in an expensive white business suit. She looked beautiful, arrogant and dangerous… But I was used to that façade.

“These people are below you, Audrey Manson.” She hissed “I thought I had taught you better in choosing your entourage. If your father was still alive… he would have been very disappointed in you.”

“I guess I’ll never know.”

“I don’t want you to go out with these people, Audrey! Do you hear me?” I opened my mouth to protest, but she quickly continued “I am only doing this for you own good.”

“No, aunt Sharon.” I said, my tone low and threatening “You’re doing this for YOUR own good. For your so called ‘reputation’. I don’t know who you are trying to fool… It is clear for everybody that I’m not your favorite niece… As a matter of fact… you hate my guts! I’m right, am I not? All you’ve ever cared about is Valery!”

With that said, I turned my back to her, walked in my room and locked the door, leaving her alone in the hall, only hearing her high-pitched voice, screaming:

“At least your sister knows what’s best for her!”

“As if…” I whispered and leaned my back against the door.

Such a life I had… Carrying one of the best known families in the world… having so much money… with the rights to do what I want, whenever I want… And yet, I could use none of these privileges. I guess being born in an immensely rich family isn’t always a dream come true. My parents both had died in mysterious circumstances… with no evidences or witnesses… as if they had just disappeared. I had been only three years old and Valery had yet to become one when all of those actions had taken place. Someone, of course, needed to take care of us and, as my grandmother had refused to do so, we were left under the guardianship of aunt Sharon. Which, as it seems, hadn’t been the wisest thing to do.

“God, I hope you are watching right now. I hope you see what fate you have chosen for me and help me live through it!”

A single tear ran down my cheek. I sat in the middle of my giant bed and looked at my reflection in the mirror on the wall, above the bed frame. I took in every single detail of my appearance. From the pale, honey-colored skin, the blue eyes, my ginger curly hair… down to my fragile body, hidden under a long baby-pink dress. An angel, everybody called me… a princess. They thought I lived like a royalty, getting what I want. They thought I enjoyed sitting alone, reading a nice romance and listening to old classics… They thought I was so pure… Hah! How easy it was to deceive people. I was no angel… I was a slave! A slave to that world, doing what everyone expected me to do, looking the way they wanted to see me… Forced to hide behind a mask, not revealing my true personality.

I did not enjoy classical music… I loathed it! And romance? It was abominable for me. The only things I loved were alternative metal, drawing and fantasy… Because they were able to snatch me out of that unbearable reality and show me a place where I gave my all to be. I would sit everyday in front of the pedestal, with earphones on, conveying my feelings on the canvas.

But what did the people know. They didn’t care a bit…

I took off my silk gloves which I had forgotten on my hands, revealing my calloused, numb palms, covered in paint. I always applied the paint with my fingers. Have been doing that for so long, that the colors wouldn’t wash away. I dropped the gloves on the floor and reached behind my back to unzip my dress. The soft fabric slid gracefully down to my waist. Getting up, I removed it completely and put on my thin, transparent sleepwear. I walked to the window to pull the curtains and threw a quick glance at the alley below. For a split second I could swear I saw something glisten brightly down there. But no matter how long I stayed by the window, focused on the darkness, I saw nothing more.

I was probably too tired and my mind was playing tricks on me… Another reason to go to bed. I curled like a cat under the covers and closed my eyes. Something was telling me that after this night… my life was about to change drastically… I wasn’t sure why or how, but I knew something would happen.

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PART TWO