

The mockingbird's whistling song echoed through the halls. The song was familiar, Fauve's heart warming at the sound. Her eyes fluttered open, her lashes batting like butterfly wings, rising from their resting place on her cheek.

Sunlight filtered in from the window across from her, bathing her in shades of gold and pink and red and orange, a cascade of fire.

She was curled into a small ball, resting against a stone wall, the heat from the sun slipping into her body like toxins, warming her blood.

The tips of her lips curled into a small smile and a gentle sting alerted her that her bottom lip had split. She lifted her hand, touched it to her lip, felt the liquid, saw the drop of tourmaline red blood like poppies blooming on her skin.

Fauve, love, have you been in a fight again? She could already hear her mother's reprimands. The sound of rapid footsteps made her glance upward, the smile on her face widening until it hurt. Her bottom lip split wider but she couldn't find it in herself to care.

A soft warmth spread from her chest to the tips of her fingers, her eyes softening.

She opened her arms right before a tiny shape hurtled into them.

Waves of dark blue and green hair descended down her little sister's back, shining like sapphires and emeralds in the sunlight. That was new. Her wide, innocent blue eyes looked up at Fauve, an identical grin on her lips, showing off slightly crooked teeth. The corners of her mouth were smudged with dark brown. Chocolate, most probably. Fauve had always preferred caramel, the sweet sticky in her mouth.

"Do you like it?" Indigo asked, pointing up at her hair. Her eyes seemed to dance happily with stars. She could have sworn a shooting star was falling, right there, in the middle of her pupil. Should I make a wish? Maybe it will come true.

Her older sister reached up, twirling a piece of blue hair in her fingers, feeling the addictive softness of the strands. She pressed a gentle kiss to the top of her little sister's head.

"It's lovely." She murmured.

Indigo giggled, curling up in her lap, throwing her arms around Fauve. Her older sister could feel Indigo's small thumbs digging into her spine.

She didn't mind.

Indigo pressed her mouth close to her older sister's ear and asked hopefully, "Can you sing the song? The one about the blue bird?"

The song was engraved into her memory. Of course it was, her little sister demanded she sing it every time they saw each other. It was an obsession, one that Fauve didn't mind encouraging.

Maybe her sister would become a singer when she grew up.

The girl with the golden hair nodded slightly, opening her mouth to start singing along to the mockingbird's whistling.

"Little bird, little blue, won't you come down from that branch, where you're perched so high?
Eyes like the sky and a smile, dazzling like the sun. Don't you know how much I love you?
Don't you know how much I love you, little blue?"

Her little sister remained quiet, not disrupting the song. Fauve could hear her steady breathing, could see the tiny smile playing at the corner of Indigo's lips as her eyes closed. She could feel her body getting heavier in her lap, going limp. Fauve's smile softened. She had already fallen asleep.

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It was nearly night, the stars and moon high and proud in the sky. They winked down at the two figures in front of the mirror, blinking sadly. The moon seemed to cry tears made of diamonds, bright and transparent, falling down its craters for eyes.

Fauve's hair still held traces of honey gold, her latest experiment. Now it was closer to a dark, chocolatey brown, made darker by the fact that they got swimming a while ago, still humid and curly.

Tightening her arms around Indigo, she buried her face in her hair, softly inhaling the scent. It smelled of blueberries and chocolate and flowers and something slightly metallic. A whiff of rotten eggs had her curling her nose in disgust.

What have you been doing, you little troublemaker? She wondered, chuckling.

The vibrant blue hue of her little sister's hair had disappeared, giving way to caramel brown waves. Pressing her cheek to the side of Indigo's neck, she sighed, relaxing. Everything was still, so still. The smell of metal and rotten eggs was getting stronger by the minute. Fauve opened her lips, readying herself to continue singing. The mockingbird was silent, long gone. It hadn't come back in months.

"My little bird, flying so high, higher than eyesight, higher than the world. How are you going to come back now, little bird? How are you going to come back to me?

Don't you know how much I love you?"

She turned her sister's face toward hers, looking down at the soft features lovingly. A pang of pain echoed in her ribs, sadness curling around her lungs, but it was distant, an echo of what it used to be.

A slim river of red trickled from her sister's mouth, slipping down her throat. The streak of red was pale, more liquid than blood. On the other side of her mouth, water dribbled out. Her body

was heavier and lighter at the same time. Her chest was still. Her hair was soaked through, pieces of seaweed coloring some of it green. Her beautiful blue eyes were wide and glassy, staring unblinking up at the ceiling.

Fauve's clothes were drenched from her little sister's body, sticking to her skin, clutching her tightly. Water covered the floor too, spreading outward, from the two sisters nearly to the windows. Tiny droplets fell from Indigo's hair, hitting the growing puddle of water, adding another inch or two. Soon the tendrils would reach the window and they would double back, trickling along the edges.

Fauve held her little sister in her arms as though she was a lifeline. She was never going to let go. Time felt to speed along and she couldn't have told how long she sat, cradling her sister's head in her lap before her mother came rushing in.

"Fauve? Indigo? Where are you?" She cut off with a scream as she saw them. Then she was running to their side, dropping to her knees, pulling Indigo toward her.

"Indigo? Indigo?" She turned her eyes toward Fauve. "What happened?" They weren't accusing, not exactly- just understanding and afraid. It frightened her, sent her blood racing nervously in her veins. What was her mother afraid of?

"Nothing happened." Her oldest daughter answered. "She's just sleeping. She fell asleep coming back here, she'll wake up soon."

Seeing her mother shaking Indigo, she reached forward, grabbing her mother's shoulders, trying to stop her. As soon as Fauve's fingers touched her shoulders, she jerked backward, muscles tensing under the touch. Her daughter gulped, pain and frustration sparking in her eyes but pushed on, her voice trembling slightly.

"Mother, stop. She hasn't slept in days, she needs this. She'll wake up in just a bit."

Stopping momentarily her mother looked toward the doorway, her face a mask of fear as she lifted herself up, Indigo still resting in her arms.

“Tyson.. Tyson!” She called. “C-come here, please, I need your help with something.” Her voice choked saying the sentence but she held her composure, shoulders tossed back, head held high, no tears in her eyes. Soon, their father skipped into the room, a furrow in his brow. A furrow that disappeared as soon as his eyes scanned the scene. Her mother glanced back toward Fauve, then turned back toward Tyson.

“Hold her, please.” She seemed scared, no- terrified of something, her eyes cold and shocked as they looked at her oldest daughter. Was she scared of Fauve?

“Mother?” She asked, stepping forward slightly, her eyes wide and confused. But her father was stepping in her way, holding her back by the shoulders, tears tracking down his eyes. His eyes were red, the translucent tears tracking a way down his cheeks.

“Stop- just, stop.” He told her, his voice rougher than her mother’s. “Do you understand what’s happened?” His eyes searched hers. “Indigo’s *gone*- she’s *dead*.”

His eldest daughter was already shaking her head, fighting against him, trying to get to her sister. She threw himself against him but he wouldn’t let her go. Water welled up in her eyes and she felt a moment of embarrassment. What was she crying for?

Her parents were frightening her. She could feel it in her racing heart and the well of dread forming at the pit of her stomach. Why were they doing this? She didn’t find it funny anymore. She wanted Indigo to wake up, to tell her it was a prank.

Just a prank.

Tears tracked down her cheek as she fought, looking at the retreating back of her mother. She imagined she could still see her sister’s face, smiling back at her, whispering that she was alright.

“No.” Fauve kept whispering. “She’s not dead- she’s just resting. She’s just resting!”