

## Crystal Tears and Murky Water

The fangs of fear sunk into her neck, the claws of guilt scratched at her arms and legs, the tail of sadness and anger plunged into her heart. While her aunts forceful and control hands dragged her further into the murky water forcing her to smile as she slowly descended.

“Anastasia?”

Her eyes flew open as the soft voice of her friend distracted her from her thoughts. Anastasia turned around to see a small boy with long blackish red hair, tan skin, and maroon eyes looking at her with fear and concern.

“What are you doing here Shade?”

The girl asked hiding her face so he couldn't see her wiping her tears. “You were taking a long time to collect firewood, so I came to check on you.” Shade replied slowly walking towards her. He sat down next to her and gently grabbed her face and turned it towards him. He silently observed her face before finally speaking.

“You've been crying haven't you.” “What happened?”

“Nothing, I'm fine.” She stated.

“Ann?”

“I said I'm fine.”

Shade narrowed his eyes before sighing and letting go of her face. He shook his head in disbelief before turning back to look at her.

“let me see your left hand.” He stated firmly.

Anastasia hesitated and glanced down at her hand. It had a glove covering it to hide the hand and its horrible secret.

“Ann!”

She slowly moved her hand towards him and watched in dread as he removed her glove and revealed the large bright red bruise underneath.

“So, I was right, you do have a cozrun demon.”

Anastasia looked down in shame. She was born with a cozrun demon. There were different types of demons. The cozrun demon was genetic and fed off sadness, guilt, anger, and fear. It appeared as a red bruise on the victim's dominant hand. The stronger the emotions the stronger the demon. The stronger the demon the brighter and larger the bruise. Anastasia's demon was especially strong. Shade let go of her hand and glared at her.

“You know how dangerous this demon is, right?”

Anastasia nodded embarrassed and ashamed.

“Why didn't you tell anyone?”

“I can control this demon just fine, it doesn't hurt, that much.”

She responded keeping her gaze glued to the ground below.

“Not that! I meant about how you were feeling.”

Anastasia slowly looked down at him once again revealing her tear-stained face with new tears emerging. She gave a mock smile and responded with,

“I'm supposed to be happy all the time, I'm not allowed to be sad.”

Shade looked up at her with shock and disgust, wondering why she thought that.

“I have to be happy, there is no room for sadness.”

“I have to be happy; I have to be happy; I have to be happy...”

She repeated the phrase until Shade covered her mouth with his hand. He held her still and looked straight into her lime eyes.

“You don't have to be happy all the time. Bottling up your feelings will make the demon stronger and you more miserable. Please, this isn't healthy you need help.”

Shade finished talking with tears in his eyes. Anastasia looked down at him in surprise before her softened. Her lip started to quiver and the tears she was holding back started to run free. She cried as the sun rose illuminating her crystal-clear tears. She cried and cried until she couldn't anymore. When last tear fell to the ground, she looked at Shade and smiled, a genuine smile. Shade looked at her and returned the smile. They got up headed back hand in hand. She no longer felt the claws, fangs, tails, or fingers of any of creatures