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(STRIKE WRITER'S CLUB CONTEST)

"The Curse"

*M*y name's Crystal. I am just an ordinary 15-year-old orphan girl living in an orphanage. The morning bell rings, everyone scurries around the school grounds to get to the cafeteria for breakfast. I don't bother, I am not always hungry for breakfast early morning. "Hey, Kris" my best friend Milly calls out behind me; she is the only friend I have in this whole school. Nobody's friends with me, everyone thinks I am just a freak with a limp and an oversized brain. "Ugh, you skipped breakfast again I told you not to- ah there it is I sneaked out a granola bar for you" Milly hands out a smushed honey streaked bar to me from her purse and she stuffs it in my mouth. There is one thing I fear each month, our society is not just any other society it is a cursed one. Every other 28 days which is the full moon everyone single one of us falls asleep it's like hibernating but forcibly, without no choice. If you don't keep count of the days and be prepared you just fall asleep anywhere. Everyone gathers around for a slumber party in our school right before 12:00 am of the 28th day. This is like mourning for death but in a happy way. Nobody knows what happens after we fall asleep, who wanders around and keeps everything intact like nothing ever happened, no seasonal or weather change, nothing misplaced or if we will ever wake up again.

Miss Honey makes an announcement, she claps her both hands together and introduces the new boy, nobody noticed him first we all just gasped when he came out. "This is Rowan, a young gentleman he will be joining us at the last moment at our orphanage though I still hope we will get to know more about him after our hibernation" miss Honey remarks with a big smile. Miss Honey calls him up to us then

we see him much better; his sharp cheekbones, gray eyes, and his stiffness around someone. He looks straight into my direction ignoring all the murmuring and comments around him. *Wait* he's looking right at me! I try to hide my embarrassment and look right into his eyes, but he looks away with a smirk. "Ow" I cry. Milly pinches my back "Come on, are you gonna stare at him all night?" she states and pushes me to our room.

12:36 AM

I jerk my eyes open and look for something to grasp. I keep tight hold of the rim of the bedsheet. "Ugh why can't I fall asleep? hey Milly-" that's when I realize I AM NOT supposed to be awake it is time of our hibernation; I nearly tumble out of my bed; *hissssss* a deafening sound comes from the hallway. I quickly grab hold of the flower vase and start yelling *hey* at the dark shadow. I walk slowly and soundlessly to the end of the hallway until I see a faint purple light and it intoxicates me to keep moving onto the light and pull me right into it.

My eyes open at the blinding of a strong white light; I run around the lush green meadow until I see a dark shadow, I keep following it, and fall over something. A strong arm grabs me and starts shaking me vigorously. "Are you ok, what are you doing here? You are not supposed to be here! They will hunt you down" I try to see Rowan with an anxious look and pass out. "Here, have a drink" Rowan hands me a glass of cranberry juice. I look around and find myself in a wooden cushiony cuff chair with a blanket draped over myself. "Where are we?" I ask when I see Rowan. He looks around uncomfortably and sighs "We are at a different dimension, only few with extraordinary power can travel between parallel dimensions, I came to your orphanage to look for someone like you but.....I never thought it **would** be someone

like you who can control portals between dimensions” I feel shocked too. “So, you mean we are trap in this dimension until I find a way to get us out” I ask. He nods. I nearly have a panic attack. Rowan notices my panic and says, “I know this might be a lot, but we can start training on how to control your power and get us out of here.”

It has been now 18 months since we came here; there is no one around 1000 miles radius from us, we are in the middle of nowhere. Rowan sometimes tries to get food from part of the dimension but can only be out for 20 minutes. We both tried to get to our actual world, but just ended in the same place. Though I can still open portals small enough to fit our heads only. The dark shadow I saw at the beginning always appear at my dreams. Rowan says that it might be connected to my parent's disappearance suddenly after my birth. Every day we get letters at the front porch from nowhere warning us to go away. I am still afraid of what the future is holding, my nightmare aren't ordinary ones either they are almost real; if get a scratch on my forearm the same mark appears at the same spot in the morning when I wake up. Today was much more terrifying a dark shadow tries to strangle me and if I had not woken up, I would've been dead. Rowan woke me up he took me outside and the darkened sky makes me panic: I open a portal and takes us to the time when our society was cursed. Everything was at the past, I see a man and a woman handing their child to someone, I realize that child is me and they are my parents. My parents are alive, stuck in a dimension! I am going to find them. I am going to get them free from the dark shadows, which has been restraining me. This isn't the end; this is just the beginning of my nightmares.