REFLECTION

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 "Because you're a jinx! " she grabbed Powder furiously by the chin and forced her to look into her eyes. "Mylo was right!"

She could not think, the sound of raindrops hitting the pavement was deafening, it fell on them incessantly dragging the dirt and remains of the dust from the explosion that covered both of them, but it was not enough. It couldn't erase what had happened. It was too late.

Vi felt anger consuming her, her hand burned, and she could see her sister's cheek red and swollen right where her palm had impacted on it. Powder was crying inconsolably, the sobs shook her petite figure making her tremble all over.

"Violet, please!"

The rain mingled with her tears and the blood that had begun to flow from her nose. Vi looked at her hand; numb knuckles and full of dirt; the bandages that covered her hand were stained with her sister's blood. Her sister. What had she done? She turned away from her in horror.

The scene flickered and changed. She was on a burning bridge; the smoke intoxicating the atmosphere, preventing her from breathing; corpses scattered on either side as she inched forward clutching Powder's hand, who was singing a sweet melody that didn't match the nightmare around them. She could hear the sounds of gunfire in the background, the thud of bodies collapsing on the asphalt; the smell of burned meat in the air. She felt the bile rise up her throat. She closed her eyes for a moment and in that split second the bridge was gone, and she felt her sister's hand vanish. Panic washed over her.

"Powder! Powder, where are you?!" she turned desperately trying to look for her everywhere without success.

She heard her sister sing again the same tune, but the sound had changed. She ran after the echo of her voice until she saw her silhouette from behind. It was Powder, but she was no longer a child. She could make out her tattoos of blue clouds glowing on her pale skin as she raised her arm. She was holding a gun. Vi felt a lump build in her throat, a feeling that something was very wrong. She saw Powder pointing to a kneeling shadow in front of her. The noise of the gunshot overlapped with her song. Vi ran towards her.

"Powder!" she called her. She had almost reached her, her pulse racing with anticipation. She had finally found her, after so long...

Powder turned then to look at her. A radiant smile spread across her face as she recognized her; her eyes glowed, reflecting the light that hit the metal of her pistol.

I knew you'd come" she said sweetly.

Vi reached up her hand to caress her cheek, as she had done countless times when they were little; it got stained with blood. It dripped from her face to the ground, creating a pool that accumulated under the motionless figure lying in front of her. Her heart skipped a beat.

 It was Caitlyn.

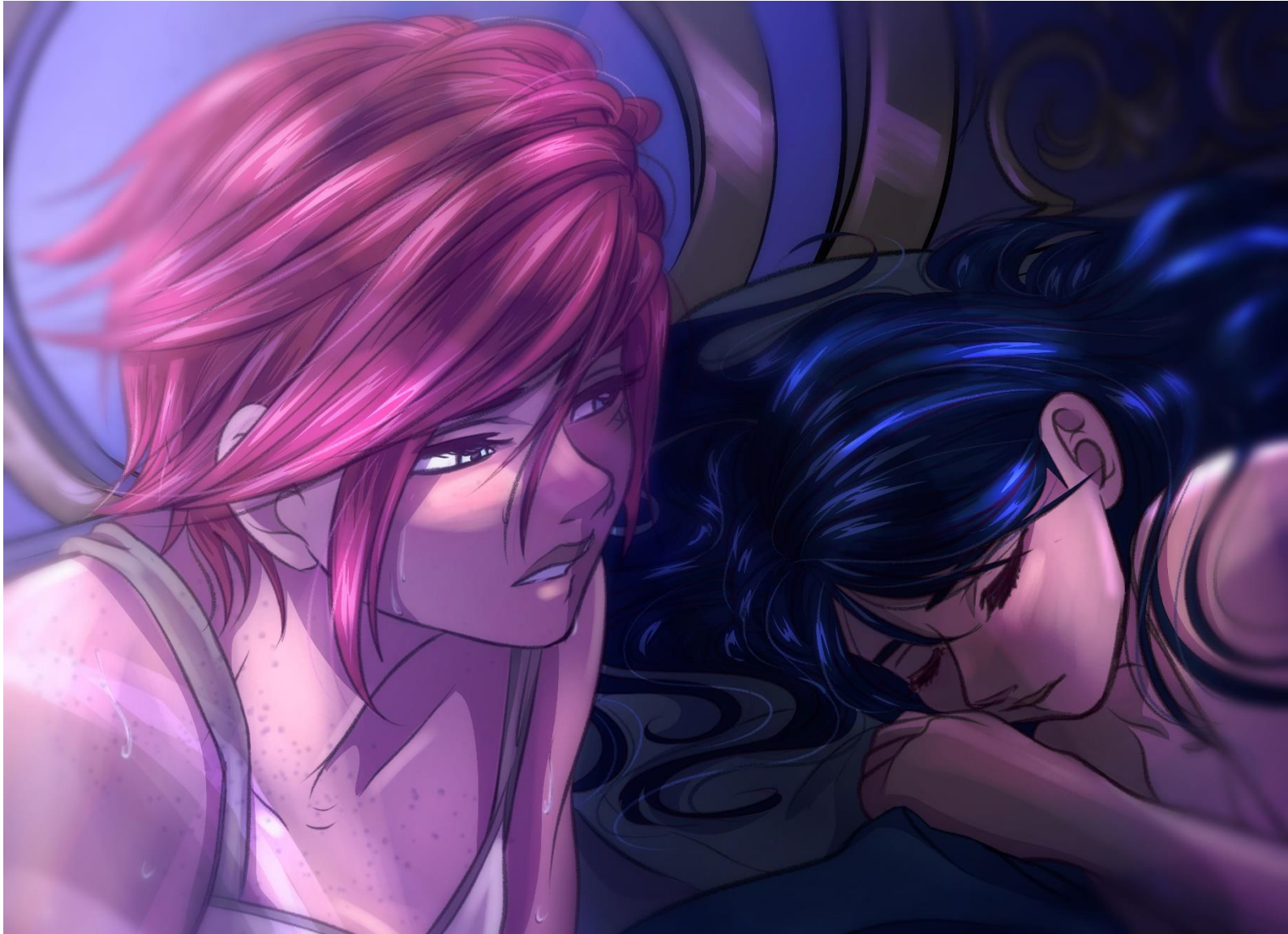"No !!" she exclaimed as she woke up suddenly.

She could still hear the ghost of the gunshot ringing in her ears, overlapping with her ragged breathing. It had been a nightmare, just that. She exhaled relieved as she slowly lowered the arm she had extended in an attempt to stop her sister in the dream. She ran her hand down her face, brushing away the sweat-soaked strands of hair that had stuck to her forehead.

Vi looked out the window and realized that it was dark. What time was it? She didn't remember falling asleep. Rain pattered on the windows of the room; it had started in the middle of the afternoon and hadn't stopped since. She squeezed her eyes shut in an attempt to clear her mind. She could still feel her heart pounding, trying to jump out of her chest. She leaned against the headboard of the bed. She could hear Caitlyn's deep breathing next to her. Vi looked at her for a moment. She was still sleeping peacefully, completely oblivious; her chest rose and fell slowly in time with her soft snoring. Nothing could disturb her, Vi thought with a half smile. Unconsciously, she matched her own breathing to hers and finally managed to calm herself. It

had only been a dream, nothing more. She stayed like that for a while, in silence, trying with all her might to get rid of the images that were still running unchecked in her mind; Powder firing uncontrollably, staring at her with infinite hatred; walking towards them on that bridge while humming a nursery rhyme and shooting a dying enforcer point-blank; Powder, smiling, as Vi caressed her cheek tenderly.

She couldn't stand it anymore. It was clear that she wasn't getting any more sleep that night. She carefully got up from the bed she shared with Caitlyn trying not to wake her up and left the room.

She wandered aimlessly through the vast corridors of the Kiramman mansion. It was still strange to be there, she would never have imagined the family would take her in, even less after the debacle in the council, but Caitlyn had not wanted to hear a word of it when Vi had told her that she planned to return to the lanes. She had looked at her, piercing her with those blue eyes that seemed to reach the last corner of her soul.

"You are vulnerable there, Vi. Sevika is probably looking for you. They could attack you at any moment and I would have no way of helping you" she had said very seriously.

They had been in one of the many meeting rooms in the house, and Vi felt small. Used to living in dark, damp nooks, or enclosed between concrete walls, being in such open spaces made her feel vulnerable, exposed. She shifted uncomfortably under Caitlyn's intense gaze.

"I can stay with Ekko and give him a hand." she replied without meeting her gaze" I'll be safe there and..." she stopped talking when Cait intertwined her fingers with hers, squeezing her hand tightly as she looked into her eyes.
"Stay" she said simply, and Vi hadn't been able to refuse.

However, despite the tight security measures of the mansion, the thick walls could not protect her from her own demons. Nightmares haunted her every night; Memories of the past disfigured by her mind in terrifying visions. Sometimes she would wake up screaming, writhing and drenched in cold sweat, the sheets tangled around her body as if they were trying to strangle her. The worst were the ones about the warehouse, the explosion that had killed Mylo and Claggor; Vander sprawled on the ground, the shimmer's remains still running through his lifeless body; Powder collapsed as she desperately begged her not to leave her. But she hadn't listened. The nights she dreamed the only thing she could do was curl up, trembling, as she hugged herself, praying that the memories would disappear. Until she felt Caitlyn's arms around her and she finally managed to calm herself. Despite the fact that she had been given one of the guest rooms for herself, Caitlyn had sneaked into her room almost every night. At first she had just lain with her on the huge four-poster bed until she managed to calm down, and then she went back to her room,, but one of the nights, one in which the nightmares had been especially vivid and Vi could still feel the tremors shaking her body, when Caitlyn started to get up to leave her alone again, she had grabbed her hand, a silent request. She didn't say anything, it wasn't necessary. Caitlyn had lain down next to her again and never left her alone since.

Her steps led her to one of the mansion's marble staircases. She climbed the staircase until she reached the landing that crowned its center, just where it branched to lead to the two wings of the house. The view was privileged from there the city seemed to bow at her feet; the commercial district was illuminated by countless lights as passerbys rushed through its streets, full of life even at night. The swaying of flying ships that lined the harbours awaiting to be rid of their cargo. And crowning Piltover's sky, the imposing Hextech towers, symbol of the undeniable progress of the city.

Progress.

That word perfectly described Piltover, at least for outsiders.

Conformity, indifference, cruelty. Despotism.

Vi clenched her fists. So much wealth, so much opulence… and meanwhile their people were dying in the streets, hunger and shimmer consuming them just a few feet away. They turned a blind eye on what was happening on the other side of the bridge only because they weren't able to control it. Two worlds separated by a simple river that meant the difference between life and death. She couldn't help but remember her childhood on the lanes; the misery, the hunger. She and Powder freezing in the little shack they shared with their parents in the suburbs, where despite having practically nothing, they had been happy. And then the nightmare; the bridge, corpses

piled up on both sides, remains accompanying them on their march through hell; and their parents, empty-eyed, staring into the void.

Vi had to bite her lip to keep from crying. She would be haunted by those images all her life, it would be the last thing she'd see when she exhaled her last breath, she was sure of it. And she knew her sister would be too.

And yet despite the hatred for the topsiders, despite all the rage against the enforcers, against the government, against everything they stood for, Caitlyn had become her greatest support, her safe haven. An enforcer herself, no less; the daughter of one of the heads of the council that had ignored the suffering of those below for so many years.

It was ironic, almost a joke of fate. And it scared her, she was terrified. Lowering your guard, where she came from, meant death.

Sometimes when she felt Caitlyn's arms around her, she wanted to scream; escape from there. Get away from her, run anywhere, no matter where it was as long as she could avoid that total and absolute feeling of vulnerability, that weakness that she knew would end up killing her. Because she was certain that if she allowed herself to fall apart, if she let Caitlyn be the one to put her back together again, she would never be able to walk away. And she couldn't afford it.

Her skin prickled, and a shudder ran up her spine. She felt the emptiness in the pit of her stomach again, threatening to engulf her; her breathing quickened, becoming erratic. No, she couldn't stay there. She had to get out, escape from that glass cage. Nothing had changed, it was just an illusion. She would close her eyes and in an instant she would wake up again in stark reality, and the blow would kill her. She had to get out of that house where calm seemed to take over every corner, tempering her, making her weak. It was a dream, a mere mirage that, despite everything, could not drown out the cries of her sister begging her not to leave her that still resonated in her mind.

She looked around her frantically, a caged animal searching for a way out, for any crevice to escape; she had to look for Powder. No matter how lost she was, she would find a way to bring her back. It was her sister, damn it, if she didn't do it, who would?

She threw herself against the huge window trying to open it, but it was useless; the image of freedom it projected was just another mirage. She pounded at the armored glass, desperate to get out. A devastating anguish washed over her. Wherever she looked there was nothing but calm, an astonishing tranquility that suffocated her. That kept reminding her that everything was a lie. She had to get out, she couldn't bear to be there another minute. She couldn't breathe, she was drowning. She rested her hand against the cold surface of the window as she tried hard to get some air into her lungs. The rain continued falling over the city, the raindrops snaked on the other side of the glass, capturing the moonlight and creating iridiscent reflections in the night.

It was useless.

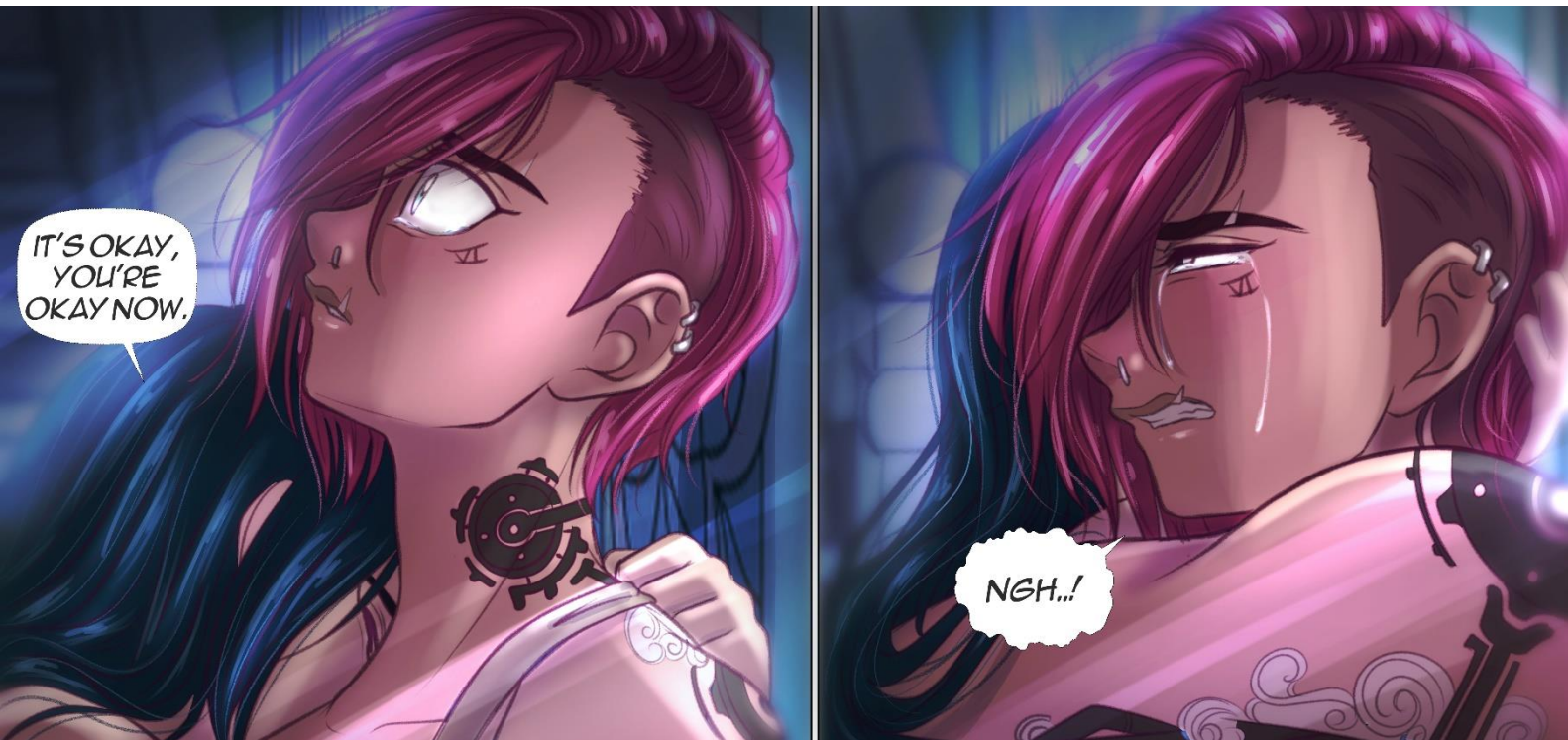She knew it, she knew she had lost her, forever. But she hadn't wanted to admit it.

She heard muffled footsteps behind her, approaching. She turned on instinct, guard up. She recognized Caitlyn's scent when her arms encircled her carefully, holding her. The warmth of her skin seeped through her clothes, but despite that Vi felt an inhuman coldness taking hold of her, she was barely aware of the contact of her body against hers.

The moonlight sliced through the high, narrow windows, framing them in a circle of light, the tinkling of the rain against the glass, the only background melody.

Vi shuddered, and Caitlyn buried her face in her neck, holding her tighter. The knot in her chest that threatened to break her finally unraveled, and a desperate sob involuntarily escaped from her lips. Vi felt herself collapse. She leaned her back against the wall, letting herself slide to the ground and dragging Cait with her.

"It's okay. You're okay now" Caitlyn wishpered softly against her neck.

She didn't try to stop when the tears began to roll down her cheeks, when the sob turned into tremors, shaking every fiber of her being, releasing the anguish that was slowly consuming her.

She couldn't help but hold onto Caitlyn with all the strength she had left, letting her absorb a small part of her pain, calming the turmoil she felt inside.

And outside it continued raining.