



Distemper

GothicTempress

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Summary

I can't escape this tightening, blackening hostility. There is no satisfying cure for this hatred I feel for him, short of the resolution that would give me what I desire most: I want him dead. I want him to pay with his last breath. It's time.

Chapter 1

This One Shot contains extremely heavy subject matter followed by a positive resolution. As in life, you often have to get through the difficult journey before you reach the happier destination. It's the moral of *this* story too. More down below.

"Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

Mark Twain

I'm clearly maladjusted, the darkness festering inside me reflected on the formations of the clouds high above and the carpet of grass below. The grass is not soft at all; it's an irritant and a callous reminder of the softness of which I have been deprived.

That cloud looks like a man without his head, his legs contorted in unnatural angles. *Promising.*

This one looks like ... what the hell is wrong with me?

Desperation burns like festering poison through my veins as I try to absorb the light of this perfect summer day, my eyes drawing up to the heavens, but I see no God. I see no beauty, no happiness. I see death everywhere.

I crave blood ... rivers of blood spurting from his malicious eyes, ears, mouth, every orifice as he writhes in pain.

I have no lingering doubts about the fact that my mind is decidedly fucked up, and I no longer desire to be re-calibrated for the sake of my emotional health.

There is no satisfying cure for this hatred I feel for *him*, short of the resolution that would give me what I desire most: I want him dead. I want him to pay with his last breath.

I want to be the one to snuff out his existence.

I can feel the smile reach my innermost demons as they begin to rally the troops

and build momentum. They are excited, and now so am I.

This grass beneath my hands is chaos, very much like the tangled mass of pain throbbing within my head. I want to claw at the calm green because I want no part of placidity or good. I want to claw at the beauty until I find the decay, the dirt, the rotting marrow I know we all have deep inside.

I can no longer trust the contours of my shell to remain neutral, to be a diplomatic facade while this war rages within. My body feels as though its about to break. I'm about to rupture apart, burst open and spill my darkness onto the world around me. I will make myself leave this lawn, leave this place of supposed peace. I will stomp on the grass as I go forth, propelled by anger and despair.

This is my fourth shower of the day.

The water cascades down my flesh and my skin screams at the scalding heat, my stigmas singed anew into the skin I detest - the skin *he* ruined.

Detestable contagion has taken root in my heart. It poisons my perilous existence as the liquid membrane surges against my distress, causing tears to spill forth.

I only cry in the shower. My tears mingle with the warm water so that I can deny that I feel them as they fall between my outstretched hands, begging God *why*.

Useless questioning.

Phantom tears ... phantom feelings.

They don't exist in a way that matters. *Tears* don't matter. They slip down the drain unnoticed just as I slip through life, spiraling down the hole that sucks me away from a proper existence, traces of black circling behind as I submerge myself willingly, submit to the emotional undertow.

I'm done crying. I want to stop questioning my louder impulses and start acting on them. I believe I should.

I believe I *will*.

My heart and my soul are malnourished, begging for sustenance. Why can't I feel

something other than hate? Figures.

She's angelic as she sways from the monkey bars, her mother laughing as she watches her daughter move, hand over fist, bar after bar, until she is safely to the other side of the landing.

Her mother claps at her success as the girl swings down, landing firmly on the happy yellows and greens of her contrived metal playground.

I can't imagine any outcome farther from reality, and I hate them for their happiness.

You rarely land safely, little one. You will fall and be left with a wound that will never, ever mend. The happy greens and yellows will morph into a monster, an ugly beast with shiny teeth and a motive you will not understand until it's too late ... until you are trapped in a cold place, your guard down and begging for the pain to stop, for the piercing agony and the torment to cease, cease, stopstopstoppleasestop...

That torment kills every happy thought. The garbage floating beneath my surface plunges to my deepest *me*, and I fear there is still some room before those depths are reached.

A man whizzes by on his rollerblades. He's smiling at me. Don't get too smiley, mister. Hide your *teeth*. Even smiley monsters bite. They force their viciousness into your soul, their venom assaults your being and nothing holds you together after that. Nothing is left of you except what drips down your shower drain.

His smile disappears, a sudden change in his demeanor as he senses my hatred, no doubt.

I'm going to leave this park bench and go home to take my seventh shower of the day.

The thunderclouds overhead are appropriate, given their lightning-veined anger as they seep cold, unrelenting tears from above. Figures.

God knows what I want to do ... what I'm about to do.

My hatred is a slowly-squeezing vice and I feel my sanity slipping under the compression, the pressure to end something...someone...the beast that is *him*.

I can't escape this tightening, blackening hatred. I should value the life I have been blessed with, not allow the shape of my hatred and the weight of pain to mingle on my crazed, expanding smile.

I can feel the toxins on my lips, trying to seep from behind my teeth. I can taste the hatred on my tongue, honey-streams of poison and pain, the coppery tinge of blood left in my mouth. I've failed miserably at stitching and licking my own wounds. The blood is always fresh. The harboring of my hatred makes it so.

Why have I let *his* violent actions define who I've become?

I've remained effectively mute for four years. No voice is necessary because who else understands that it's one of the last parts of me that I have control over? My voice is uniquely me. I lost so much of *her* to his actions. Why make sounds when no one understands this burden anyway? I'll keep it to myself. It's all I have left that's definably mine.

I'm going to make *him* bleed for us all. Every woman he's ever harmed, every victim who's been subjected to his depravity and cruelty...I'm going to splatter the street red and write my hatred in his vile pulp, blood on every surface I can reach.

Payback. I can see it on the walls now, written with my own hands. Oh, yesssssss.

I'm Isabella Marie Swan, and I'm at my breaking point.

I'm about to take his useless life.

I step through the rusted, pried-open burglary gates and open the graffiti-covered glass door. I step over the threshold and am greeted by a bastion of dark promises housed in clear cases...rows of handguns waiting to be caressed.

Fired.

They are whispering to me, chanting morbid affirmations through the glass.

I am drawn to the first case and the proprietor of the shop, a tall man with long dreadlocks joins me.

"Hello there. I'm Laurent..."

He holds out his hand to shake mine, but I keep my hands at my side. No one touches me. I've allowed no one to touch me in years, not since...I shake my head and look down at the case. His smile falters, no longer reaching his eyes.

I point at the top shelf of the case.

"This one?"

I nod. He unlocks it and slides open the back, grabbing the gun and resting it on the counter.

"The Smith & Wesson Sigma. No delay or preparation needed to fire it. Super-strength polymer, self-cocking firing mechanism, 15 rounds. A beautiful weapon."

He smiles longingly at the gun as he hands it to me. I cock my eyebrow at his wistful expression and he blushes. It has a slightly angled handle that's quite comfortable. The top of the gun looks like a speeding train, the perfect vessel for the lead I hope fills *his* body, killing him slowly as he bleeds out.

I lay it on the counter and point to the next one.

"That's a Glock 36 subcompact, six rounds, light at one and a half pounds. Pressure on the trigger cocks the striker and then releases it, unleashing the 9 by 19 Parabellum."

I pick it up and the short handle immediately reminds me of his repulsive ... It was capable of *enough*. I wince. The grooves on the top of the gun resemble straight lines, hash marks on the wall marking the number of decades I'll be spending in jail for *this*.

I place the gun on the counter and point to the next one, Steel Gray and beautiful.

"This is the SIG P220, nine rounds, the magazine release is at the heel of the butt..."

I can't wait to see what it feels like to hear *him* begging for his life, what it feels like to have my heel violently crashing into his butt, a barrel pointed at the monstrosity he calls a...

"You pull back this slide to eject the round into the chamber and pull the trigger."

He places it on my palm, the thick barrel and wide trigger balancing nicely against the easy grip handle. I shake my head and hand it back to him. I point to the shiny Silver, hefty looking one next.

"Ahhhh, it's Brazilian. The Taurus PT52, a blowback pistol with carbon steel on an aluminum frame."

I lift it from the counter. It's substantial in my grip and the silver curve at the top of the handle and the back of the gun is seductive, shining in the florescent lights. *This* gun has personality. The silver curve at the back resembles a perfect eyelash. I think it just winked at me.

It's almost too pretty a gun to use for what I intend. Will it look as pretty when it's covered in his blood? I think it *will*.

I slap a wad of hundred dollar bills on the counter and smile.

"It's a beauty, and it's even more beautiful with you holding it."

He winks, and so does the gun in my hand. Again. Way to encourage the crazy, Laurent. You are probably even crazier than I am. Figures.

"I'll need your ID and your Firearm Owner's Identification."

I pull them out of my pocket and wait for him to take down all of my information. He smiles as he hands them back to me. He holds out his palm and I place her gently in his grip.

"I'll only take a Fifty as your deposit. You'll pay in full when you pick it up. See you in 72 hours."

My eyes brighten in response. There is no hope for sleep in my manic state. I may only be alive for a few more days. I'll eat whatever I want and not worry about the calories. I'll spend obscene amounts of money on things for my parents and the few friends who have remained by my side. Three sunrises and three sunsets remaining. I'll witness them all. I'll try to count the stars, split the sky into three parts, taking a section each night. I'll make sure that my strategy is fool proof, because this will be my one chance to fuck up the natural order of things ... to play God ... to *be* God.

I like this bench. It's been a comfortable place for me for the last two hours to

patiently await the moment I can walk into the store across the street and attain my means of revenge.

After three and a half years of incarceration, *he'll* be released today. I'll finally get my chance to make him pay for what he's done to me. Jessica told me that a group was going to Bullet on Sunday evening to celebrate his release. Too bad he was such a good liar that everyone believed his side of the story. The name of the bar is a sign from God, portending his fate. It will be the perfect place to end him.

I. Can't. Wait.

The moldering wood planks beneath me creak as I reach down to pick up the tattered pamphlet discarded on the the cement under my bench.

Vibrant colors and cheap-looking clip art accompany each stage of a United Airlines evacuation procedure. What would possess someone to steal such a thing, only to discard it? It probably fell out of their suitcase pocket. Did they endanger the lives of others by removing it from the aircraft? What if a future passenger is missing these directions in the event of an emergency? Why the hell do I care about any of this?

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, PLACE THE MASK ON YOURSELF BEFORE ASSISTING THOSE AROUND YOU.

I stare at the picture of the mother reaching for her mask while the child next to her remains motionless, frozen in fear.

I chuckle at the pictures that follow, images of orderly passengers exiting the aircraft in a calm, single-file line.

I close my eyes and throw my head back to laugh maniacally at the absurdity of these asinine directions. It's rational, I suppose, yet too unbelievable to accept that this should be how people under duress will act.

I open my eyes and glare at the billboard high above the city street where I sit. I did not notice it before.

SAVE YOURSELF FROM THE MISERY.

INVEST IN YOURSELF TO GUARANTEE THE FUTURE OF YOUR FAMILY.

Damned corporate jingoism. Why the fuck is it now, in this moment, that this shit

should suddenly make logical sense? United Airlines and Bank of America to the rescue. Figures.

It suddenly hurts to think, to contemplate the path I've been on, the crumbling path beneath my discombobulated mess. Why am I rubbing my own thumbs against my clenched fingers? I'm surprised that I enjoy this feeling on my skin, the gentle brushing of silent solace.

Why have I not comforted myself? Why have I fled from myself? It's such a shame, because I have such soft, beautiful skin. I deserve to be loved, cherished...I deserve to be touched.

I feel unnerved by the fact that I suddenly have to take the temperature of my own plans.

Rationally, I know that my whole life is ahead of me, but I'm not sure I want that option. I kind of want to leave it all behind. I could have kissed the ceiling long ago. I could have wrapped a rope around my neck and kicked away the proverbial and literal chair. A permanent solution to my despair. THAT is what I could have done. Those kinds of oblitative actions appealed to me once. I couldn't take any more. I literally couldn't function another moment ... until I could, and I did.

I did.

Maybe I'm more adaptable than I gave myself credit for? I stopped myself then. Can't I do it again? I have some grasp on reason. I *think*. Reason tells me, in this moment, that I need to be exorcised of this torment. I desire nothingness. Silence. Peace. And yet, will I get it crossing this street to buy what I imagined would be salvation from my pain?

I've spent years fantasizing of ways to remain devoid of emotion as I rip him apart, twisting and gouging with a knife or riddling his body with bullets...will I get my silence, my peace by spending the rest of my life in an eight-by-eight cell or eight feet under?

I need to slough off this rotting skin.

I see the dreadlocks in my peripheral vision.

I watch him turn on the lights and flip the florescent sign on.

Open for Business.

I watch a family walk by the entrance of the gun shop, the mother struggling to maneuver a double stroller over the potholes and high curbs onto the uneven sidewalk.

Ugh, more nudging from whoever is pulling the strings.

I need to consider those I love because I haven't been so absorbed in my own pain not to have noticed my own mother's difficulties trying to push my father and me along lately. If I spent the remainder of my life in a cell, rotting into a hard, unforgiving cot, a prisoner behind the bars I thought were worth it ... just for the sensation of pulling that trigger, the satisfaction of knowing I ended *him* ... it might literally kill them both.

For the first time in years, empathy-fueled tears pour down my face without the presence of running water in a shower. I've noticed the way my mother looks at me, silently begging me to heal. To live. To speak. To touch and allow life to touch *me* again. I've noticed that her depression seems to be resurfacing. I've noticed my father drinking considerably more, exhausted but stoic, his last vestiges of control found in the shot glass perpetually attached to his lips.

I have a feeling that I will end *many* lives if I cross this street.

I will not be satisfied and my afflictions will continue to torment me if I buy that gun. I know this deep within myself, but can I stop? Do I want to?

Even if I were to use the lead to fill my own head, I would still cause unimaginable grief in the lives of the few I love most.

I have spent too long stewing in this toxic sludge. What the hell have I been doing to myself? Why have I allowed myself to gorge on this feast of hatred and pain for so long?

Save yourself first.

I'm afraid that even if I find my voice, it will be useless after years of disuse. It's broken. I'm broken, and fragments of myself are everywhere. I'm nothing more than a useless pile of shattered scraps. But I also believe, deep in my bones ... I *know* that places and things that are crumbling and broken show the most character, their storied pasts implying something far greater than I've given myself credit for.

I stare at the gun shop. I can see the black dreads beneath the florescent lights. I shiver at the thought of perpetuating more pain. I will abandon this ridiculous,

self-destructive scheme. I will try to let Karma, the Gods, and the Cosmos have their little party. They can play their game of chess. I will let them check mate *his* gritty details.

I will try to believe that something beyond me will. I will *try*.

I need to use my voice again, to rediscover my strength. Am I too afraid of facing my pain? Will it hurt me to *try*? Will it hurt me anymore than what I was thinking about choosing as the alternative?

I stand up and decide to walk home, looking at the skyscrapers off in the distance. I know what I can do to make a statement ... to commit to the possibility that I am worth something better, something bigger than I would have ever dreamed for myself after everything that has happened.

I've been lost enough.

It's time to think larger. It's time to think beyond my pain, beyond myself. It's time.

I walk into the copy shop and reach into my pocket to withdraw the money that would have bought the wrong salvation, the empty non-solution that would have ruined so many lives.

I hand over the money and my handwritten letter and instructions. One thousand, four hundred and sixty copies, for every day that I have allowed this pain to fester ... to own me. On the thickest stock possible. I want it to be durable. To last as long as possible.

"It will be ready in fifteen minutes. There is nothing in the queue. I can get to it next if you'd like to wait."

She's looking at me, expecting me to respond. I just nod my head and sit on the ledge by the window. I watch as she places the paper carefully in the scanner of the machine, but she pauses before lowering the lid. I know she's reading it. I see her hunching slightly, her shoulders visibly trembling. She drops the lid quietly and lifts a shaking finger to the control panel, setting the machine into motion.

She turns slowly to look at me, tears streaming down her face. She's weeping, fat tears visible from across the room. She looks at me but seems to be afraid to speak.

I'm afraid I'm also venomous now, stealing her voice too.

She's approaching me.

"May ... may I have a copy? That was ... that is something that I needed to read. That I need to remember."

I nod, smiling a real smile for the first time in four years. The sensation feels foreign on my cheeks, the muscles atrophied from lack of use. One thousand, four hundred and fifty-nine copies left. I am happy to give my first day to her, for she looks like she can use a little freedom, too.

One thousand, four hundred and fifty-nine copies on a heavy paper stock is a burden, but I've carried heavier. I walk down the street, deciding that my apartment building will have to do. It's the only building where I have access to a roof.

I climb what seems like a million stairs, sweat dripping a path down my sturdy spine. I feel exhausted and alive from the ascent - my impassioned professions heavy on the paper; bold, black ink weighted by my words.

My burden suddenly feels like a bloated, unwelcome beast that needs to be freed from its cage.

My heart begs me to be free of it as the wind whips around me on the rooftop. From sixty-eight stories above the street, the pedestrians and cars below resemble ants moving about their colony.

There is a simple metal bar separating the solid roof from the leap of infinite silence.

I step back, suddenly afraid of being too close to that edge. Maybe I never had it in me in the first place? I suddenly understand that is a good thing.

Life may be more difficult, but I suddenly want it. I want it *back*.

I place the large box down and lift the lid, a copy of my words in my fingertips.

My throat aches. Why am I crying? What do I even sound like? Will I recognize *me* when I hear my voice after years of not saying a word? Do I want to? I clear my throat. Shit, this hurts and I'm just moving phlegm. The vibrations of my larynx are like sandpaper against the rawness of the words attempting to escape. Figures.

My scratchy, strained voice releases the sounds of the words into the air:

This is me.

The me that does not need a specified face, or a given name, only a voice. I send this message into the air, hoping to be comforted by the fact that as these words and emotions are freed into the wind, so are my burdens, transformed into wisps of distant memories as they are pushed away like dispersing storm clouds. These are burdens that I desperately wish to be freed of.

I do not need a face or a name because there are millions of me, and we all share the pain and the burden of having something forced on us without consent.

I am the me that was a victim, and I am the me that is now going to reclaim this life as my own. Faceless and nameless, my voice will be more potent. Am I your parent, your child, your sibling, your relative, your friend? Have you ever wondered? Have you ever worried, asked or cared? Will you, when you read this and acknowledge, deep down, that you have always sensed my pain? I am the me that will send this voice into the unknown, with the hope that it will not just land in muddy puddles and under the treads of car tires. I hope the voice of just me will find its way into willing hands, aiding the others with unheard voices.

This is me.

I will try to evolve, to grow again within this new womb of my new universe, this new existence. I will try to remain pliable. I will attempt to relearn how to exist. I will speak words for me and no longer keep them caged within. My voice will be my own.

I will no longer bathe in tears. I will no longer hide in my shell of silence and will instead strive to experience unfathomable happiness as best as I can. My new, flinty resolve for a greater life beyond the pervasive state of my current pain will become part of my new normal.

I am done with you, disgusting beast. I am done with the burden and the wounds you have inflicted on me. You claimed me as your victim, but I now claim back my life, my consciousness and my resolve.

I despise and will never forget your actions, but I intend to thrive anyway.

I peel back these stale and bitter feelings, the hatred to which I've set my internal clock for years, and I release everything into the sky.

These words will have meaning.

These words will set me free, and I will no longer own them alone, but will share them with unknown faces and unspoken names, just like me.

This is me, and I will finally strive to be a better me, a happier me.

I release the burdened me and I welcome a new one. May the wind take this profession away and breathe new life into my lungs, feeding new life into the sinew of my precious being ... into the soul I no longer thought I had.

But I do, and now I wish to live.

I now claim my life and control.

I now reclaim ME.

My trembling hands tip the box over the rail and I stand transfixed by the beauty of the white pages dancing in the sky, drifting in all directions on a path towards the bristling world below.

My throat burns after speaking aloud and yet I am not bothered by the pain. I welcome it. It means I am still alive and that I can still speak for *me*.

It's strange to watch my burdens float away. My sudden clarity is found on these pages drifting into the wind, the float and fall of fragments more graceful than I ever imagined ... I *will* be better because of what has happened in my life, even if it is painful to think about.

I always knew my voice could be beautiful, when I found it. But God, it hurts to talk. I'll have to get used to speaking again. Baby steps. Figures.

I want to live, finally. If I'm going to attempt to relearn how to exist, to try to remain pliable, why not start with redefining what it means to exist in the first place? This is *me*, the new me, and I. Begin. Now.

I draw my arms around myself and I close my eyes, slipping into a magnificent new embrace of sensations and re-awakened hopes within my own embrace. I need

this hug. I need to allow myself to feel as though I deserve touch, to believe that I can stand on my own and comfort myself with no one or nothing but my own strength to support me. I need to believe that even in my weakest moments, hurting and broken, I am strong and capable of defining my own happiness and the progression of my life.

I smile at the fact that I need no one to claim back the me that I thought I lost. I hope to have many happy things like love and friendship in my future, but the only person I need now is me. As I stand embraced by my own arms, depending on my own strength, buoyed by my own renewed resolve, I look at the cityscape around me, as far as I can see. I feel as if I am capable of throwing myself face-first into life's glorious sun. I want to be scorched by its goodness, its possibilities.

I want that chance again. I want my life re-warmed by brightness. I will give it a fighting chance now that I feel the brightness warming my skin.

As I look at the clouds drifting high above my head, I see a formation that resembles a bird, its wings expanding in the atmosphere as it rambles through the heavens. It is breathtaking and I believe it will be *me* as I spread and begin to test my own wings.

The expansive vista before me reminds me of how substantially *large*, how beautiful the world really is when I allow it to be. In this moment, I no longer feel existentially small. It is as if I am becoming my own, *new* woman, and this woman is suddenly filled with promise and a suitable optimism. Not the unsuitable, vengeful *kind*. The healthy, existential *kind*. The enlightened *kind*. The happy *kind*.

It's a beginning I must welcome. I *do*.

I'm Isabella Marie Swan, and I'm at my birthing point. I realize I need no one but myself to rediscover my strengths and my happiness. It's the rebirth of *me*, and while the road to healing may be difficult, I can do anything because I've withstood so much and yet, despite it all, I'm stronger than I thought. I'm still *standing*.
Figures.

End notes:

When you crush the petal of a violet, it releases the true depth and beauty of the essence, the fragrance of this gorgeously scented flower. Unfortunately, it often takes a crushing/violent blow to reveal it's beautiful perfume.

This story was intentionally written without other characters supporting Bella. We must be open to becoming strong on our own before we are capable of allowing others to help us. This story was inspired by Snowqueens Icedragon and a conversation about abuse on her Master of the Universe Twilighted thread in 2010. It was a discussion that revealed that there are far more of us survivors than any of us could ever imagine.

In exchange for something ugly or painful, I hope we (survivors of what we've experienced) can all be rewarded with something beautiful. Be happy, dearest reader, and believe you *deserve* the gift of something beautiful. No matter what has happened in our lives, we deserve happiness, especially victims who have to learn to live, how to somehow move forward. Our bones are stronger than we thought, and our frames are built to shoulder inconceivable weight. Live well, no matter what has happened. At least *try*, even in your moments of deepest despair. Your life can be filled with the most beautiful of perfumes. It's never easy, but you can do it. You *will*.

Hands you a Violet

Special thanks to Justduckie for her Beta'ing this emotionally demanding piece, to EdwardsBloodType for encouraging me to try and to Elliedgasmswoon and Isabeausink, for holding my hand as I mentally crumbled with every version. Boy, did I ever. Thank you all for your strength. Thank you for *everything*.