



BURN

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I find myself in a white room surrounded with blank walls.

Nothing to see. Nothing to hear.

I stumble around barefoot, wearing a white nightgown pure like the chamber I'm held in.

What am I doing here?

My breathing becomes heavy as I take another glimpse around the vacant space. No windows. No air. I don't do well in tight spaces.

How did I get here?

Beads of sweat start to emerge on my hairline as my legs feel weak; dragging me down I sit up against the wall, hugging my knees. Rocking back and forth I rake my sandy hair out of my face, assuming the walls will soon close in on me.

And they do.

I feel the wall behind me slowly scoot me forward.

Get up, get up!

I have no way out. I'm done for.

I close my eyes, ready for what's to come.

The wall slides forward, jerking me as I come to a sudden stop. I dare not open my eyes as I feel heat on my caramel skin.

I retreat my hand and crawl back noticing a door in front of me. I manage to heave myself up facing the scarlet entrance. There seems to be steam coming from it—bordering it. I take a pace closer, curious as to what's hidden inside.

As my left foot comes out a crack suddenly appears on the door making me freeze. One foot in the air I slowly bring it down and an even vaster split surfaces. Being about a foot away I reach for the golden grip while drops of sweat rain down my face as if I'm in a sauna. I know this is a bad idea but I refuse to listen.

I clutch the handle and my hand is stuck. I scream at the awful sting striking all throughout my body. The knob is on fire and I can't get my hand free. I jump and kick the splintered door releasing sounds of agony. It's boiling in here. All I can do is panic as I'm glued to the scorching handle—roasting my hand. Smoke spews out the cracked door filling my lungs with heat.

My hand is beginning to go numb. I fall to my knees—shaking as my palm stays attached to the door that's about to combust at any moment.

My vision is getting hazy. I've given up.

I feel an arctic breeze from behind. I twist my body and notice a door carved out of ice. I'm surrounded by snow.

"You're joking..." I cough up, wondering if this is another trick.

Only one way to find out.

With my left hand free, I extend my upper body towards the cobalt exit. The fire is fusing deeper with each tug. I retract back towards the flames. This time I try to leap with it; grasping the frigid knob my right hand peels from the fiery gate, and I lay huddling under the icy atmosphere.

Unable to clench my fist, I turn back to the smoking door that no longer exists. I gape down at my hand that I no longer recognize. My entire palm has been ripped off—exposing the blood, tissue, and pieces of bone.

"This is only a dream!" I scream in denial.

Out of nowhere, a single snowflake lands on my bare palm, stinging. As it melts it also seeps within, and my eyes witness my skin becoming whole again.

I glance up at the door handle, reaching towards it, hesitating. I clutch it and for a split second feel a jolt. I take a deep breath, coughing as if I swallowed a handful of snow.

I gradually remove my hand and ball my fist, shocked at how I can easily move it. Hand completely healed, I slowly begin to stand.

What magic does this door hold?

I motion around to see if any other doors want to sprout from the ground.

My hand becomes a landing pad for the snow, as it falls down, forming the tiniest blossom.

I beam as the work of art melts before my eyes. I start to feel goosebumps and rub my arms for warmth just as I hear a slight scraping sound from behind.

Once again, the empty borders close in.

I panic. The temperature is falling by the second.

I have two options: freeze to death, or get crushed. The former sounds more appealing.

I quickly reach for the handle giving it a twist. The door flies open. A blizzard charges at me.

I shoot up, almost tumbling off my bed. I raise both my hands, giving myself a full evaluation. Everything appears to be normal.

Scanning my surroundings, I find relief within the confines of familiarity. I look to my window to see the sun burning through the glass.

“Just a bad dream,” I mutter to myself, “great...”

I plop back on my pillow and take a deep breath.

I exhale, releasing the ice that once filled my lungs.



