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Title: Tsubasa

Tsubasa

The first thing she remembers is waking up surrounded by liquid. It swamps her senses, sends her heart thudding against her chest.

She hears the gentle lap of water and feels like she is floating.

Is this a dream?

She tries to think back to when she fell asleep, and can't recall.

Okay, let's try something simple. *Name?*

For a scary moment, her mind goes blank. Then,

Kara Darwin. Nineteen years old.

She breathes a sigh of relief and feels the pull through a mask connected to her mouth.

Mask?

Slowly, she cracks blue eyes open. Everything blurs for a moment, and then settles for a semblance of clarity.

Water. She's in a glass tank filled with water. She glances around, then down at herself.

Needles and tubes and white medical gauze cover everything the hospital gown she's wearing doesn't reach, with an oxygen mask hooked over her mouth leading out of the water.

Brushing wisps of brown hair away from her face, she drifts forward and peers out through the glass, trying to glimpse where the tubing ended. Instead, she finds something much more surprising.

There is a person standing on the other side of the tank.

The features are blurry and almost indistinguishable through the water, but she can tell somewhat from the broad shoulders that it's a man. A man wearing what appears to be an oversized lab coat.

She'll just call him 'Lab Coat' for now. The thought amuses her.

"Hey!"

She tries to speak, taps on the glass. "Where am I? Who are you?"

The words come out garbled through the tube, but the guy in the lab coat notices. He jumps and yells something that is completely incomprehensible.

She tries again, taps on the glass. Lab Coat looks like he's glaring at her, his blurry features scrunching together.

Another person-wearing-lab-coat appears; this one shorter than the first. She can't tell the gender.

Lab Coat 1 seems to point at her, then himself, then back to her.

Just who are these guys?

Are they even doctors?

Why is she in a *tank*, anyway?

She watches as Lab Coat 2 nods quickly in response to the man, then turns and walks toward her. Blurred features come into focus, and she sees a woman, her expression stern.

She taps on the glass repeatedly to try and get the woman's attention; grows irritated when she is ignored.

The woman walks out of her line of vision, the tubes blocking her from seeing much more.

She feels a sudden, strange tingly feeling shoot through her.

She stops hitting and lowers her hands, stares at them blankly. She tries to move one and gets a twitch in response.

Her head pounds, and colors stream together until she closes her eyes and sinks into blackness.

Bright... is her first coherent thought.

Consciousness slowly trickles in as a blinding white light spears her closed eyelids. Eyes watering, she attempts to bury her face further into the pillow, clinging to the last vestiges of sleep. With a sigh, she lifts her face from the plush cushion, wiping some drool from her chin. Kara blinks blearily. Blinks again, and wonders if she's still dreaming.

She sweeps blue eyes around the bright, hospital-like room. Everything's so *white*. There's the bed she's lying on, a table and chair to one side; and in the corner, a small toilet and sink built into the wall.

No windows. One door. It reminds her of a prison cell.

Had she dreamed that whole glass tank thing? Where was she?

She slowly sits up, wincing at the sharp ache in her back and vaguely noticing her clothes had been changed to a white shift. She gropes for the spot, groans when her hand probes two tender areas near her shoulder blades. She presses against the sore muscles, freezes when she feels where bones and feather shafts connect and meld with her skin.

She traces the feathers and muscles and sinew that *aren't supposed to be there*, cold sweat forming on her brow. And, hesitantly, turns and looks.

Feathers brush her chin as she stares at two creamy white wings extending from her back. She doesn't realize she's stopped breathing until black spots start to swim through her vision. Sucking in a breath, she bows her head, trying to control the deep-seated urge to panic.

Am I dreaming?

Taking a deep breath, she looks again; cautiously running a hand over the feathers, feels the warmth of living flesh and shivers at the contact.

She startles at the sound of a door opening, watches as a man in a white coat walks in, carrying a cafeteria lunch tray piled with food. Had they done this? Those people she saw through the tank?

She glares at the man in silence.

"Ah, I see you're awake."

He sets the tray of food down on the white table and walks over to her bed. She shies away from him, and he stops a few feet away.

He smiles, though his eyes remain cold.

"What did you do to me?" Her voice is scratchy and rough when she speaks.

He looks surprised at her question. "Do? You were half dead when you were brought here. We decided to do a little experimenting." He winced visibly. "Whoops. Wasn't supposed to tell you that."

She stares at him with wide eyes; then scrambles to her feet, backing away slowly. The man watches with an amused, if slightly nervous smile. The smile disappears as she darts out the door.

"Wait a second! Come back here!" He calls after her.

Ha. Fat chance. She nearly snorts. This guy's crazy.

Alarms blare overhead as she runs through gray, labyrinthine hallways. She stops at a junction, panting and trying not to panic as she hears people shouting. She turns in circles, wondering which direction to take. A sudden breeze ruffles the feathers on her wings, and she whips around, running in the direction of the wind.

She finds a window at the end of the hallway. Conveniently cracked open, and probably a long way to the ground. Peering out, she finds herself about five stories above ground. She climbs through the window, balancing herself on the ledge and raising her wings. With one last, panicked glance over her shoulder, she jumps.

This is such a bad idea!

She closes her eyes, waiting to go *splat*. At the same moment, she feels her muscles tighten and contract as, instinctively; her wings catch the air like sails. Her spiraling death slows and she blinks her eyes open as her wings flap and she soars higher, nearly clipping a tree.

I'm not dead?

Alarms still blare from the large white building she'd been housed. She points herself away from it, flapping hard until she reaches above the clouds. She laughs, long and loud into the empty blue sky. She is *flying*. She is free.