

## Escape

I woke up to cold hands wrapped around my neck. At first, I panicked but then I remembered. The face that hovered over me was not a friendly one. Her eyes were drawn and encircled with purple rings. Her hair was pulled back into a tight bun. Her mouth was pressed into a thin line.

I tried to take a breath. I couldn't. I began to gasp and gag, her long fingers tightening their grip. Just as I thought my lungs were about to burst into flames she released me. Her cracked lips turned up in a smile. I spat to the side, gasping for breath.

"Good morning, Elizabeth." I didn't reply.

"I said, good morning, Elizabeth." I didn't say anything. I was still trying to breathe. After waiting for a couple more seconds she became irritated. She swiftly struck me across the cheek, her long fingernails raking against my skin.

"Good- good morning," I choked.

"Good morning to you too." She said with a sick smile. "Do you remember the rules?" I nodded. She just stared at me with a placid look. She was waiting.

"I don't move. I don't eat. I don't speak." I said. The words were practically ingrained into my head.

"Very good." Without another word she hoisted up the simple shift she wore and marched back up the stairs. She locked the door behind her. I wore the same shift. Mine was black. It used to be white.

I rolled onto my side and curled into a ball, wrapping my hands around my sides, shivering. The basement was freezing. There were no windows, no lights, just damp corners filled with shadows and spiders.

I laid there, curled in a ball, silent and still for what felt like forever. I knew she would come back eventually. She always did. I didn't know how long it took. I didn't see the days or years that passed. I didn't know how old I was or how many hours of my life were wasted away down there. I didn't remember a time when I didn't wake up to her clenched hands and sadistic smile. After spending my entire life in this prison my limbs were sticks and my heart barely pumped. She didn't care. All she cared about was owning me. I was her possession, her object. And I had no way out.

When she returned I was still curled in a ball. She came down the creaky stairs with one hand behind her back. I stood up. She looked different. Her eyes were bloodshot and her visible hand shook.

"M'am?" I said in a cracked whisper.

"Shut it!" She hissed. I could hear the venom in her voice. I stepped back. She took a shaky step forward. She had been drinking. I could smell the spirits wafting off her lips. I began to quiver. It was always worse when she drank. Her temper shortened and her patience disappeared.

She crept towards me, one hand still hidden behind her back. She stopped when she was about a foot away from me. She pulled her hand out from behind her back. I saw the gleaming blade of a knife. I looked up. Her eyes were wide, her expression maniacal. She stepped forward again. I didn't have time to think. She lunged. I spun out of the way. I took a deep breath. I knew the room better than she did. I knew the walls and the floor. I knew the bumps and cracks that were easy to trip on. She didn't. She lunged again. Instead of spinning, I jogged a few steps, the floor cold on my bare feet. She followed. Her pace was slow and unsteady. She held the knife upright in her hand. I took a few more steps. She tried to follow but caught her toe on the bump in the concrete floor. She fell. A cry escaped her mouth as she

approached the floor, her eyes on the knife in her hand. She landed on her stomach. Even in the dark, I could see the pool of blood. The tip of the knife stuck out from the top of her back, a glint of silver in the dark.

As gruesome as the sight was, I didn't hesitate. I sprinted to the top of the steps. I placed my hand on the doorknob and twisted. I took a deep breath. For the first time in my life, the door swung open.