

Chapter 7 Saving It For Him

It was my dad.

He lunged at me from the dining table, kicking the leg of the stool I was sitting on. I stumbled and fell backward, toppling with the stool.

He took a step forward, swinging his fist toward my face.

In that moment, it felt like time had rewind. The dad who used to hit people whenever he got drunk was back.

The only difference was, before, he used to hit two people. Now, it was just one.

His fists and kicks rained down like a storm. I curled up, covering my head with both arms, my body folded up like a shrimp.

Punches and kicks landed everywhere.

Most of the blows hit my arms, back, and legs, but even so, I could feel blood running from my nose and the metallic taste of it in my mouth.

“Sl*t, sl*t...” I heard him cursing between kicks, each insult spat out with another strike.

I wanted to get up and shout back. I wanted to say, if I was a sl*t, you were the one who brought me into this world.

At that time, I didn't fully understand the word “sl*t.”

I also wanted to yell, “You'd better kill me today, because if I don't die, I'll never see you as my dad again!”

It was a shame that at that time, all I could do was curl up into a ball and silently endure the violence, utterly helpless.

I thought I was going to die, especially when he kicked my side. It hurt so much I almost blacked out.

I didn't remember how long the beating lasted that night. All I know is I was rescued by several neighbors who banded together to kick the door down and pull me out.

“Soren Judd, look at her! This is your daughter! Are you trying to kill her?”

A man was shouting at my dad. From the voice, I think it was Damian from next door.

Someone picked me up, and I heard someone else crying.

I must have looked terrible. My face was covered in blood, my hair was matted, and my arms were bruised all over.

That night, I slept over at Hazel's place next door.

Maybe it was because I got beaten so often that no one even thought to take me to the hospital, despite all the people who had helped rescue me.

Years later, when I had my first full-body checkup, the doctor in the ultrasound room asked me, “Has your right liver ever been injured?”

I was bewildered.

She said, “It looks like you had an injury there but don't remember it. There's a large calcified spot.”

It was then I remembered. It must have been from that night—it was on the right side, and the pain lasted for days.

Later, I thought it was a good thing it was winter. I was wearing so many layers. Otherwise, who knows if I would've survived that beating.

How could a girl from a background like mine ever be the same as other girls?

Whenever I saw other girls laughing so brightly, I couldn't help but feel jealous.

I knew the teachers thought I was withdrawn. I knew my classmates thought I was strange. Some said I was stuck-up.

Stuck-up.

What a flattering term! If only I weren't what I was.

(Look at me, always digressing when I start telling a story. Let's get back to what happened after that night.)

After that first time with Oberon, I stayed at school for a week. It was only after that week that I went back to the bar.

It was the same small room that belonged to Madeline.

Most people there were smoking, and the room was filled with a haze of smoke.

“Sophia, where've you been? We thought you got yourself a sugar daddy!”

“Not at all! I had exams this morning. I've been studying at school!” I replied.

“How did the exam go?”

“Who knows? I copied from the guy next to me. If he got it right, so did I. If he messed up, I'm done for.”

“Didn't you study for a whole week?”

“Classical Corvainan Language and Literature. Six thick books, and we only covered two this semester. There are twenty-nine classical texts we have to memorize.”

“Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?”

“‘The Raven' and 'Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night'. Ah, hand me one...”

“What are you smoking for? All you do is puff on fake cigarettes, passing the smoke through your mouth and nose. It's a waste!”

“You're all smoking. If I don't, I'll feel out of place!”

“By the way, Mr. Zimmer was looking for you a few days ago,” Madeline suddenly chimed in. “He said if you showed up today, you should wait for him.”