

Forgotten

I haven't seen daylight for about 5 years. A cell has become my bedroom. I'm hanging by chains that are about 3 metres long. The room is only 3 metres by 3. I'm fed, given books and candles to occupy my time.

I've been here about 10 years, taken from my own backyard, my little face would've been all over the news but I guess it's died down now. I've been forgotten.

There's a little drain in the middle of the room, I have nightmares about why it might have been installed. But it has given me someone to talk to, I know there's another because I have daily conversations with a boy through the drain, that links our painful lives together.

His screams echo through my mind, and I know I'm next. I hear the muffled sound of leather on skin, my mind pictures exactly what's happening. Flesh ripping, blood dribbling.

A door closes and mine opens, revealing him. He doesn't have a name, neither do I, he's just a big shadow, dressed in black with belt in hand. I think he's insane, but I guess most people already know that.

He takes each step toward me carefully and slowly, but he's not cautious. He slowly winds up my chains so I'm loosely pressed up against the cold stone wall. The veins in his neck and forearms are bulging, his eyes bloodshot red and for a second I think I might not make it out of this one. I almost hope I don't make it out, but I always do.

The belt makes contact, I scream but I don't really feel anything. Again and again it slams into me, my ribs ache and blood is pouring down my head. The manic look in his eyes makes me think he's not even aware I'm here, he's just hitting me. The belt drops with a metallic clang and I risk a glance up thinking it's over, but then his boots slam into my head sending black and red stars into my vision, then into my ribs. He bends down and grabs my overgrown hair and yanks my head up, wrapping his calloused hands around my small neck and squeezes, I think maybe he has come to finish me, maybe this is it for me, is this all my life is to be?

A high, guttural almost animal noise escapes his throat and he releases me yanked down the chains and slamming the door.

I try to just focus on my breathing, but then tears flood down my face and I make those ugly hiccuping sounds as I cry. Because the truth is, no matter how much my life sucks, I really don't want to die yet.

"Are you ok?" A wheezing painful voice breezes through the drain. I'm not ok, the last thing I'll ever be is ok, but I know that's not what he's asking. But still, I don't really want to talk.

"Hey, please answer me." He sounds panicked, so I crawl painfully over to the drain.

"I'm ok." My raspy voice sneezes through, splattering a few drops of blood onto the grate, as it tumbles away into darkness. His sigh of relief makes me want to cry, I'm just as grateful that he made it through.

We both just lay by our drains, not saying anything just listening to each other breathe because we don't know how many breathes we have left.

Again I hear boots outside my door, and I think, he's come back to do something worse. But then the door opens and what appears to be the saddest man ever slumps into the doorway, he seems

as if the weight of the world is on his shoulders, no signs of violence and aggression anywhere. Anybody else would feel almost sorry for him, but I know what he can do, how much he has hurt me and I instinctively crawl up against the wall. But he just falls down and cries, the ugly kind that makes you want to leave, but that isn't an option for me. I don't know how long he sits and cries but when he looks up at me you can see the word sorry written on his features, and sorry isn't exactly a word spoken often around here.

I guess it's going to be spoken now. "I'm sorry. You know that right, you know I can't help myself? I want you to know that so bad, but what difference does it make? I can't do anything about it. Just please know I'm sorry." He looks at me with this kind of desperation, trying to see whether I'll believe him but the stone hard expression I have learnt very well stays on my face.

A gasp exits his mouth and then he leaves. His tears will be yet another stain on the blood soaked floor of this cell.

I don't know how long it is before he comes in again, but he seems almost happy. He walks towards me and places new chains on my wrists, these ones shorter and attached to his belt. Then he takes the ones attached to the wall off. I don't understand what's happening, and if he sees the look on my face he doesn't tell me.

To my surprise, we walk into the next room, the room where the boy is. The door opens and there he is, as ragged as I imagine I must look but quite muscular which makes me think he hasn't just been sitting around in here. When he stands he is quite tall, with shaggy brown hair and a chiseled jaw. He just stares at me in disbelief as the man swaps his chains as well.

He leads us both along a dark damp tunnel soundlessly. And then with a few locks on the door opened we emerge outside.

It's so bright and blinding that I almost fall over, I feel like my eyeballs are burning. But I don't dare close my eyes, I might not see the sun again for a long time, so I'm taking this all in.

"Believe it or not, but today you both turn 15 today so we will spend an hour out here." I can't believe I'm 15 today, I've read stories about people with amazing birthday parties with lots of friends and food and lots happens. But even though this is only outside this is the best birthday present I've ever had.

I look over to the boy and he looks as amazed as I am, but then his gaze falls on me and his expression turns hard. I wonder why, why wouldn't he love this? I'm suddenly self conscious of all the cuts and blood that must be on my face so I turn away.

We are led under a big tree, I think we are in a forest, but I wouldn't care because I am *outside*. I still can't believe it, I'm actually walking on grass and dirt and looking at the sun.

I look back at the boy and he tries to tell me something with the movements of his lips. He gives up when I don't understand, and gestures toward the man. His lips move again, '*distract*' I think he says.

I jerk on my chain alerting our captors attention and he stares at me. "What is this tree called, please?"

"It's called a gum—" he's swiftly cut off because the boy has gotten his hands on a tree root or something and started bashing the man in the head. The piece of wood comes down repeatedly, the man continually trying to fight back, but I guess a strong 15 year old against an older man lessens his chances.

I watch by in disbelief, the man crumples to the ground blood covering his face in unrecognisable chaos. My chains jerk me forward and I almost fall in the way of the blood soaked weapon. I look at the boys face and pure hatred coats every feature, he keeps swinging the bat, even though I'm sure the man is dead.

I should be happy, or relieved at least that he's gone. My endless tormentor is gone, and yet all I feel is horrified. A dead man lay in front of me, completely unrecognisable from the unforgiving captor he had been. I sink to my knees and cry, I'm not crying for him because he's dead. I'm crying for the 15 year old boy who should have had a normal life, but instead felt no other choice than to kill a man on his birthday.

The boy slumps down beside me and holds me, both our tears flood onto the blood soaked grass.

I don't know how long we sit there before I stop crying, but it's then I realise that no matter how bad our life was, we can now make it better. We will both always be different, never be completely normal. I wonder how we can go back to the life we were supposed to have?