

It started when she turned 16.

It started with the subtle touches, sexual innuendoes. Perverted leer in his eyes. A barely 16 years old Emma had conflicting thoughts when his hand would faintly brush against her skin or when she would be washing dishes in the sink and he would creep on her back, whispering in her ears.

Making her skin crawl in disgust.

He would visit her at nights knowing well her mother was a heavy sleeper. She took pills before sleeping and that was how he pounced on Emma. Every night brought dread and terror for her. Even if she was sleeping, her heart would be awake.

At guard.

The sound of a door knock triggered the panic living in her. The uncertainty kept draining her. The uncertainty of will she make it tonight?

What if he gets her?

What if. .

The questions kept going in round circles until the walls of her room closed in on her. The voice in her head was cruel. Ruthless. Dark. It fed the fear in her.

The only thing keeping her sane was her mother. She was happy with the vile man she knew as her husband. Someday she did get the courage to speak up. Inform her about everything but. Seeing the shine in her eyes always killed the courage in her.

Right on the tip of her tongue.

She had made her mind the moment she turned 19. Emma will find a job and get out of here! She had to leave her mother's world unscathed.

She had to find a job!

It seemed like her only chance at survival. No fairy godmother was suppose to descend from the sky to help her out.

She had to help herself!

To make things worse, she was a high school drop out. She couldn't cope up with the school and then home. The stress upon stress. Who in the world would give a job to her? She had nothing on her. No A grades. No distinctions. No passing with flying colors.

But when there's a will there's a way.

"What are you looking at, child?"

Emma glanced up from the newspaper spread on the table.

"Trying to find my luck, Mrs Bagshot." Emma grinned at the old lady.

For Emma, she had to be the definition of a badass woman. Even at her 60's, she had an exotic restaurant working under her. The restaurant expertised on different flavors of tea, coffee, juice. You name it and **Bagshot** had it.

With a warm smile, she walked towards her.

One fine rainy day, Emma escaped from home because Jack wanted a head massage specifically in his room. That day Emma ran and ran until she got exhausted. Drenched from head to toe. She stopped in front of the restaurant tucked away at the corner of the street.

Beyond the glass shield, she could see people laughing and sipping tea or coffee.

So safe. .

Everyone seemed so safe. .

Why wasn't Emma safe?

She had breathed out, her breath turning into white puffs of smoke as a sob threatened to make itself known.

That's when Mrs Bagshot saw her.

Looking like a drenched cat, she had seen the wistful look in her pretty brown eyes and immediately let her in. Warm her up with a cup of hot chocolate. Giving her a fresh set of clothes.

Since that day, for Emma the restaurant resembled a heaven on earth.

Mrs Bagshot placed a hand on her back as she leaned forward on the newspaper.

"So? Did you find it?"

"No. Not yet." She mumbled glumly.

"When I was your age, I had my first son. I have no idea why girls are so career driven these days." She said, her eyes skimming over the paper laid out.

"I wouldn't call myself driven. I just want to have food on the plate." Emma shrugged.

"Ah, my dear. Your path is hard indeed but not impossible. Did you check this one?" She inquired suddenly. Her eyes squinting in concentration. "Damn it! Let me bring my glasses."

But Emma didn't notice her leaving because hope overwhelmed her heart as she skimmed over the advertisement. Her heart beating wildly. Her lips moving.

Santos Association

Has a vacancy for a part time care taker / cleaner.

To join the team at Santos Association, you need to be present on ; business days ,weekends , holidays and when required.

We are looking for energetic person who takes pride in their job to enroll into the existing Santos team.

Interview starts at 11: 30 PM

Quickly, she slipped a hand in her bag and took a pen and a notepad out.

Writing down the address.

God! She isn't going to miss this opportunity, Emma thought fiercely.

Mrs Bagshot came back with two cups of frothy coffee.

"Looks like I hit the jackpot, Mrs Bagshot."

She was smiling and the old lady raised an overplucked brow.

It was so rare to catch the girl smiling. She wondered what lived inside her that seemed to be forcing her out into the big bad world. The old woman had enough experience to know Emma looked. . . troubled.

The way she would look over her shoulder now and then, her legs never stopped moving. She always seemed in a fight or flight mode. . squeamish. .but Mrs Bagshot knew her boundaries and not crossing them seemed like a good idea for now.

"What are they offering?"

Emma wrapped the newspaper carefully as if her life depended on it.

"Food and. . . comfort. That's all I need, Mrs Bagshot!"

She nodded absently, watching the young girl glow with happiness.

And it certainly wasn't the first time she wished to unravel her secret. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Emma kept mum about it.

She went straight into her room and took the necessary precautions. Dumping the bag on the bed, she hummed with herself. Taking a look around at the surrounding.

She felt mad for missing inanimate objects. Like her pillow, the bedsheets, the closet. The crappy sink at her bathroom.

Crazy how she connected to them more than she had connected to humans. She definitely wasn't cynical but seeing the very first impression of a man had been. . .earth shattering.

Her father died when she was a toddler. So really the only man she had come in contact was. .Jack.

She definitely knew good and bad existed everywhere. Good men, bad men. .

Taking an oversized t shirt out from the closet - she jumped, hearing the knock like a bomb detonated.

Her skin crawled and the happiness that had bloomed in her heart died down its own death. The palpation of her heart made her breathless. The sheer terror running in her veins like liquid blood.

The door was knocked again.

Maybe it's mom, yeah maybe she tried to calm down her overdriven heart.

Slowly, she stepped towards the door. . swallowing down the panic creeping up her throat. It was constricting her chest.

She got near to the door.

"Yes?" Her lips were chapped.

"I'm setting lunch alright? Come and get it." Her mom said playfully.

And Emma nearly collapsed against the door.

"O-okay mom. "

Tucking her forehead against the door, she took in deep breaths. That's what Google said about panic attacks.

She nearly had one.

Panic attacks weren't worse because you could die while having it. No. It was worse because you died every second of it.

"Stupid. . .stupid," she muttered.

Well, there went her shower mood. She glanced at her bag. .and a small smile tugged at the corner of lips. Her escape ticket was hidden in it.

Placing the t shirt back in the closet, she made a bun of her long brown hair. She didn't want long hair. It simply was the fact that. .she couldn't afford chopping it off so she let it be.

Moving towards the door, she unbolted it and then pulled at it. .

Ugh.

Ofcourse! The latch.

The door was ajar slightly being unbolted but the latch was on its place. Her hand moved towards the latch and then froze right there.

Beady eyes were staring at her through the crack of the door. A smirk on his wrinkled face as his eyes moved up and down her body -

Emma backed off.

Thankful for the latch!

It held the animal out.

"You look scared." He leered at her, loving the affect he had on her.

She was scared shitless but she wouldn't give him the satisfaction of seeing her weak.

"Get. Lost!" She bit out.

"Helen said you're taking a bath? Mind if I see the view?" He bit his bottom lip.

Emma moved near the door, rising her index finger in warning.

"If you so much as look at me, I'll tell mom everything!"

He gave her a sad face.

"Awwwww, are you trying to be threatening, myEmma?" He pouted and it was the most disgusting sight she had ever seen.

Watching her struggling, he laughed and then suddenly flung one of his arm out towards her through the crack of the door.

Emma balked at his sudden advance.

His fingers catching a few of her hair, ripping it out with full force.

Emma winced in pain as she stumbled back, getting off balance and falling on her back. . feeling the sting of pain on her head but she stared back at him, a fierce look in her eyes.

He fisted his hand around her ripped out hair. Emma could see her hair dangling from his fist.

Jack leaned in as far as the latch was allowing him to.

"Someday I'll have you like this. .spread out on the floor for me. "

"Honey, where are you at?"

Her mother's voice floated in.

A slow smile spread on his face.

"Coming, sweetheart!" He yelled back. Giving her the last withering look, he left, leaving her to collect herself.

Crumbling down was easy, standing back on feet was going to hell and coming back.

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