



# MAKESHIFT ASYLUM

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In the week she spent most of her time tied to a bed with a piece of cloth in her mouth, she learned two valuable lessons. Firstly, blood is not a decent lubricant. Second, the people who will try to help cause the most damage.

As she tried to shift to release some of the tension on her ankles due to the shackles, she involuntarily jerked back, her restraints jingled as she let out a muffled cry. For a brief moment she forgot that to her right was a shrine of all the “happy moments” she had – photos, gifts, letters. Never did she fathom how her own smiling face would horrify her to this extent.

All she wanted to do then was to just curl up and cry, but that too was a luxury beyond her. If the desperation radiating in her chest was not enough to break her, she heard the footsteps approaching. She clamped her eyes shut. She couldn't bear the idea of having to see him again.

He fumbled inside the air conditioned room with her Toblerone and Nutella, strawberries and roses. His heart quivered when he saw the shackles had started to cut into her skin again. He tried to soothe her by caressing her hair the way she liked it just like old times in their relationship.

There isn't anything he wouldn't do to make her stop crying. Burrowing into her silky black hair, he just whispered, “Be good.”

This time when he gently tugged the cloth from her swollen mouth, she didn't scream. She looked at him thinking back to the days he'd take a leave from office every time she was sick just to feed her every meal by hand. A sigh of relief escaped from him. He pecked the corner of her lips before bursting into almost musical laughter.

“You know how some boyfriends go like, “I'm tired of babysitting you”? Well, I'm so glad that I can always keep an eye on you. I'm never going to give you up, sweetheart.”

There wasn't any whimpering, no sobbing, when the tears started to stream from her eyes. He dutifully wiped them off. He was always there to help. It started sweet back in high school with help doing homework and treats every day. Slowly, the urge to do everything for her and to keep her safe kept evolving far past its peak.

He did what he had to. He felt he had a better chance of detecting dark matter in the universe than to pin point the moments that led to this. Righteous as he was, he didn't need reason or understand-

ing to save her from herself.

Somewhere along the line of cuddling and goofing around, he lost her somewhere under the blankets. It felt to him that one morning out of the blue she decided that her heart was a time bomb and that she must terminate herself before it can. He unwrapped the chocolate bar and broke off a piece remembering a former self of hers who said, “Chocolate could fix everything.” It was up to him to test that now.

The slow decay of hers somehow escaped him. He thought nothing of it when she went on a rampage of ruining perfect friendships, quitting her job, and refusing to meet anyone. Her joking about whether her parents would prefer a dead worthless daughter or a living one was just that, jokes, right? He was clueless and defenceless when she tried to attack him by claiming to be suicidal. But he wasn't going to have any of that. He was not going to be a victim.

An overwhelming urge to hit her shook him as she kept rejecting the chocolate, just like all the other food he tried to feed her over the week. Grabbing her by the jaw, he yelled, “Why won't you let me help you? What did I do to deserve this?”

The first sound that slipped from her

since his visit was when he flung her head directly at the headstand of the bed. He regretted it immediately, climbed onto the bed to give her a hug and snuggle her neck. Regret started fading as she relapsed into her provoking silence.

She never wanted to be saved. She wanted to jump off a tall building – do something without an escape route midway. She didn't want to have to go through the desperation of trying to patch herself up if she were to slit her wrists, or get loose from a tied rope. She needed something that didn't come with an antidote once done.

She started to feel as if his weight was growing on her, she had to come up with something quick. Being forced to live is as much torture of having life cut short with a gun, knife, or otherwise. She just wanted to run, to feel the air rush against her face one last time, but the only thing that could race in her was her mind.

All she could think about was how life didn't grant her a dying wish. She wanted to hold down her saviour so he wouldn't be able to see but she was deprived of arms to turn his head away. With a prayer he wouldn't move his head from her neck. She clamped her teeth shut on her tongue. Death by drowning in her own blood.