

Don't Cry, My Love

DAY ONE

He woke up. Around him—nothing but darkness.

He was in a chair, strapped down, only able to move his head.

The chair was unmistakably made of wood. Not polished. Rough. Raw. He could feel the grain biting into his skin. He was naked.

A sharp jab in his thigh told him there was a splinter embedded in the seat—he could feel it cutting, the warm trickle of blood slowly running down his leg.

Something was in his arm. A catheter in his penis. A dull, pulsing pain in his abdomen.

He screamed.

"Where am I?!" "WHO ARE YOU?!" "Why are you doing this?!" "HELLO?! ANSWER ME!"

Nothing. Just silence. Black. Still.

No sounds. No smells. No footsteps. No voices. No clues. Just void.

His mind spiraled. This was it. He was going to die here. Someone was going to walk in at any moment with a knife—slice him up, butcher him alive.

He'd seen this in movies. But this was different. This was real. Surreal, but real.

Then—a flash.

A light filled the room for a single second. Blink and it was gone.

But he saw it: a table. Ordinary. Dining table. No chairs. No cloth. Nothing else. Just the table, a few feet in front of him.

Darkness again.

His breathing slowed, shallow and erratic. He waited for more light. Nothing.

Time dragged. Hours maybe. He fidgeted constantly. The splinters scratched at his back and thighs. He shifted, tried to move, but couldn't. The restraints bit in deeper.

He clenched his fists. Dug his nails into the wooden armrest. Hard.

Snap.

A sharp crack of pain. A long splinter had lodged under his fingernail.

He screamed.

Blood throbbed in his fingertip. Burning. He cried.

DAY TWO

A voice.

Soft. Female.

Voice: "Good morning."

He jolted upright. The voice was calm. Warm. Gentle.

Man: "Wait—who are you? Why am I here?!"

No reply.

A flash again. Two seconds.

Same table. But now, a vase. Flowers. And a tube.

A clear tube ran from his abdomen to a container below. He gagged. Waste.

Man: "HELLO?! WHO ARE YOU?! ARE YOU TRAPPED TOO?!"

Silence.

Man: "HELLO?? WHY ARE YOU IGNORING ME?!"

He sobbed. His voice broke apart.

He gritted his teeth and tried to work the splinter out from under his fingernail by scraping it against the chair.

Snap.

It broke. Deeper. Gone. Unreachable now.

He screamed again. A tantrum. Wild. Helpless.

DAY THREE

Voice: "Good morning, handsome."

Man: "Wha...? WHO ARE YOU?! WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS?!"

Nothing.

Man: "LISTEN! My muscles hurt, I've got splinters from this fucking chair! Let me move. Just a few minutes. Please! I swear I'll behave."

Silence.

Light. Three seconds.

The flowers. Still there. But the table had moved. Further now. Tilted slightly.

Man: "What's going on?! Why did you move the table?!"

Voice (soft): "What are you talking about, love? It's always been like that."

Man: "Wait... Who are you? Please, just talk to me."

His voice cracked. Raw. No answer.

He sat in silence. Sweat pooled on his skin. Every inch of him ached. He could smell himself—the rot of unwashed skin and dried blood.

His chest heaved. He was breaking.

DAY FOUR

Voice: "Honey, wake up. I made your favorite."

The scent hit him before the light.

Pancakes. Syrup. Bacon.

The light snapped on—four seconds.

The table was set. Perfectly plated. Steam rising. A single chair.

Man: "WHAT IS THIS?! I CAN'T FUCKING MOVE! HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO EAT THAT?!"

Voice: "I wanted to do something special for you."

She sounded hurt.

Man: "Wait... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell. I just—I can't move. Please. I need help."

Darkness.

Smells gone. Light gone.

Man: "WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?!"

He screamed. Rage echoing off the void. But only emptiness answered.

DAY FIVE

Voice: "Good morning, honey. You look much more rested today."

Man: "What?"

Light. Five seconds.

The room had changed. Decorated walls now. Bookshelves. Framed photos. New flowers.

The table had moved again.

He froze.

This time, he didn't cry. He didn't scream. He said nothing.

He just watched. Counted. Memorized every detail.

Tomorrow, he would be ready.

Now he had a purpose. A goal.

Something to fight for.

DAY TWELVE

It had been nearly two full weeks, but to him, it felt like a lifetime.

Every day was the same—but somehow always different.

He was woken by the same voice every damned morning. The sweet tone. The loving comments. All of it empty. All of it maddening.

Today, he expected 12 full seconds of light. He waited for it with sarcasm, bracing himself for whatever absurd change awaited him this time.

His face itched with unkempt facial hair. His scalp was greasy, crawling. He stank—body odor, sweat, dried blood... and now pus, seeping from under his fingernail.

This time, he woke before the voice.

Man: "What wonderful fucking delights are awaiting me today, dear?"

He said it with a sneer—sarcastic and bitter.

The voice returned.

Voice: "Good morning, handsome. I made waffles. And what do you think of the new carpet?"

Man (furious): "I couldn't give a fuck about your decorating. Or your fucking food I can't eat. It's all bullshit!

If you're going to kill me—just fucking get on with it. FOR FUCK'S SAKE!"

His final shout reverberated in the space like a slap. The anger cut the air.

No reply.

The scent of waffles vanished.

And for the first time... no light.

Man (desperate): "Wait... where's the light?"

Hey, come on—I was angry, I'm frustrated, and in pain. Please, don't do this..."

Nothing. Only the hum of silence.

Man: "Listen, I'm sorry. I'm just a little tired. I didn't mean to yell. Please... I'd love to see the carpet."

No reply.

He softened his voice, made it tender.

Man: "I mean it. I'm sorry. Let me make it up to you. I'm genuinely interested. Show me the carpet... please, babe."

Voice (gently): "Okay, fine. I got a great deal. I went with claret red—I figured it matched the wallpaper well, don't you think?"

Also, with the amount of red wine you drink... it won't matter if you spill it again."

The light snapped on.

He soaked it in greedily—every detail:

The table. The claret red carpet. Half-red, half-cream walls, with a beautiful wooden trim cutting through the center. Polished furniture. Photographs neatly arranged. The bookshelf—books back in alphabetical order.

His gaze returned to a photo.

A woman. And the man next to her... looked familiar.

It was him.

Man: "Yes, my love. You always do a brilliant job with these things. It's beautiful."

The light stayed on for exactly 12 seconds. Then, as it always did—blackness. Silence. Nothing.

He sat in his chair, confused. Disoriented.

That photo. That was me...

What the fuck is going on?

Drowsiness crept in. Not the kind that came from boredom or exhaustion—something deeper. Heavy. Drugged.

He fought it. Tried to stay conscious. But it was no use.

Sleep took him.

He began to dream.

He was at a bar with friends—laughter, music, beer in hand. The warmth of company.

He looked toward the bar. A woman sat alone. He couldn't see her face... but he felt drawn to her.

He stood, began walking over.

Just then, a waitress rushed past and collided with him—drinks spilling, glass shattering across the floor.

He woke with a jolt.

The voice was screaming. Booming.

Voice: "Everything I do for you, and this is how you fucking treat me?! I've waited hours for you to wake up!

What—you drank too fucking much again?!

What have you got to say?!"

Man: "Wait... what are you talking about?"

Still groggy, disoriented—he felt something new.

He was clean.

His finger didn't hurt. It was bandaged.

His face shaved.

His hair—freshly styled.

He blinked. Confused.

Man: "Wait... did you do this?"

Voice: "Of course I fucking did. Like everything else I do for you..."

The light turned on.

He began counting, softly under his breath.

He scanned the room.

The decor was familiar—but wrong.

Everything had shifted.

Books—no longer alphabetical.

The photograph was still there—but the glass was cracked now, right across both faces.

The flowers in the vase had started to wilt. Color drained.

The light stayed on for fifteen seconds.

Then—darkness.

He thought to himself: Wait... two days?

Man (softly): "What's wrong, love? Is everything okay?"

No reply.

Pure silence.

He stared into the black void, heart thudding in his chest.

And waited.

DAY THIRTY

He's dreaming again.

Same bar. Same drink spilled across his shirt. But this time, he's swiping at the mess furiously, muttering curses under his breath.

"Watch where you're going!" he snaps at the waitress.

She stammers—"It was an accident, I'm really sor—"

He jerks awake.

Voice: "Good evening, Robert. I've made dinner."

The light clicks on.

The room glows in soft golden candlelight. The table is dressed like a romantic fantasy—perfectly plated steak with peppercorn sauce, broccoli arranged like miniature trees, mashed potatoes smoothed into a gentle swirl. A tall vase brims with a fresh bouquet of deep red roses. The scent is thick—almost overpowering.

Voice: “I love the roses you got me, Robert. They’re simply gorgeous.”

A pause. Then a more playful tone.

Voice: “Also, I got that thing from Victoria’s Secret... for later.”

He swallows. His voice, hoarse and dry, scratches out:

Robert: “It smells... divine. Thank you, my love.”

The light snaps off after 30 seconds.

Darkness again.

Thirty whole seconds. A full month. Thirty days of this surreal loop of make-believe domesticity, veiled threats, and flickers of fading sanity.

Robert leans back, exhaling slowly. He doesn’t know if this is a dream, a punishment, or some twisted science experiment. But something about all of it gnaws at the edge of his memory. Familiar, yet impossible.

He’s stopped counting the light now. It makes things worse. If he just plays the part, the days go easier. But even pretending is starting to wear thin.

He slips into unconsciousness, exhausted.

The dream returns.

He’s back at the bar. The bartender hands him a towel. He pats his chest dry, chuckling awkwardly. The woman from before—the one he meant to speak to—she’s still there, perched gracefully on the barstool in her red dress.

He walks toward her. Smiles.

Robert: “Dumb luck, eh?”

She turns. Blonde. Radiant. Ruby-red lips. Sparkling eyes behind curled lashes.

He wakes up gasping.

A single name pushes through the haze:

Robert: “Sarah...?”

Sarah: “Good morning, love. How did you sleep?”

Robert: “I... I was dreaming of us.”

Sarah: “That’s sweet. All good, I hope...”

He doesn’t respond.

The light clicks on.

The roses are dead. Blackened at the tips, petals fallen. The photograph is missing. The furniture’s been shifted again. But now it’s obvious—things haven’t been cleaned. Not properly. The room is... slipping.

Still neat, still arranged, but just off. Smudges on the wall. Dust in the corners. Something behind the scenes is cracking.

The light shuts off.

Shorter, he’s sure of it.

Robert: “Is something the matter?”

Sarah: “No. I’m just tired. Am I not allowed to be tired?”

Robert: “Of course. I was just asking if you’re okay—”

He shifts in his chair. A splinter bites into his leg. Sharp. Real. His body flinches. Pain is the only thing that anchors him anymore.

He exhales heavily into the darkness.

Sleep takes him again.

He dreams—same room. But it's not a dream. It's a memory.

He's standing. Sarah is too. They're yelling.

Robert: "I work hard all fucking day, and I come home to this? You're still in bed? What's wrong with you?"

Sarah: "I don't know! I just feel... tired. Maybe I'm coming down with something."

Robert: "Then go see a fucking doctor!"

He wakes up again.

Sarah: "Good morning, my love."

Her tone is softer. Sadder. Almost hollow.

Robert: "Okay. That's enough. Enough with the 'my love' bullshit. This isn't love. You have me tied to this fucking chair—I can't move. This is imprisonment. This is... it's fucking torture!"

Silence.

The void answers him. No music. No voice. Just the low hum of a place that doesn't exist.

A chill creeps up his spine.

The light flicks on.

The room looks colder. Dimmer. Books are no longer neatly stacked. Some are falling over. Others are ripped, fraying at the edges. The tablecloth is dirty, stained. A smell of mildew lingers faintly in the air.

The vase is empty. Cracked. It leans slightly to one side.

The light cuts out again—definitely shorter this time.

Robert: “Seriously, you cowardly bitch. Come face me. Don’t just sit there in your silence—fucking DO something, you wretched cunt!”

His voice ricochets through the room like a shot.

Nothing.

Just the sound of his own ragged breathing.

He feels it coming—drowsiness. Not sleep. A chemical drag pulling at his mind.

Just before it takes him, he hears her voice again.

Soft. Faint. Not angry. Not gentle. Just... tired.

Sarah: “You were always like this...”

DON’T CRY MY LOVE

Robert woke to the sound of music.

A slow, melancholy melody drifted through the darkness. Soft static fuzzed around the edges. The voice was unmistakable.

Skeeter Davis.

“Don’t they know it’s the end of the world...”

He froze.

The song was familiar, painfully so. His mother used to hum it while cooking. Sarah once put it on during a long drive. It made his stomach turn now. Something about hearing it here felt unnatural—too perfect. Too staged.

Then he noticed it.

Beneath the music—faint, uneven, choked by sobs.

Someone was crying.

The light snapped on.

Robert blinked against the brightness. But this wasn't like before. The bookshelf was in ruins—shelves collapsed, books strewn in piles on the floor, some torn in half. The once-pristine vase was smashed, a spray of jagged glass and dried flower stems scattered across the carpet.

Something else caught his eye.

A mirror.

It hadn't been there before. Cracked, leaning against the far wall. From where he sat, he could just barely make out a warped reflection—his own face pale and sunken, eyes bloodshot.

And behind him...

A shadow. A dark figure.

Unmoving.

His heart lurched.

The light went out.

Robert screamed. Full-bodied, terrified, primal. He pulled and twisted violently against the restraints—leather straps biting into his wrists, slicing skin. Sweat poured down his temples. In desperation, he slammed his head backward into the chair, again and again, his skull meeting wood with dull, sickening thuds.

He screamed until his voice broke. Struggled until his body gave out. And finally, the blackness pulled him under.

He dreamed.

A park. Midday sun. Birds chirping.

He was sitting with Sarah on a red and white picnic blanket, sandwiches half-eaten beside them. Her head rested on his shoulder. Their hands were intertwined. He looked at her and she looked back—soft smile, radiant eyes. Then she leaned in and kissed him.

A simple, perfect moment.

He woke to a scream.

High-pitched, animalistic, blood-curdling. Then the sound of smashing glass. Wood splintering. A chair toppling. Something breaking.

The light came on—but it wasn't steady. It flickered. Strobing like faulty neon.

Robert's breath caught as he watched the room unravel before him.

Wallpaper peeled from the walls in strips. The once-elegant furniture fractured and collapsed inward. Books flew from shelves. The smell of mold filled the air. The floor beneath him seemed to pulse and crack.

Then—suddenly—silence.

Stillness.

The room was dead.

Robert: "What the fuck is going on?! What are you doing?! Why are you doing this!?"

His voice broke at the end. A sob escaped before he could suppress it. His shoulders trembled.

From the darkness, Sarah began to hum the song again—The End of the World. The same verse, on loop. Her voice was soft, almost loving.

Sarah: "Don't cry, my love. It's all going to be okay."

Robert: "What the fuck do you mean it's going to be okay?! I'm here against my will! You're going to kill me!"

Sarah: "Don't be so dramatic, love. We can get through this."

Robert: "Why did you destroy the room?! Why are you torturing me?! Fucking tell me!"

Sarah: "You're starting to lose it, Robert. The house is fine. I don't get why you need to be like this."

Robert: “What the fuck do you mean?! None of this makes any goddamn sense!”

Sarah: “Stop yelling at me, Robert. You’re making me feel like shit.”

Robert: “Good. I hope you fucking suffer.”

Silence. Thick and final.

He waited.

Robert: “Well? What are you going to do now?”

Nothing.

Robert: “Speak to me, you fucking bitch!”

The reply came suddenly. The voice thundered from every direction—amplified, flat, robotic. Stripped of humanity.

Sarah: “You think this is all about you? What about me, Robert?”

Her words echoed long after they ended.

Robert’s chest rose and fell rapidly. But his limbs grew heavy. His head dropped forward. The haze came in fast this time. He tried to resist, but his body betrayed him.

And once again, he slipped into darkness.

Final Chapter – “The Table”

Robert sat awake in his chair, eyes wide, staring maniacally into the void. The blackness wasn’t just around him now—it was inside him. He didn’t blink. He barely breathed. Every inch of him was stiff with numb dread.

Sarah began to hum.

The same tune. That haunting little melody she'd hummed every day since he first woke up in this place. Skeeter Davis. The End of the World.

The light clicked on.

Only for two seconds. Just long enough.

The room was almost entirely gone. Rotting at the edges, like it had been swallowed by time. The furniture was stripped away. The pictures—gone. The flowers, gone. No warmth, no personal touches. Only one thing remained.

The table.

It sat in the center of the room like a corpse in an empty coffin. Covered in dust, legs splintered, the varnish bubbled and cracked like dried skin. A ghost of the first day.

Robert said nothing. He didn't even flinch. His face—stone. Not sadness. Not rage. Something worse: nothing.

Sarah's voice floated out from the darkness, light and cold.

Sarah: "How are you feeling today, love? You've been... off for a while."

He didn't respond.

Sarah: "Well... if you're going to be like that, then I think it's best we just end it."

Robert blinked for the first time in hours. Then, slowly, a smirk curled onto his face. He looked upward into the black.

And then—silence.

The air turned. Colder. It crept along his skin like frostbite. His body began to tremble, but he didn't care. His limbs barely responded. Atrophied. Blood crusted around old splinters in his arms and thighs. His clothes were filthy. His hair greasy and matted.

Robert was no longer a man. Just a husk in a chair. Waiting. Longing for the final curtain.

Sleep came for him like a lullaby sung by a devil.

And again... he dreamed.

This time, his dreams were different.

Not wistful. Not nostalgic. They were heavy with resentment. Buried things clawing up from the dark.

He saw himself walking through the front door of their home. The lights were on. Something was wrong.

The house had changed again.

The layout was different. The furniture rearranged. Shelves moved. Rugs swapped out. The photos gone. He turned to Sarah and asked:

Robert: "Why is everything different again? What was wrong with how it was before?"

Sarah: "I fancied a change."

The scene looped. Another day, another change. Again, again, again. He never knew where anything was. Never felt grounded. The home never felt like his. He was always a stranger walking through someone else's life.

Then came the kitchen.

Robert opened a cabinet. No bowls. Opened another. No plates. He called out to her.

Robert: "Where are the dishes?"

Sarah (laughing): "They're right where they always are. Are you losing it?"

He dreamed of nights they'd try to be romantic. Wine. Candles. He let his guard down, got a little drunk, tried to enjoy her. And she'd twist the knife.

Sarah: "You're disgusting. You drink too much. You're just like your father."

Another dream.

He came home with flowers.

Sarah: "Why are you buying me flowers? They're just going to die."

Another one.

He bought her a dress.

Sarah: “Why are you trying to change me? You don’t like how I dress now?”

The dreams weren’t nightmares. They were memories. Honest ones.

He woke.

Eyes open, staring into the dark. The silence pressed against his ears. He wasn’t sure what was more painful—his mind or his body.

Then her voice came back.

Sarah (cold): “You’ve made me fucking miserable, Robert. I’m leaving you. I hate you.”

He froze.

And then the scream.

Piercing. Human. Horrific. It exploded from the dark like a gunshot. The sound of flesh being stabbed—wet, violent, raw—ripped through the silence. Again and again and again. Sarah’s voice dissolved into a gargling death rattle.

Robert shook in his chair, hyperventilating. His mouth hung open, but no sound came out. His chest rose and fell in jerks.

The light came back.

But this time... it didn’t flicker.

It shined.

The chair was gone. The darkness was gone.

He was standing.

In the room.

It wasn’t just a room. It was his dining room. The wallpaper, the table, the chipped vase. The exact same. Only now he realized—it had never changed. He had.

He looked down.

His right hand trembled.

In it, a kitchen knife. Blood still warm, dripping onto the maroon carpet. The drops made no sound.

At his feet, Sarah lay still. Her eyes wide open, lifeless. Her neck and chest soaked red. Blood soaked her clothes, splattered the walls, pooled on the floor like spilled paint.

She stared at him. Her expression—not of pain, but of disbelief.

Robert staggered back and collapsed into one of the dining chairs.

He looked at the knife.

Looked at her.

Looked at the room.

And understood.

This wasn't a prison. It never had been. Not in the way he'd imagined.

This was guilt. Manifest. A purgatory born from denial.

He brought the knife to his throat.

His final words a whisper.

Robert: "I'm sorry..."

And then silence.

A faint hum. Then—her voice, one last time.

Sarah (softly): "But I loved you. Even then."

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