

Lost in the Thorns

Written by Jimmy Jan

He said he would change, but I never should have believed a word that came out of that whiskey-plagued mouth.

I look at my ring, the gold band that sealed my vows, "till death do us part," and then I look in the mirror and focus on the welt that has risen on my cheek from my husband's ring after he slapped me. My eyes slowly wander the mirror, looking at the assortment of cuts, bruises and scars, the result of the abuse that has gone on far too long. A loud slam at the door tells me that he is ready to paint another piece of purple artwork on my skin.

'Get out here, Sarah!' he yells with a groggy voice. He says it again and again, adding a choir to the sharp percussion of the slams at the door.

'Jackson,' I plead, 'please don't do this again.' I know he doesn't hear me. He never does, his ears filled with intoxication running through his blood, blocking out all reason.

The longer I keep the door locked, the angrier he gets, the louder his voice gets. I wonder if I could hide in here until he passes out drunk on the floor, but the answer to this comes just a moment later. The door flies open, with a crack of the lock. I close my eyes and brace myself for the first of the attacks. He kicks me in the chest, once, twice, and again. Then he grabs me by my shirt, pulls me upwards and throws me against the mirror, smashing the back of my head against it. I fall back to the bathroom floor, the tiles hitting me as hard as Jackson's punches. My vision goes blurry and dark billowing clouds encircle my mind and I drift into unconsciousness.

I don't know how long the darkness lasts, but my eyes eventually open, a pulsing headache almost keeping the shut. I slowly get up, feeling the broken shards of mirror beneath me and I look down at my body. My skirt has been pulled down to my ankles and my top has been ripped open and I ache all over. He has forced himself upon me again. The laundry hamper beside me has fallen over and I grab my bathrobe. Pulling it around me, I quickly look around, searching for Jackson. He is nowhere to be found, so I make my way to the sink.

This is the last time this is going to happen.

Opening the cupboard directly below the sink, I kneel down and feel for the piece of paper I wedged between the sink base and the side of the cupboard. The paper is light in my hands, but the decision I am about to make is heavy. I don't actually know why it is a hard verdict to come to, as it is the solution to all my problems. The words printed on it are: 'Sarah, I am a neighbour. I hear the things your husband does to you. If you want it to go away, if you want him to disappear, if you want freedom, call the number below.'

I look back at my ring, the gold shining in the light. I remember my vows, our vows. They mean nothing without love, and I know that Jackson doesn't love me. I believe he loved me once, when our love was a rose bush, but now, like the roses, I am lost in the thorns.

Our vows mean nothing to Jackson, and now, they mean nothing to me. Just like the ring around my finger, without love, the gold means nothing.

I find my phone and I call the number, in search of a freedom from my husband, a way out of the thorns.

Two days later, the thorns were gone.