

## Sweet Desperation

The crack of the whip sounded behind her, and silence fell in the audience. The nervous shuffling in the crowd behind her sounded distant. In the midst of it she heard a hoarse, loud voice announce, "Sentenced to be whipped 10 times for breaching the law." But from there on she could hear nothing but her own deep, harsh and desperate last few breaths.

She heard the constant slap of rope meeting the ground in a rough embrace, getting ready, before she felt a line of fire across her back, her bones screaming for mercy.

She heard a high ring in her ears and was very aware of her shallow breath in her ears. She tried screaming, but her mouth refused to move. She felt the blood trickle down her back, tickling her long, sickly white legs, and heard nothing but silence until a single drop of blood stained the coarse concrete.

Her feet slipped out from under her and she could feel the tug of not only the rope on her wrists, trying to keep her up, but the tug of a peace, a sweet bliss in her mind.

She chose the easy way out. Her eyelids closed, her breathing slowed, her body numbed.

She dreamt of an overgrown area that looked like a tangle of green wool behind a lake, the seats were covered like blankets from the weeks that overruled the space around her. Why hadn't she taken this road a long time ago? She asked herself. The sun was radiant, sparkling on to the waters of the lake. The trees around her were a beautiful green, live and fresh an artwork in themselves. She smelt the sunshine, like the smell of spring, the scent of leaves once they were snapped or the smell of fully bloomed flower.

But she realised something was wrong. The whole scene before her brightened, and she felt a burn at her wrists. The rip as her shoulders were pulled out of their sockets. Her eyes were exposed to a harsh light, coming from the reflection of the sun on the lake, making her squint. She squirmed in her chair and saw her bloodied-raw wrists, bound back by rope. She squealed in frustration and wriggled her fingers realizing that the rope wasn't tied on at all.

A cold tickle wrapped around her wrists, sneaking down her body as the trees shook violently. She stood up arching forward, breathing in sharply as her ripped shirt grabbed at her torn and fleshy back, she moaned but hobbled forward. She took slow shaky steps towards the lake but lost her balance and fell, the dry grass digging fiercely into her tender back. She forced her head around and saw the lake, and she felt a tickle in her chest. She cautiously stepped through the green tangle of weeds, feeling stronger step by step, painfully reaching her goal.

Unexpectedly her bony body twisted, and her now bloody red leg felt as if ice had had been pierced up her leg from her ankle, numbing it. She screamed a high torturous scream making her throat dry and burn with effort. Her left leg wouldn't move as if it were embedded in the ground, and she wept, salty tears slipping over her upper lip, dissolving into her mouth. She couldn't do it, she couldn't end the torture that was now like wires all around her, making it impossible to escape from.

Somehow her strong determination made her hope slowly, back towards the lake, where she could wash off all her blood and tears.

Despite her leg, she flew to the water that was glimmering as bright as a diamond in the sun, in honest desperation. She stood before the glimmering cloudy water and prayed that her parents would respect her choice. She dropped like a stone in the water and screamed piercing her own ears and before she could go back the thick water engulfed her head, bubbles surfacing after her. Her body sank deeper...deeper...deeper, but as she did, a smile spread on her ghostly white face as she realized she could no longer feel the burning whip tear her back apart.