

# Veteran of the Silent War

## So this is Hell

It was dark, so very dark and yet the sun was shining, sending shafts of light through the walls of the barn. Cali's wrists were tied to the stall and he was there, the man that called himself her father, certainly he couldn't truly be her father and treat her this way. Her heart was turning dark as sadness replaced anger in her soul.

"Please don't!" She screamed while he unzipped his pants. It was futile she knew but she had to try, she always had to try. She had learned to not kick or flail too much because if she ripped her dress or got it dirty Grandmother would beat her and sometimes the beatings were worse than what he did to her.

"Don't... don't what; don't you want your birthday present? I have just what you want right here." His voice was thick with emotion and lust. He grabbed her tiny five year old hips, pushed up her little cotton dress and forced himself inside her. Cali screamed.

She was not allowed to wear underpants or any kind of pants. It made him angry when he had to work for it. Then the pants got ripped and so did Cali. Then Grandmother would beat her extra hard for getting her daddy angry and for getting blood on her clothes and for ripping her pants. The feel of pants, other than his pants on her legs was nearly a lost memory.

He was never gentle when he gave her these kinds of presents. It always hurt, but sometimes he didn't hit her first and sometimes he did. One time he broke her jaw. The nurse at the hospital was really nice but Cali had to lie to her and tell her that she had fallen off of a fence that she shouldn't have been climbing. Just last month Cali had to lie to the Minister about the bruise on her arm. Her father had nearly broken it when he snatched her out of her bed and brought her to the barn. Cali didn't like lying to protect her father, but she knew if she didn't her Grandmother would beat her. She didn't like the Grandmother's beatings, but her Grandmother did.

The Grandmother would laugh when Cali winced or cried out. Cali was learning quickly not to do those things. She refused to give the Grandmother pleasure. Sometimes Aunt Helen would watch Cali's beatings. Sometimes Aunt Helen would laugh with the Grandmother but sometimes when the Grandmother tired of beating Cali she would start on Aunt Helen.

Now Cali knew why her own mother had never wanted to come out to the farm to visit the old woman. But her mother was gone now. She had died nearly a year ago. She had fallen down the stairs and broken her neck. It was an accident, at least that's what she had been told. Her father, Philip had not taken his wife's death well. He had packed up his two daughters and moved back in with his mother. A few months later the hurting had started. That was six months ago now and

the play time with father was only becoming more frequent and longer in duration as the months passed.

Cali always took the beatings and the presents from her father. She always stood in place of her younger sister Monica. It's what big sisters did, that's what her mother had taught her. Big sisters always look out for the little ones, so that's what Cali did. Because of this Cali celebrated birthdays two to three times a week and was beaten nearly every day. Sunday was her only day of reprieve because Grandmother would not work on the Lords Day, it was sacrilege and she forbade it of her son. Philip was content to drink himself into a stupor on Sunday.

While she received her presents or was being beaten Cali would try to concentrate on the happy memories of her mother. It wasn't hard to imagine her mother as an Angel surrounded by an aura of light. The pain was often so great that Cali thought that she actually saw stars. She imagined her mother amongst the stars.

Cali would often imagine that her mother would talk to her when she felt weak. It was at these times that Cali would find encouragement in her mother's words. That encouragement would carry her through the trial of pain and humiliation.

She began to talk to her mother when everyone else was asleep. At these times she would ask her mother why her father hurt her so. Her mother had no good answer for her but she promised that someday Cali would be in a position to repay him. The hope of repaying him kept her from going insane.

At first Cali would often talk to Monica before going to bed at night. Monica didn't understand why Cali was always in so much trouble. Cali had to explain that she was being punished for things she hadn't done. But Monica didn't understand, she had been told that Cali was a liar and shouldn't be believed.

The Grandmother made certain that Monica was given special treatment. She got treats and got to watch TV and no-one ever yelled at her or hit her for any reason. Cali blamed herself for the way that they babied Monica, it had been Cali that had stood up for Monica in the beginning, and Grandmother just took it the extra mile. In the end it didn't matter how it had happened all that Cali knew was that she was alone. Monica didn't believe her, the Grandmother hated her, Aunt Helen was no use to anyone and her father... he was a monster.

Weeks had droned on and became months. One pain was scarcely dull when a new one was inflicted. Sometimes Cali could hardly walk without wincing or limping. She tried not to give anyone the satisfaction of seeing her in pain because they would only laugh at her and tell Monica that Cali was weak and not worthy of pity. Eventually Monica stopped caring. Cali could see it on her sister's young face, the lack of compassion, the lack of love. They were little more than babies and yet the Grandmother and her father had somehow driven humanity from Monica and nearly driven hope from Cali.

Eventually Cali had to take her conversations with her mother outside because Monica had started to tease her and when her Grandmother heard about Cali talking to ghosts she beat her and

screamed at her and then beat her again. Cali had to be taken to the hospital again afterwards. She had to lie to the nurses and the Doctor again.

She learned from her misplaced trust. Now she talked to her mother while she did her outside chores. She told her mother everything. She told her of the pain and the sorrow and the depression that had begun to take hold of her heart. Her mother told her to be strong for soon she would have a friend that would believe her and help her. The day that her mother told her that, her entire life changed, even the Grandmother saw the difference but instead of beating it out of her she told Philip to give her an extra special present. That was the first day that he sodomized her. Cali couldn't help it she cried and screamed in pain and when she went back inside she was beaten for making so much noise and told that she should get used to it. After all of that it was hard for Cali to hold on to the hope that her mother had given to her but she managed it.

She managed it by holding on to the thought of not being alone in her battle against the monster and his mother. If she had just one person on her side that she could actually see and touch it would be enough. Her mother was wonderful but she couldn't touch her or even see her all the time. She knew that she was there but it just wasn't the same. Each day of pain drew her closer to her new friend that is what she clung too. She didn't know when it would happen but it would, because her mother had promised.

The sun had long since set when her father finally finished his business. She was relieved... he had only hurt her three times today. He untied her hands, kissed her gently on the forehead and called her a good girl, words he would never say in front of the Grandmother, before swatting her on the ass to send her into the house. Once inside Cali rushed up the stairs to wash. She had to help her Aunt set the table and serve dinner. The Grandmother growled at her when she went past. But she didn't grab her and start interrogating her. That was a good sign.

Dinner was no special affair. Cali served the meal along with her Aunt and when everyone else was done they ate and cleaned up. Her Aunt was a pig. She ate and ate until she couldn't eat any more. Lucky for Cali, her father expected leftovers for his lunch the next day at work so there was more than enough to feed them all. Cali couldn't understand her Aunt's behavior she knew that the woman forced herself to vomit after everyone had gone. The Grandmother always told her that she was fat and then beat her to keep her thin. Maybe this was her way of fighting back. It seemed like a waste of effort to Cali. Ultimately she didn't care she had plenty to eat and was mildly amused when she heard her Aunt heaving into the toilet down the hall from her room.

Aunt Helen often left the kitchen before everything was done. Cali didn't care she enjoyed not being around the strange woman. Tonight Cali was slow in cleaning up slower than usual. She never rushed back to her room in the evening. Time in the kitchen alone was preferred to time with her sister. After she had finished cleaning the kitchen, she overheard the Grandmother talking to her father.

"Philip, you need to stop hitting the whelp in the face. We need to be able to cover the bruises or nosy people will be sticking their damn fool noses into our business." The old woman said with disdain.

“Do I have to mama?” Philips voice always became a simpering mess when he spoke with her like this.

“Yes, you damn fool. Do as I say or you’ll end up as someone’s bitch in prison.” She growled and Cali could hear her slap her father across the face. She did that often but never more than once or twice. Her father had told her that when he was young his mother had hit him with boards and frying pans. Now he was a good boy and did as he was told so she didn’t hit him that much anymore. He told Cali that someday the Grandmother would stop hitting her too.

“Yes mama. I can still play with her though... right?” That’s what he called it, playing and when he thought it was a special time it was a present. Cali couldn’t tell the difference. He called it names like that so that when people asked he didn’t have to feel like he was lying. Sometimes he told them that Cali got lots of presents when they played together.

“Of course you can. She needs her father’s love. But don’t neglect your sister. She’s real happy you’re home you know.” She settled back into her chair, Cali could tell by the way it creaked. The room became quiet. Clearly her father was mulling something over. Cali dare not move or even breathe hard. If they knew she was listening she would surely be beaten.

“She’s been acting strange mama. She acts like she doesn’t like me anymore so I’ve been avoiding her.” He sat down on the chair beside his mother.

“She’s only acting that way ‘cuz she’s jealous. She thought that without Patricia around you would be spending more time with her. You’re just making it worse by avoiding her.” The old woman leaned forward and the chair creaked in a different way.

“Oh, I guess I didn’t see that mama. I just don’t understand women.” There was a definite sound of joy in his voice, perhaps even anticipation.

“That’s why you got me to tell you what’s what son. Now go upstairs and show Helen how much you love her. Go on boy do it now.” Cali could hear her father jump to his feet before the Grandmother had finished speaking.

Cali could hear him kiss the Grandmother. She had seen them kiss many times since moving here. They kissed like he used to kiss her mother. “Goodnight mama” She heard him step away from her. She said something to him but Cali couldn’t quite hear her. “Alright mama, alright.” He said as he bound up the stairs.

Cali waited to hear her Grandmother settle back into the chair before she peeked around the corner. The Grandmother’s chair had its back to the stairs. Cali could see her tight gray streaked bun of hair just over the top of the high back. If she were quiet she could sneak up the stairs and the Grandmother would never know.

She saw her father disappear into her Aunt’s room as she got to the top of the stairs. She carefully avoided all of the creaking floorboards and slipped into her own room.

“What took you so long?” Monica’s tiny voice broke the silence and nearly sent Cali into cardiac arrest. She hadn’t realized that she had been so afraid.

“The dishes were extra dirty.” She said dismissively. Monica bought it. Nosey little brat! Cali would have said that out loud had things been different. But she had to admit that Monica was still just a child and didn’t really grasp all of the intrigue and plots going on around the house; in truth Cali was sure that she was missing a lot of stuff too. She tried to pay attention because she had heard someone in Church say that knowledge was power. Cali certainly felt powerless most of the time but when she knew something someone else didn’t she did feel more powerful. She would learn how to use this all to her advantage one day.

Cali went to the closet and slipped off her shoes. She shrugged into her nightgown and then slid to the back of the closet. This was an old house and the walls were nearly as porous as the barn. She could easily see into her Aunt’s room. She and her father were kissing and she was pulling his shirt off of him.

“Whatcha doin’?” Monica scared the hell out of her and she had to suppress a surprised squeak.

God I wish she would stop doing that! Cali bit her tongue almost literally. “Watching father show Aunt Helen some love.” There was no need to lie; it wasn’t like it was the first time that they had seen their father lie with a woman. They had walked in one time when he had the Grandmother bent over the dining room table. The Grandmother had explained that it was natural for a man to show his love for women in this way and their father was full of love.

The sisters sat down on the floor and watched. For the first time Cali really watched what the female did. In this case her Aunt looked to be enjoying her father’s love. She pulled his pants completely off of him and pulled him down on top of her. She did not even pull him to the bed. She just lay down right there on the floor by the door. The floor was hard and it hurt when he did this to Cali on the floor, she much preferred the bed where at least when he squashed her, her bones weren’t ground into the hard floor. They watched while Aunt Helen groaned and called out his name and he panted like a dog. They seemed to really enjoy each other. When he was done she didn’t want him to go away but he insisted that he had work in the morning. But he promised to see her in the morning before he left. Cali was happy when she heard that. It meant that he wouldn’t be waking her. She prayed to her mother that Aunt Helen would make her father very happy and he wouldn’t want to play with her tomorrow at all. Her mother heard her prayers and gave her three days of peace.