

THE HOURGLASS

by

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There it was. That awful, awful sound. She hated it, because it meant that she had to spend another day awake. When she was asleep, at least she was alone. She wished she could sleep forever. She rested her head on the flat pillow and pulled the blanket over her head. She knew the sound wouldn't stop, so she got up and turned the alarm off. She heard the small click which meant Caleb had just unlocked the door. She turned the lights on, and made her way to the toilet.

Her morning routine consisted of putting on deodorant, clothes, glasses and her ring. She could hear Caleb walking around from up-stairs. He was probably preparing breakfast. Before she went up, she turned the old hour glass in the book shelf upside-down. She used to watch it all day, as she lay in her bed. It fascinated her, to see the tiny grains of sand make their way down to the bottom through the tiny loop hole. It made her lose track of time, and she could stare at it for several minutes. She had plenty of time, so it was never a problem.

She collected all the strength she could find and with a pounding heart, she made her way to the kitchen. After all that time, she still hadn't gotten used to him.

Caleb was sitting by the table, reading a news-paper as always, when she entered the kitchen.

"Good morning, sun shine", he said with a cheery voice. "Breakfast is ready."

She didn't say anything, she just sat down by the table and started eating. It was the usual: yogurt, a cheese sandwich and a glass of milk. Caleb liked routines. When she raised her hand to eat the sandwich, she saw that the bruises on her arms were fully visible. Caleb looked at them, and a grin spread across his face.

"You earned those, you know. I've told you not to read my newspapers a thousand times."

She muttered something that he couldn't hear and looked down at the yogurt. He never let her read the newspapers.

"Are you done?" he said to her after a few minutes. When she nodded, he said: "Good girl. Now, go brush your little teeth. We wouldn't want them to get dirty, now would we?"

"No..." she said and left the table. Quick as a lightning, Caleb got up and took a hard grip on her arm. "You know what to say", he said and looked down at her.

She looked him in the eyes and whispered: "Thank you, Caleb."

Caleb watched her the whole time, while she was brushing her teeth. She didn't know why, but he did it every morning. She never got used to it, and it always gave her the creeps.

When she was done, he took her by the hand and led her down the stairs. Caleb pushed her into her room. He stood in the door and watched her for a while. He liked to watch. She thought it was because he knew how much she hated it when he did that.

"Do you think I don't understand what goes on in your mind?" he said. "You should be more grateful. I give you three meals a day, a bed to sleep in and a shower to wash your dirty little ungrateful body in. And what do I get in return? A stubborn little brat!" He sighed, as if he were the one being held locked up in a room all day. "I will unlock the door by twelve."

He locked the door, and she could hear his steps as he walked up-stairs. She knew this was her life now, but she never got used to it. She never got used to his temper, to the bruises, to the routines, the locked doors. She turned the hourglass once more and lay down in her bed. The sand in the hourglass kept on falling and she knew that her life now was like the hourglass; it would never end.