

The days of punishment are coming,
the days of reckoning are at hand.

Hosea 9:7

Chapter 1

DAY ONE - WEDNESDAY

The aroma of Chanel No.19 filled the wardrobe, clinging obstinately to the laundered clothes hanging around him. His head swam with the fragrance, reminiscent of acorns falling from laden branches in the quiet forest he had liked to wander around in his youth. A key scratched into the lock of the flat's hall door and he remembered the young woman. The wardrobe's smell was her perfume, not the forest. He tried not to gag from the combination of fear and what had now become an overpowering stench.

He ground his teeth, biting down hard on the pure hatred. His jaw muscles jumped to an unknown rhythm, while his fingers slowly wrapped around the knife's handle. The touch, like holding a loved one, helped calm the mounting anger. It excited him. Made him feel whole.

A light switch clicked and he heard the woman gasp. She must be in the kitchenette, he thought. He clamped his hand

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across his mouth to stop the laughter that suddenly bubbled up from nowhere as he imagined her reading the newspaper cuttings he had laid out for her. The old wardrobe rocked on the uneven floorboards with his movement.

‘Who’s there?’

A few squeaks managed to escape his fingers, so he recalled the woman’s face to bring back the anger and his red hate for her and all her kind.

She’s a tart, he thought. They’re all tarts. Thinking themselves so pristine and too good for me. I’ll show the bitch. Even keeps a phone by the bed. Tart.

Soft, slow footsteps approached and he heard the click of more switches. Lines of yellow light suddenly showed the outline of the wardrobe’s double doors.

Will the little slut scamper for the front door, he wondered, or creep into the bedroom to use the phone? He heard a footstep between the rugs in the hall and knew she was going for the door.

His hand reached forwards to fling open the wardrobe but heavy steps began clumping up the shared stairs outside the flat. The woman moaned, stepping backwards.

Scared of neighbours now. Come on, bitch. Let’s dance.

A shadow blocked the light around the door. He leapt out, his arms spread wide.

‘Surprise!’

She whimpered, her arms defensively enfolding her stomach. But they were not enough to stop him. ‘What do you want? Please, take the money, anything. Just leave me alone. For God’s sake, please leave me alone.’

‘Aaaah,’ he groaned, smiling broadly, ‘but I’ve brought you a present.’

Her quaking fear aroused him, his swollen penis straining against his trousers. He liked it when they were too scared to scream or run. Just like rabbits caught in the glare of headlights. And her bones would crunch just as easily when the time came to crush her.

‘You don’t recognise me, do you?’ He hated that.

Her frown softened when her eyes opened wide, her lips parting slightly.

‘Yes,’ he said, enjoying the moment. ‘You looked at me that first time just like *she* did before *she* threw me out.’ His anger was returning too hard, softening the arousal.

He reached forwards gently and placed his left hand against her side. His eyes flickered at the touch, and a fire flared through his whole body. The silky material of her dress felt good, clinging to her like a second skin, and her body was warm and soft beneath it. His hand slid across the material, the fingers spreading across her back until each tingled. He pulled her closer, feeling her resistance.

The touch changed her fear, freeing her throat and muscles. She screamed and struggled from his grasp. His right hand whipped round and connected perfectly with her jaw. With lightning speed his fingers curled into a fist which he smashed down hard against the reddening skin. The loud crack of something breaking halted his next blow and he stood above her, breathing normally. This was all part of the job. He bent down and pulled her back to her feet. She sagged in his left arm, still stunned, while her

long, black hair brushed against his hand.

He had time, plenty of time. Patience was a virtue, as his mother always used to tell him. The woman's eyes fought to focus and he stared at them, struck by the way the pale blue contrasted sharply with her otherwise dark colouring. She whimpered and began struggling, then stopped when he raised his right hand.

'Please,' she mumbled almost incoherently through the shattered jaw.

He liked them to beg. Liked them to relax against his arm. Liked them to look deeply into his eyes. His arousal returned and he quickly clasped the knife handle and slid it from the sheath at his side.

He slowly pulled her towards him. She appeared resigned to her fate, but he knew one wrong touch, one sudden movement, would send her into a frenzy. Like that other bitch who had clawed his face. Now he knew them better. Continuing to stare into her eyes, he thrilled at his power over her, and of their closeness. He wanted to watch those eyes while she died - while she realised that she was dying.

It was too much. The choice too hard. He looked down as the point of the knife lightly touched the dress at the small bulge of her stomach. Her eyes must have followed the direction of his gaze.

'No,' she screamed, beginning to struggle again.

He grinned in rapturous delight while watching the point of the knife press her stomach inwards farther and farther until it overcame the resistance of the material and skin.

The orgasm made his body jerk as the last of the bright blade entered her dark depths.

Everything was silence, as though the world was holding its breath. She stood unresisting in the crook of his arm, her eyes staring at him in disbelief. Shock had left her totally numb, the momentary absence of pain her only relief.

‘Did you see the teeth down the blade?’ His voice was hoarse with excitement. ‘They’re hungry!’

He twisted the knife half a turn and she tried screaming piercingly, but he released her and clamped his free hand over her mouth. When her legs gave way, he lowered her to the bright yellow linoleum, leaving the knife’s handle protruding from her belly. Then he clasped it again, slowly and gently, like a caress, before twisting it a little farther.

‘It’s gathering your guts like spaghetti on a fork,’ he told her while imagining the damage it was causing.

Her feet were beating a fast rhythm on the floor and her head twisted violently beneath his hand. He pulled a pair of her briefs from his trouser pocket and stuffed them into her mouth, then gently lifted her onto the bed. Her thrashing almost threw her from his arms, but the mattress would deaden the noise she was making.

‘That’s more comfortable,’ he said, sitting beside her and holding her legs until they became almost still.

Her large eyes stared at him and her breathing came in short, shallow gasps. His finger gathered the beads of sweat from her lip and forehead, her light tan now a grey pallor. He ran his hand down her cold and clammy arm when the skin around her mouth changed to a pale blue.

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He cursed softly, realising the knife must have caught an artery. She would die quicker than intended. He grinned at the extra time he would now have to play with her afterwards.

The knife handle stood proudly on her stomach between her blood-covered splayed fingers. His arousal was returning while staring at the glorious sight. His hand joined hers and gently caressed her belly, running slowly over the wet material. The fingers of his other hand released her legs and curled round the handle of the knife again, like a woman encapsulating an erect penis. Laying his head on her breast, he looked down her body and twisted the knife more until she finally became still. Raising his face to hers and seeing her eyes lose their sheen, he removed the gag and kissed her tenderly on the lips.