

My Pain Is Your Pain

By Kirsty Ferguson

The hand knotted in my hair, slowly wrapping around and around until the fist was pushing against my head, knuckles digging in. It felt like my scalp was being peeled from my head in increments. There was no blood yet but any minute now I was sure my head was going to split open like a rotten grape. I squeezed my eyes shut tight and tried not to scream. From experience, I knew that if I screamed it would only make it worse. The torture would go on longer then, no end in sight. Oh yes, I had learned.

Every now and then I glanced at the clock. The pressure didn't let up for half a rotation of the hour hand. It would have to end soon. Dad would be home. As if he had heard my silent plea, his tires crunched in the driveway and the car door swung shut with a quiet thud. The hand quickly unwound from my hair and smoothed it back into place, tucking it behind my ears. The hand quickly wiped over my eyes, chasing away my tears. The voice whispered the words I had heard so many times before. The threats, the promise of worse next time if I told. So I smiled. Shaky yes, but still a smile.

The door opened and my dad stood in front of me. He swept me into his arms without a word. He looked at my face, maybe he saw the fear and heartbreak hiding within but I never said anything. He slowly put me back onto my feet. He stood over me for a moment, love and something else in his shadowed eyes.

He stepped forward and looked at my tormentor. There was something in his face that I had never seen before. He pulled something from his jacket pocket and lurched forward. The air was filled with screams and ribbons of blood flew across the room, a thin wisp settling across my face. It was over long before my punishment usually was. He was panting hard when he turned back to me. Now all I saw was love.

'Your mum will never hurt you again pumpkin.'

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