



The diatribe in the background continued.

Anukai washed another pile of dishes left in the sink from food the mother had made for herself without any acknowledgment of the hunger of her teenaged kids. As she blankly dunked her hands into the soapy water on autopilot she felt a heart-beat entwined with her own begin to fade.

Across the way in the TV room the mother gossiped about how Adam, the “lost” son of one of her friends had tried to kill himself earlier that day. He was in the hospital running up bills as his parents tried to make their grief look believable in front of the concerned doctors.

“He’s supposedly lost so much blood that there is almost no hope or point...” the mother crowed. Anukai’s mother laughed about all her friend had done to deserve the grief that the loss of a child would normally cause. “But the biggest drama is over his daddy,” the mother purred into the phone.

“He vehemently refused to give blood in order to save his own son’s life at first! Fear of needles, he said! Got shamed into it by the doctor only to find out the boy ain’t even his- Giiiiirlll~”

“He stormed out of the hospital, all “I want a divorce! And you’re getting nothing! In front of everybody! Yes! She called me crying about it-” the mother cackled, waving it off, “then she wouldn’t even get off the phone to go Be with her dying son- I couldn’t Wait to tell you!”

Anukai stacked the dishes in a daze, moving onto the obscene pile of glasses the mother had accrued in less than three hours home as the beat she felt against her inner ear got fainter. She gritted her teeth as the mother complained about planning the wake/potluck under the hawk-like eyes of their so-called friends showing out for front-row seats to the spectacle of the latest woman in their ranks losing a child to suicide and gaining access to prematurely paid-out life insurance, right as the husband she’d repeatedly cheated on was finally divorcing her.

The mother laughed out loud. “I should be so lucky for her to crawl off somewhere and die-”

Anukai absently grasped the rim of a glass underwater as everything around her paused. The heartbeat and faint-breathing stopped at the same time as a bright light exploded in front of her eyes. She saw herself grab the dirty butcher knife on the counter and stab her vindictive mother in the chest repeatedly, a tell-tale demonic sixth finger rupturing the side of her stabbing hand as she butchered her on the couch.

In a flash, what felt like the grip of a hand shot through the water and wrapped itself around Anukai’s wrist to stop her.

“She’s not Worth it- and you are not like them-” Adam’s voice boomed in her head, using the last of his spirit to stop her. Everything in front of Anukai went red as the glass she held onto broke and jabbed through the side of her hand right where the demonic digit would have been.

Anukai looked down at the bloody, sudsy water, lifted her hand and stoically pulled the hunk of glass still rammed in it down and out, letting the spiritual bloodline marker fall back into the sink and disintegrate in her mind’s eye, then dropped the chunk of glass into the sink.

In shock, Anukai wrapped a wet kitchen towel around her hand and slowly walked into the TV room towards the mother.

“Yeah, I’m sure her nosy ass is probably eavesdropping now. Yeah, he was her friend... No- fuck her- hopefully she’ll be joining him soon enough-” the mother bellowed for show and then cracked up. “What!” the mother barked without even looking up, feeling Anukai’s presence. “What do you want?”

“Take me... to the hospital.” Anukai whispered.

“Why?!” the mother snapped. “So you can see your little-”

Anukai didn’t even flinch. “Take... me to the hospital.” she said again.

The mother started to show out with her bemused friend still on the line. “Who do you think you are?!” she began, oblivious to the blood that now dripped onto the floor as she ranted. Anukai numbly watched the mother snarling and realized that she was about to pass out. She turned on her heels and headed for the back door without saying a word right before everything went black.

“Don’t you walk away from me when I am talking to you-”

The last thing Anukai heard was the mother screaming at the top of her lungs, full of real concern for the first time in Anukai’s entire life as she crumpled to the floor.

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