

THE TRAPPED DAUGHTER by Jay Kerk

Excerpt

Yup and okay are the only words I have muttered since he returned home. We eat dinner in silence, and I watch him as he slowly chews every bite, enjoying and wowing at the flavors. I hate how much I hate him.

A few bites into dinner and I find myself without any appetite. I turn my eyes away from my father because if I don't, I will either become mad enough to do something nasty to annoy him, or I will burst into tears. I stare up at the glittering chandelier hanging over the dining table. I wish its warm lights could dispel the gloom that has filled my soul.

I can feel my palms sweating, my forehead prickling.

"You haven't spoken a word all night," my father says.

I reply with a smile, but I can't hide the disappointment behind it. Captivity breaks your spirits. Captivity makes you cherish small things that you were not aware you valued. Finally, after everything else, captivity crushes you.

If my mother was still alive, he would not even dare speak to me like that.

My mother never had the patience for helping me with schoolwork, or setting up pink balloons for my birthday. My father was the one who sat me down for French spelling, bedtime stories, and even talked me through my trouble with boys. He was the rock. She never made much effort, but she would not have harmed me like he is doing.

They weren't different people because of how they were brought up – they were different because of his approach to life. Any greedy businessman learns new millennial skills if they bring in more money. He controls the environment he operates in to ensure he achieves his goals. Discipline in hierarchy is a term he created to describe how an employee should have a soldier's obedience with regards to company objectives. Without, he says there is no way to run any large company – and he had more than a thousand staff.

My mother was an artist who believed in autonomy and individual expression at any cost. Side by side, they were wolf and sheep, predator and gentle, peaceful grazer. I regret not spending more time with her before she passed. She could have warned me about the monster.

The power to converse with him about anything eludes me, and I struggle through the couple of hours that I have to endure in his presence until he retires to his room. The moment I return to mine, I lie on my bed, close my eyes, and think of Gabe.