

Eve

Every afternoon, she leaves work with a knot in her stomach.

Five o'clock, the fatal hour when something inside her begins to tremble.

Her body dreads six, the moment she has to walk out.

Her colleagues know nothing about her life. She prefers it that way, invisible, discreet.

She is the perfect employee: warm, cheerful, impeccably professional.

Clients and coworkers respect her, even admire her.

That is why work feels like a kind of release.

From Monday to Friday, her only weekly refuge.

But the moment she leaves, the knot tightens.

It swells, pressing against her chest, a weight dragging her body down.

Her steps grow uneven, heavy.

Her arms go numb. Her throat dries.

Fear takes hold of her and refuses to let go.

Arriving home is the peak of her ordeal.

Her body trembles. Her eyes lower. Her back curves inward.

Orlane Sebäi - Eve

She is no longer the confident woman from work.
She becomes someone else, a woman who submits.

She sets herself to work immediately.
The house comes before her own needs.
She barely dares to sit, to eat, to rest,
Afraid of being reprimanded.

She scrubs every corner with frantic precision.
Everything must be spotless.

Her partner never comes home at the same time.
And when he does, she freezes.

Her body stiffens.
Her soul begins to fracture.

At the slightest misstep, the shouting begins.
Threats and humiliation are part of her daily life.

Everything about her partner breathes barely
contained violence, unchecked aggression:
doors slamming, complaints shouted into the void,
objects hurled across the room,
empty bottles piling up, the nauseating smell of
drugs lingering in the air.

She wonders how she ended up here.
She is gentle by nature, kind, always ready to help
others.
She fell into the trap of a deceptive love.

It had been perfect at first.
But once they moved in together, love quickly
turned into an ordeal.

She remembers.
The violence crept in slowly: sharp remarks spoken
in anger,
then biting insults,
then threats of physical harm,
and finally, the blows themselves.

To her, the pain of the mind cuts deeper than the
pain of the body.

Her love for him, despite everything, is killing her
slowly.
She feels trapped.

“Is this Stockholm syndrome?” she wonders.
“No one would believe me,” she thinks.

To others, he is the perfect partner: charming, funny,
attractive, clever.

After every outburst, every act of cruelty, he
apologizes.
And every time, she accepts.
Every time, she forgives.

She feels guilty for being this weak.
She does not yet know her own strength.

If one day she breaks, she fears she might kill him.
The thought terrifies her, ending up in prison for
defending herself.

She is so afraid.
She has never known such terror.

Home has become her prison.
The beast lies dormant inside it.

Giving her partner a name « the beast » slowly
helps her find the strength to fight back.

The beast will come.
The beast will be angry.
“I must not provoke the beast.”

She feels as though her entire life revolves around it.
A vicious, endless cycle.

And yet, a thought begins to form fragile, but real.
“I will lock the beast away.”

She does not realize it yet,
but this is the first step.

She begins to script a way out,
to imagine an end to what she endures.

Every moment of quiet, she devotes to this plan.

This step leads her to the next.

She speaks.

An organization and her closest friend become her lifelines.

In secrecy, they help her find a way out of the beast's den.

The blows continue in the meantime.

But the hope of an ending close now and helps her endure them.

The beast knows nothing of what is unfolding.

Inside, she rejoices.

She longs for the inevitable day.

The day the beast is taken away by force, locked inside a cage that is her deliverance.

She does not dare cry out in relief or show the slightest sign of joy.

She fears the beast might be released too soon.

But it is not.

She realizes she is safe the day the judge delivers a heavy sentence.

The beast will not be free anytime soon.

At last, she can live.
She can come home whenever she wants,
buy what she desires,
see people again.

Old reflexes die hard.
Her heart still races when she leaves work.
The relief only comes when she steps into the empty
apartment.

Solitude becomes her companion, a quiet, faithful
confidant.

The trauma resurfaces at times.
An unexpected noise, and she flinches.
A car passing too loudly, and her body tightens.
A man shouting in the street, and a shiver runs
through her.

It will take time.
And patience.
To finally believe it is over.

I am free. I am strong.
I am no longer a victim.

I am myself. I am Eve.