

Prologue

Lynn

As little kids, we all dream about that one special day: the perfect wedding. We imagine the crisp white dress, the beautiful venue, and being surrounded by friends and family—and, of course, the love of your life waiting at the end of the aisle.

So did I.

I met her in high school when I was fifteen, a time when life felt measured in ink and old paper. Now, many years later, I'm standing at the end of that aisle, but the face waiting for me isn't hers.

It's funny how it happens. One minute you're head over heels, lost in the scent of citrus and sandalwood, and the next, you're trapped in a toxic whirlwind that refuses to end. You think you've found the person you'll grow old with, the one you can trust with your "gaping wounds" and your deepest secrets, only to realize they were the worst possible match.

She was a storm masquerading as a girl, and I was just an anchor being dragged into a suffocating sea. I spent years wearing long sleeves to hide the scars she couldn't see, decorating a cage I called a sanctuary.

But the whirlwind eventually moves on. The storm heads back out to sea, leaving behind nothing but the wreckage and the quiet.

Standing here now, I realize she just wasn't the one. Today isn't about the ghost in the garden or the girl who taught me how to

break. It's about the person who helped me pick up the hammer and learn the language of wood.

The girl who didn't just see the "pretty girl" or the "nerd," but the maker underneath.