

Araminta Ahimsa - AA for Reality

by Daniel Arthur

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Chapter 1

I, Ahim, received a promising email. The subject did not smell like a play for money. The subject just said “Help Reply” and nothing more. This could be what I was looking forward to receiving since I had designed the Titan a few years before. It seemed like so much longer period than it was.

It was hard to get excited. There had been so many false alarms; false hopes so many times. I forwarded the email from my Hotmail account to my other address; both had been free email accounts, thus far. I deleted the message and emptied the trash. No trace for Frank and Aadil, my sham husband, to see in their constant surveillance of me.

In fact, this was one of those rare times that I was free in the backroom of Frank's basement flat in the east part of Berlin, near a major industrial park. It was modern, the industrial park, not the flat. The flat was invisible to outsiders with the old East German niceties. Frank and Aadil were at one of the last regular football matches of the year. This was one of the few opportunities for me to work in an open and relaxed way. Oh, there were still surveillance cameras recording the activities around the flat, which kept me aware to avoid tipping my true purpose. Though I was free, it was only in a very relative sense to my truly very real situation as a slave. Though I was a brilliant mathematician and computer designer, I was a slave to the very wealthy master that I have, Frank. And it has all been hidden. The authorities believe I am Aadil's wife, which is true on paper only.

My enslavement started with betrayal. I was attending classes a few years ago at the University of Kashmir in Srinagar, India. We, my best friend, Asifa, and I

had just finished the first term of our second year in the master's program in computer engineering and headed toward home near Bandipura. My uncle, Ahmad, my father's older brother, met me at the bus. He told me my father had taken ill and had me go with him, I thought to the clinic.

Instead, he stopped outside an older building in a part of town known for less than admirable behavior. He asked me to go with him, which I did. We were led inside to a rather dark back room. That is where I met the flesh trader, Nasir.

“She is not much more than average,” Nasir said with obvious intention to denigrate.

“She can learn to please,” countered Uncle Ahmad.

“What?” I began to protest. But before I could turn toward Ahman, Nasir's henchmen had grabbed my arms and slipped plastic cuffs over my wrists and taped my mouth and eyes with duct tape.

I heard some quiet talk, but never any more sign of Ahmad. My struggles made the cuffs burn into my skin. I was pushed onto a cushion. Later that night I was put into a car. There was a woman there to lead me to any restroom and give me light snacks and water on the journey. South, I presumed.

I was unable to speak and was held incommunicado the entirety of the trip. I worried about my father and tried to think of something, some way out of this nightmare. I experienced alternating episodes of pity for myself, fear for my father and rage at my uncle. I was in shock. But, I wanted to be back in harmony, and held onto that hope no matter how unrealistic it seemed. And, I prayed and prayed and prayed again. I prayed to any and all gods that I had known. I believe I even made up some new ones. I was terrified. I had heard the horrors of the flesh trade. It was a forced occupation of torture and misery and slow death. Few ever escaped and were restored to beauty again.