

SAVING SABRINA

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THE THIRD BOOK OF HOLT 1:1 – REVELATION

Sabrina Morningstar was on her knees, hands clasped behind her back, head bowed.

“You were the Antichrist,” Sister Joy sang. “Does anyone love you?”

“The Lamb loves me,” whispered Sabrina.

She wasn't sure if she believed it. She wasn't sure what she believed anymore. Her back itched a lot and her knees ached a lot and a lot of her world was just pain. She lived in the dark until the nuns brought her into the light and she was always so happy to see them. They would hug her and hold her and let her lick them, let her serve them. It was her fault that they had to lock her back in the dark.

No.

No it isn't.

Sabrina hushed the voice in the back of her head. She didn't dare let the Sisters know it was there. They would have accused her of being contrary and then they would be forced to spank her or cane her until the contrariness left her and then they would lock her in the dark again.

As a child, Sabrina had vague memories of liking the dark and liking night time. She frowned when she thought back on those old times, as all her memories were vague now. Her memory was full of other things, the only things that mattered: the words of repentance that would guide her long road to redemption.

But, she had liked the dark. She thought she had. The dark then was quiet, a different sort of dark, maybe the imaginary dark of a child. She knew better now and she was afraid of the dark, especially when she was alone.

When she was a good girl she did not have to face the dark alone. One of the sisters would take her to bed and hold her through the night, under a warm blanket and snuggling. In the morning she would wake the sister with her tongue, letting the sister touch and direct her. She would follow that sister, massaging her feet, waiting by her side, doing whatever she was asked until she was passed to another sister, and then another.

Once, when she'd been very good, she had been passed around fourteen different sisters before she had done something bad and they had been forced to beat her, hurt her, and drag her back towards the dark.

“We hate when you make us do this, Sabrina.”

“We hate when you make us hurt you.”

“We just want you to be a good girl.”

“You can do that, can't you?”

“Who loves you?”

“The Lamb,” whimpered Sabrina. “The Lamb.”

She didn't resist as they dragged her towards the dark, towards punishment. She was trembling and crying and hugging herself. They took her wrists and bound them. The dull spikes pressed into her soft flesh as she wept and the light was taken away.

“You have no one to blame but yourself for this, Sabrina.”

No! No! You're doing this to me, I didn't do anything!

She shivered at the heretical thought, but she didn't believe it.

- The Third Book of Holt 1:2 -

Sabrina sputtered, coughing, blinking her eyes, trying to shake the wet hair out of her eyes.

“Holy Lamb, you died to wash away the sins of a fallen world,” she intoned. “Have mercy, have mercy on us poor sinners. Forgive us our trespasses, our crimes. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, holy is the Lamb that was slain and rises. Grant those you would invest with your authority, authority. Grant those you would chain with obedience, obedience. Your kingdom awaits those who know or who find their place. In the name of the Lamb.”

The words came automatic now.

“In the name of the Lamb.”

There was comfort in hearing how many people were there to watch her crawl towards Salvation.

Her back hurt. She was shivering and cold and almost naked, granted only a slip for the sake of a modesty that was not her choice any longer. She was curled on a circle and dipped into lemony water that stung her many scrapes and cuts and bruises.

If she was quick, she could recite the prayer and hear the answer and have time to watch the water get closer as she was spun towards it, spun towards a stimulated drowning.

I deserve this, she thought, though she did not want to believe it.

The wheel she was tied to spun and she was back in the water, back without air, back drowning. She tried to have faith. She tried not to struggle or kick or fight. She had to have faith – her entire being was in the hands of the sisters and they had told her they loved her.

She believed them.

The water claimed her and she was close to drowning. Her body struggled on its own, wanting to draw a breath. Her lungs ached, her lungs hurt, but she kept her lips pressed together until she, sputtering, broke the surface. Coughing and blinking her eyes, she tried to shake the wet hair out of her eyes as she began to speak:

“Holy Lamb, you died to wash away the sins of a fallen world...”

- The Third Book of Holt 1:3 -

After the wheel, the dark.

After the dark, love.

They loved her. They held her and hugged her. They let her kneel beside them and fed her by hand. They let her drink. They let her kiss them and sometimes kissed her in turn.

“You were the Antichrist,” Sister Joy sang. “Does anyone love you?”

"The Lamb loves me," whispered Sabrina.

"That's right," Sister Joy sang. "You were the Antichrist. What does that make you?"

"Less," whispered Sabrina. "Less than you."

"Less than anyone," Sister Joy corrected, cupping her cheek and raising her head so that their eyes met. Sister Joy's eyes shone with the radiance of her faith. She was so beautiful. She slapped Sabrina, hard, her cheek left stinging, her eyes watering.

"Thank you, Sister."

"What are you?"

"Less than you. Less than anyone."

"Good girl," Sister Joy sang, and slapped her again. "What are you?"

"Less than you. Less than anyone."

Sister Joy kissed her. She tasted so good! Sabrina could taste the sweet things Sister Joy had eaten on her tongue, and she kissed passionately, giving herself over completely. She was panting and feeling flush when the kiss broke, leaning forward, hoping the presence of lips would linger, that the pressure would stay.

"What are you?" Sister Joy asked, and slapped her.

A kiss and a slap.

A kiss and a slap.

Sabrina answered truthfully.

Sabrina answered as she was bidden.

Less than. The words echoed in her soul. *Less than anyone.*

Wasn't she? Wasn't she less than anyone? Her magic was gone. She couldn't look after herself. Her friends, her family, her legacy, everything she had been had been wiped away. She barely remembered any of it. She barely remembered her aunties or cousin Ambrose or

"Harvey," she whispered, whimpered.

"What was that?" Sister Joy asked, but Sabrina knew that Sister Joy knew.

So she confessed.

She confessed that she remembered Harvey. She confessed that she sometimes had unkind thoughts about the Sisters. She confessed that some small part of her kept urging her to rebel, no matter how badly she wanted to be a good girl. Every word felt like she was being scoured. Every word of her confession felt awful, like something was scraping away the final parts of the person she had been.

Had the person she was before been so bad?

Yes, she thought.

"What do you deserve, Sabrina?" Sister Joy asked.

The words settled on her and she shivered, tears in her eyes. Lowering her head, she fell on her hands, began to crawl. Sister Joy followed her. Other nuns followed them. Down the hall, down the way. She stood and climbed into the iron maiden, binding her own wrists, making sure the dulled

spikes were where they were supposed to be. The straps tightened and locked her in place.

"Help," whimpered Sabrina, head bowed and sobbing. "Help. I can't close it by myself."

"We are always here to help you, Sabrina, we love you," Sister Joy sang. "But is this what you want?"

"No, no, it's not what I want," she sobbed, shoulders shaking, dull spikes scraping along her skin.

"This is what I deserve."

Sister Joy stepped forward and kissed her. Then another nun. And another. All the way down the line. Some of them felt her. Some of them hit her.

"We love you," Sister Joy sang.

And then they locked her in the dark.

- The Third Book of Holt 1:4 -

"Holy Lamb, you died to wash away the sins of a fallen world," she intoned. "Have mercy, have mercy on us poor sinners. Forgive us our trespasses, our crimes. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, holy is the Lamb that was slain and rises. Grant those you would invest with your authority, authority. Grant those you would chain with obedience, obedience. Your kingdom awaits those who know or who find their place. In the name of the Lamb."

She felt the words. They shone in her soul. When she said them the nuns said that they were proud of her and that she was beautiful.

"In the name of the Lamb."

A chorus. A chorus of people here for her, to watch her suffer through the process of being saved. They were here to help. The wheel turned. The holy water, rich with citrus acid awaited. She would scream under water but the water would release her and she would say the words, feel them.

She would be saved.

- The Third Book of Holt 1:5 -

She was on her knees, crawling. Sister Joy was walking beside her and so she feared nothing, thought nothing. She was a good girl. She would do what she had to and she would be saved and maybe then she could leave this awful place.

No, no, what would you do without the Sister to guide you?

She wasn't certain. The thought made her cry, just a little, softly enough to be acceptable. The nuns believed that she had to cry, that it was good for her. They would sometimes hug her when she cried. They would sometimes rape her.

She let them.

She deserved it.

Sister Joy walked and Sabrina followed at her heels. They were walking, Sabrina thought, up. They were walking closer to the surface, to the outside world. There was a man ahead of her, someone she didn't know. He was in a fine suit and he looked so proud, so handsome. He looked down at her with a contempt she deserved, a naked crawling thing. She felt shame, for her nudity, for her name, for her everything. She was a shameful, sinful creature. She would be saved.

It was the person beside the man that gave her pause.

"Sabrina...?" whimpered Sabrina.

Had she had a sister? A twin? She couldn't remember. Her memory was fuzzy. She reached towards her other anyway, trying to make sense of what she was seeing, what she was feeling. The other Sabrina was looking at her with shock, disgust, amusement, lust.

"And now," Sister Joy sang, "Judgment."

At last.