

A Silver Band for Life

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A Silver Band for Life

Katie Oler

My skin is a strong structure, stretched over my body, the most significant organ to the human body. Skin has many uses that a human mind cannot comprehend. **It protects me.** Each speck of bacteria will be banished with the power of the skin on my body. My hands can only rub the rough structures of my skin, feeling every movement and muscle that does not appear before my own eyes.

Your creation is magnificent. Your hands structured me. They rubbed against every muscle and every bone to create me. You made me in your own image and made my body.

However, my skin does have a different function. It reddens quickly in the contact of something uncomfortable. It is sensitive to certain textures applied to my skin, even if it has a smooth surface. My skin gets irritated by it. It grows into the need to itch and scratch at my skin. The nails of my hand dug deep into my skin to try and relieve this sensation onto my skin.

I remember when the church told me about the purity ring. They whispered into my conscious that this is a way for me to show my devotion to You, to save myself from temptation. So many girls were given these bands to place on their left ring fingers to commit to life for You. We were told how You would be proud of us and that we would live for You in our human bodies.

The ceremony was short but essential for the adults. I was asked to pledge my allegiance to give my life over to You, to save my body for a man—for a future husband.

“Are you ready to take the next step of saving yourself for your future husband?” the leader of the Church asked me.

I shivered as I stood there, the older men and women surround me as they waited for my answer. They dressed in suits and dresses, multiple colors varying from white to black. However, they all held hands, closing me in a circle—wanting me to be seen by You.

‘Well, You wanted me to, right God?’ I thought in my head as I stared up at the older man as he held a box. I shook my head, squeezing my hands together into fists. Adeline rose within my body, fear pulsed through me.

“Ah, that is a wonderful answer, though, you must proclaim it to the Lord to let Him know you actually mean it,” He sighed, reclaiming, “Repeat after me, ‘I vow to save myself for my future husband and never will be tempted by worldly objects around me. I will remain holy in your image and will continue to walk down the path you determine for me.’”

I nodded, proclaiming, “I vow to save myself for my future husband and never will be tempted by worldly objects around me. I will remain holy in your image and will continue to walk down the path you determine for me!”

I repeated, my mind hazy with expectation. Their hands grasped my being, grabbing my left hand.

In the ceremony, a father is supposed to be there for his daughter—for her to whisper that she will save her purity for a man that they hope she will marry. However, mine is six feet under, flowers growing from his skeleton remains. They found it bothersome that my father wasn't there for me to vow to. So, the only resolution they had in mind: was to have another man take my father's place.

“Ah, it is wonderful to see how much you are growing into a fine, young woman!” the old man says. He grinned towards me as the leader opened the box, the silver ring shined in the light.

I stayed silent, trembling at the taller man. Though, I took a deep breath and smiled.

“Y-yes, I am,” I lied.

He was a much older man who I had seen around the church. He was around the age of sixty-five. He shared the vows to save me for my husband and not be tempted by worldly sins. I repeated them, only hearing silence and the loud clicks of cameras taking pictures of the ceremony.

I was only fifteen at the time.

His wrinkled fingers slowly pushed the ring onto my left ring finger, the ring sparkling under the flashes of cameras. I stared down a sense of dread building up. There wasn't enough air in the room for me to prepare for the expectation of becoming a woman.

As the days grew, my poor skin reddened. The ring continuously made my skin erupt in hives. My fingernails would dig into the skin. I tried to find a solution to the sensation that my finger experienced. This strange promise ring became a hazard for my body. Scratches from my nails remained around my finger as a reminder of my vow.

That was when I took off the ring, the sensation going away overnight. I was relieved—thankful that it wasn't hurting me anymore. Though, the following day, the men and women of the church heard from my mother about my actions.

“HOW DARE YOU REMOVE THAT RING! YOU ARE ALREADY DISOBEYING GOD'S ORDER?! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF, GIRL—!” one stated.

“Ah, it's such a shame, I thought that you were a good Christian girl! God doesn't like when girls disobey his orders...” another sighed gently.

I took a long sigh, my hands squeezed into fists. I stared up at the adults, the shadow of the cathedral covered their faces. However, they still stood in front of me. Their arms crossed as their bodies were stiff as rocks. The adults were frozen into place as they waited for an answer about this predicament.

“The ring made my skin have a bad reaction to it. I thought it would be alright if I just took it off for a second—!” I reasoned. I shivered in my place; my eyes averted to the side.

“That isn’t a good reason—! You know what we have said in the past: we must suffer in the world for our Lord and Savior Jesus before he comes back during the Rapture! However, it seems to me that you are just making up excuses now to just not wear the ring—!” another one growled.

I froze as a chuckle interrupted the adult’s complaint, seeing the man from the ceremony wave his hand with no care.

“Girls like you always fall from God’s grace...if you were my daughter, I would have punished you at this very moment...” he states.

I wasn’t the woman I was meant to be, the woman that I was committed to them. I hated myself. A resounding uproar of coiling butterflies entered my stomach as their glares grew. I felt the veins of anxiety and surmises grow throughout me.

I trembled before the church of God that day.

They continued to beg me to put it back on, for me to live my life for you. Their dark, hollowed eyes pierced through my soul. Their claims overshadowed my mind. The sense of dread returned, ready to eat me alive each night for dinner.

As a person, the actions I was supposed to take were necessary. I never could have men look at me—if I did, it was my fault. I never could think of a sexual thought—if I did, it was my fault. If the views about me wanting to escape from these never-ending ideals were voiced—well, it was all my fault.

You created me in your own image, right? It’s said that You planned for me to be made as every cell in my body is there for me to actively survive. Their claims of each cell being created in a shape of a cross were astounding—meaning You must have been here the whole time.

I hated my skin.

Tears of solemn rolled down my face each day. I hoped that maybe—just for once—I would be enough.