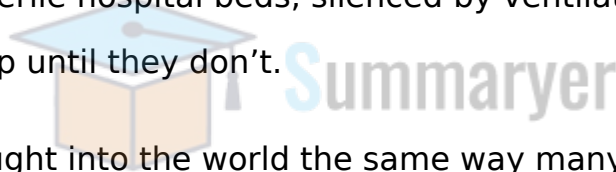


Prologue

Prologue — this tale begins and ends in blood, the one constant across generations. From the moment life begins—screaming, wet, and stained by birth—it sets a tone that is rarely acknowledged in polite conversation. Death has grown quiet in modern times, often masked by sterile hospital beds, silenced by ventilators and numbed by machines that bleep until they don't.



Five girls were brought into the world the same way many are—greeted not just with warmth but also with a rush of red, wrapped swiftly in cotton and guided into civility. Their lives followed a structured mold: learning how to be gracious, how to support a family, how to please, how to endure. These girls were raised to be steady hands in chaotic homes, the unseen glue behind pristine table settings and homemade desserts.

They matured into the women you might admire in passing—impeccably dressed, managing three kids and a household budget, laughing freely at brunch. Their greatest rebellion is often as tame as a flashy necklace in December or an extra slice of cake when they swore they wouldn't. Society rewarded them for this predictability, for not coloring outside the lines, for quietly upholding standards older than their grandmothers' wedding rings. Their joy was never loud enough to be disruptive, but always enough to be charming.

These women appeared on the public record only at life's major signposts—birth, union, and death. In between, they were docile patrons of community causes, donors to church raffles, keepers of tradition. Their homes held heirlooms not just in silverware but in behaviors passed down as carefully as lace-trimmed tablecloths. They were the ones who ensured Sunday school was attended, casseroles were delivered, and that no guest ever left a dinner party hungry or unappreciated.

However, beneath their measured lives ran something volatile—quiet, but waiting. What no one predicted was that the end for these women would not mirror their quiet lives but erupt instead in a crimson blaze. The tidy lines of their lives would be smudged, their carefully controlled narratives ruptured. As though fate, bored by routine, had decided to stain their stories with something unforgettable.

Some of the blood would be their own, drawn in ways both shocking and sorrowful. Some would not be. But all of it would serve as a stark contrast to their embroidered napkins and bone china teacups. It would soak through the roles they had been given, through every label society had pressed into them. Eventually, it would erase everything they were supposed to be.

This isn't just a tale about violence—it's one about limits, and what happens when people are forced to live entirely within them. The polished exterior may appear intact, but no one emerges from constant containment unchanged. Even silence, when pushed long enough, finds a voice—sometimes it speaks through screams, sometimes through blood.

These women never asked to become the centerpiece of such a tragedy. They did not imagine their lives ending in chaos. But life rarely asks what one wants before handing over the script. Sometimes it rips the script up altogether and demands improvisation.

While they were busy being what others expected, the storm gathered. Their stories weren't documented until it was too late. When the reckoning came, no one saw it for what it was—because how could anyone expect carnage from kindness?

There's a harsh truth at the core of this transformation: people will break if bent far enough. Not always with noise. Often in the quietest, cleanest ways possible. These women were not trained to strike back, but desperation is a powerful tutor.

So when the blood spilled, it shocked everyone—yet it had been simmering for years beneath casseroles and carpool lines. Underneath the pearls and perfectly penned thank-you notes, there had always been something more. Not evil. Not madness. Just a

refusal, finally, to stay invisible.

What began in tradition ends in rupture. What was shaped to be soft turned jagged. And what was buried for the sake of harmony came back, red and roaring, refusing any more silence.

