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I Was Six

by Tilia Guilbaud-Walter

I was six when my mother taught me the art of invisible strength, it's a vague dream like memory, the garden we stood in lit by gas lamps, she squatted down so as to be able to look me in the eye.

"No matter how scared you are or how much it hurts," she told me, "keep your chin up, an act is just as powerful as the truth."

I remember the tree behind her creaking as she put her hand on my shoulder, "Confidence will keep you alive amber." Her hard green eyes stare in to mine, her face frozen in a practiced dead pan, no emotion, she steps away, her leather boots hitting the ground like a drum beat as she walks down the path. She disappeared for weeks after that, my father was scared, he tried not to show it but every day as he placed bowls with diminishing amounts of food in front of my two younger brothers and I his face seemed to grow rapidly older, and everyday when my mother didn't come through the dirty red door to our cabin, we all slowly gave up hope.

It was the night before my seventh birthday, a night at the end of summer, a brutal storm took to the woods I was lying in bed shivers running over my shoulders, watching the lightning out of my broken window when I heard my name whispered by a voice I hadn't hear in eleven months "amber" my mother said I could make out a shadow creeping towards me in the dark.

"Mommy?" I asked unsure that it could really be her, I felt her arms around me.

"Your ready now amber," she said, "these are for you." She handed me a pair of boots just like her boots but for feet my size, "Meet me out side in five minutes and don't wake your brothers."

The rest of the night was a blur, the next few years were a blur, my boots eventually got worn down and my face morphed into an emotionless stare much like my mother's.