

“It could be me. It could be you.”

Amanda Kim was reported to be missing on January 16th, 2016...

[Amanda Kim]

One Week Before

There had been multiple occurrences involving child abduction in the Bay Area. Human trafficking was a reality everyone refused to open their eyes to, myself included. The news never failed to report about a new child lost. And yet I never believed in a true threat, never believed that I'd ever come close to experiencing what those children had.

The Day Before

All it took was two welcoming gestures and one simple, pristine, white card. The number, 925-xxx-xxxx, displayed boldly in a delicate script. An internship. An opportunity.

The Day Of

The rate at which I was accepted caught me by surprise - I could hardly believe this chance had fell so easily into my hands.

It's the dull, aged steps that gives me the first warning. They had told me this hospital was newly built.

It's the lack of any signs of warmth that gives me the second warning.

It's the obscene emptiness filling the building as I enter that raises the red flag.

My body turns cold.

The wind's bitter touch molests my skin, leaving me numb and weary.

Dirt fills the air.

A clinic?

Specks of dust invade my nose until the sound of my sneeze betrays the fragile silence. Yet my sneeze isn't the only sound that resonates through the interior. It takes only a second before I feel frigid hands that reflect the sadistic eyes I see in return.

I feel it before I see it.

Filthy men.

The roots to strong arms holding me back, forcing the breath out of my lungs. Choke me. Blind me. The thud of my knees do nothing to relieve the ache of my spine when I am thrust down to the unforgiving cement floor.

All I see is black.

My body jolts out of the haze to reveal hundreds of captive girls. Their bloodied wrists giving testimony to only a fraction of the abuse they have been put through. Before me, a fly traces the path of a sliver of sunlight with a freedom I no longer possess. And all around, I see pleading eyes and hear helpless whimpers. In this facility, the children are no longer children. They have become objects to satisfy men's pleasures. Their childhood ripped away in a moment of brief naivety.

A man strides over, revealing a smirk of ill-intent, seemingly bathing in his dominance. I feel the painful thud of my heart as desperately, I attempt to free myself of the knots that bind me. He towers over and forces my head upwards to face him. I close my eyes, crouch over, and scream.

It was then that the wave of realization had struck - Amanda Kim had become just another face in the news.

...She was likely a victim of human trafficking. Our prayers go out to her parents and two brothers.