

Content Warning: Physical and Sexual Abuse

## **Social Worker II**

by Marlanda Dekine-Sapient Soul

The big handed man punched his eldest granddaughter in her stomach and sat down to write a sermon. She and her siblings cleaned their mama's house with her when he announced his visits. The father would not participate. The children knew to turn the washing machine off if he visited on a Sunday, too.

*Say you've eaten, even if you haven't yet. You have and you are full and you don't need anything. Say it if he asks, said mama.*

And, because of a tragedy called respect, they did.

The children would be safe with the big handed man who loved them as best as he knew how, mama made herself believe. This family never spoke about sex, but the eldest knew mama remembered sex during dreamscape. She knew it hurt because mama told her so. After the dreams, mama became an investigator on behalf of all her female-bodied offspring. Now, they might be school-aged prey.

*Has anyone ever touched you where they should not have?*

Mama had never forgotten how the big handed man slapped her face once like he had never seen it before, and she sent her children to him every day after-school to be kept safe. The son of the big handed man is mama's nightmare.

*Tell nothing. Let it be, said mama.*

The eldest: *Maybe dreams are bad. And, sex. Maybe sex, too.*