The Stain of Abuse.

The man went to the finest men's store in the city where he lived. He tried on several suits, and finding nothing suitable, he moved to the most expensive rack. There, he tried on the finest of the most expensive suits they sold. He chose the cloth he wanted, was measured, and was informed the suit would be ready in two weeks. He then purchased two fine shirts, a tie, cuff links, and new matching shoes and socks.

He left feeling satisfied. When he arrived home, he felt tired and went to bed for a nap.

He telephoned a woman friend whom he wanted to get to know better. He asked if she'd like to go on a special date in two weeks; she asked, "What would be special?" and he answered, "Dress formally, and I'll pick you up at 6 pm." The man then made dinner reservations at a fine hotel and reserved a booth with windows overlooking the river. Then he bought tickets to the opening concert of a singer he knew his friend adored, and last, he reserved a limousine for their date night.

Two weeks later, he went to the men's store and tried on his suit. As he moved to look at himself in the mirror, he saw that it fit perfectly. He then got the shirts, tie, shoes, and cufflinks, and went home. About four-thirty, he shaved, showered, and made himself as presentable as he could. He dressed in his new shirt, pants, shoes, and last, put on the jacket. The man felt quite distinguished as he walked to the full-length mirror in his bedroom. As he raised his eyes to look at himself, he was horrified to see a large, glistening, brownish-red stain on the front of the jacket, over his heart. Pulling the jacket open, he saw the stain was also on his new shirt, and, also, covering his heart.

The man was distraught as he pulled the jacket off and flung it onto the bed. He undid the tie and ripped off the shirt, tearing the buttons off in his anger. He covered his face with his hands and

cried aloud. Soon, he stopped crying and, looking at his jacket and crumpled shirt, he noticed there were no stains anywhere. Rising now, he walked over to the mirror. On the left side of his bare chest, there was only unstained skin.

His telephone rang, but he didn't answer. More calls came over the next few hours; some came one right after the other. His doorbell rang several times, and still he sat alone.

The man was too ashamed to talk to anyone because he knew there was nothing wrong with the suit or the shirt. The only thing wrong was him. He should have known that the finest suit he could buy wouldn't hide the stain from the abuse he had suffered as a child. His heart carried the stain of that abuse, and while he tried everything he could to remove the stain, nothing had worked; he couldn't remove the stain, and that stain was a constant reminder of the horrific abuse he experienced as a toddler, which had bankrupted his emotional self-worth. The man believed the years of terrible abuse happened because he was worthless, and only worth being a sex toy. The only safe place he ever found was when alone; around people, he felt scared, worthless, a fraud, and a failure.

He woke from his nap. Remembering his five years in foster homes was traumatic, but curiosity and a deep friendship with himself kept him optimistic for life. Smiling now as he shook his head, he got up and went to the kitchen to make a cup of freshly ground coffee.

Written by Peter Skeels © 11-25-2026