

# **My Memories**

by Leslie Juarez Martinez

It's very surprising to see how life sometimes takes many twists and turns. Sometimes, I sit on my balcony and gaze at the sky, reminiscing about everything. I felt like I was on a big ball that had burst, and I tried to inflate it every day. One day, I asked myself a big question... Why am I so damaged?

I never thought that my greatest pain as an adult would be remembering my childhood. That stage that brings memories of family and melancholic moments to everyone. In my childhood, I was hurt a lot. I always wanted to see the bright side, but unfortunately, all I could remember were the voids they left in me. I would hear my heart shatter like a glass that falls and breaks into thousands of pieces. One day, I tried to piece it back together slowly, but it was impossible for me.

I rebuilt it with my mom, with her warm hugs. Yes, that was a good memory from my childhood. I never thought I would experience something like that. I only remember that day, and it makes me anxious. My soul fought against life and death. With just 13 years of age, I lived through my worst experience. I know that I was one more girl who had to endure domestic violence. Sadly, the person who hurt me was my father, the one who was supposed to protect me



from all harm, the one who was supposed to help me not feel empty. But, unfortunately, I had a father with a different mentality, one who believed that violence solved problems.

I remember that date, 07/06/20, when my life depended on my father's hands, his strong hands with an inexplicable force. At that moment, I only thought about my mom and sister and how strong I had to be for them. Based on that date, that hot day with beautiful sunsets that I liked so much, my father was choking me and punching my face with a closed fist. I felt my body growing cold, and my heart no longer beat fast but slow. That big purple wall was stained with blood, dark blood. I remember when my father saw that I couldn't breathe anymore, he threw me to the floor and put his large, shirtless body on top of me, and he continued to beat me.

I only remember hearing in the background, "Die, you're a slut, I wish you were never born, you're not my daughter; you're a whore." In that moment, I felt that the words hurt me more than the heavy blows he was giving me. I have the sweet memory of hearing my sister in the background saying, "NENI," the way she used to call me. Her cries shattered me even more. My body was getting harder and colder with each passing moment, with my vision blurred and hearing an unfamiliar sound from a distance.

Since that day, something changed inside me. My inner child no longer existed. I just wanted that horrifying experience to leave my head. I fell heavily into drugs. I always said that marijuana took me out of the dumb reality I inhabited. I went to parties, did everything to feel better, but I wasn't. I was just a teenager asking for love and attention from my parents. When I received the opposite, rejection and indifference, I remember that despite everything I received from my parents, I created a "Leslie" with a different outlook on life. It never left my mind that I was just a girl who had suffered physical abuse. I just wanted a change in myself, and I achieved it. I only had to think about how strong they made me from that day. I changed so much that my goals are different now. I only think about succeeding and becoming a better person.