

# A Childhood Taken

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People might look at me and think, "That girl has a happy life!" Truth is my life has not been a walk in the park. I went from changing my dolls' diapers to changing my baby's diapers within a blink of an eye. But as you know, things happen for a reason. I have gone through so much that a child should never see or even know about. I have known violence, rape, and drugs. I am not gonna lie, I have had some happy moments throughout my life, but when you remember the bad times you forget about the good times and focus on the bad.

A small child sits on the swing; he tied it there. The swing is tied to the tree with thick yellow rope that creaks each time she swings... I was seven years old at the time. I could remember it like it was yesterday. It was a sunny chilly day, the birds were chirping, the flowers were blooming. You heard the laughter of children playing outside while I was doing what I usually liked to do: watch movies like Snow White, The Lady and the Tramp, and everything that had to do with fairy tales.

I heard the sound of an unusual truck pull into the driveway. I got up from the old ripped couch that had gold flowers around it and made an annoying screeching sound every time someone sat on it. When I looked outside, I saw him tying a royal blue swing on the tree that was as tall as the clouds. I thought in my head, I wonder who the swing is for? Maybe

he has kids. I got lost in my thoughts. When I snapped back to the real world he was in front of the window telling me to come outside and try the new swing. Before I knew it, he was pushing me and I felt the wind go through my face and those little butterflies you get when you jump off a diving board. But not too long after, I began to feel him grab my butt every time he pushed me and I told him I wanted to get off.

As my feet kicked the dirt to help me stop the swing, he asked me if I wanted to buy ice cream. At first I felt uncomfortable, but when he said he would buy me a nice doll, I jetted down the driveway to ask my grandma if I could go. At first she said no, but when I told her my sister Nancy was coming, she said yes, but we had to be quick.

As my sister Nancy and I got into rusty blue pickup truck, he told me to sit next to him. I didn't question why, but on the ride to Pathmark he kept rubbing my back. I felt weird about it, but I thought it was just an act of kindness. Inside the supermarket he told me and my sister to pick anything we wanted. I didn't know where to start. He bought me candy, ice cream, toys, make-up. I thought he was the coolest. But that was his way of winning an innocent child's trust.

I awoke to a knock at the door. As I searched for the light of the moon for some guidance, I realized that someone was already in the room with me. I sensed his warm breath and rough cold hands begin to touch my legs. I felt my blood turn stone cold. I could hear him breathe in and out, as if he was holding it in for a long time but could not catch up with it. I felt my heart beat faster and faster every time he took a step closer. When I finally realized what was happening, my adrenaline jumped up and I was racing to the door, but he was much faster. He pinned me to the floor, I began to kick, but when I tried to yell, it was as if my voice was not there, I couldn't hear myself yell, and neither could my babysitter.

The nightmares begin. I wake in a cold sweat, trying to escape him and his blue pickup truck, just running over the rough green grass that keeps bringing me down every time I think I have won the battle. My grandmother wakes me and asks what is wrong, but I do not have the courage to tell her the truth that can ruin her and take her away from me. I remember when I was in kindergarten, how I would slow down every time I reached the big red doors that led me to the huge school where I would be pulled away from the safety of my angel, how I would throw myself on her and she would say, "Mi'ja, it's very hard for me as it is for you, but you have to come here so you can get an education."

Every night I would curl up with my angel, curled up by her womb, the warmth and the smell of love and the feeling of safety that she would be there when I woke up. It was the only way I would feel safe, that I would know she would defend me, like a lioness defends her cubs. But when the sun rose, I would lose that feeling because she was off to work. There, I would lie on the edge of the bed cold, lost, as if the smell of love had vanished.



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