

My story begins at the age of 12yrs. I was called to the principle's office where two police officers were waiting for me along with a social worker from the state. That day would be the last day that I would ever sleep in my own bed or play with my brother and sister again.

Dear Mom and Ron,

I want to start by telling you that I have forgiven you both for the pain and suffering that I endured while in your care. Both of you violated the love and trust of a child and then walk away without punishment. You were able to cause pain and suffering in a child's life but move on without any remorse or repercussions. The destruction you caused was a mere chapter in your lives but scared my life forever. As my mother, I confided in you and trusted that you would be there for me, to protect me and keep me safe, but you just chose to blame me and rid yourself of me.

Do you know what it was like to walk home from school, in fear, every day hoping that he would not be there, hoping that he would not take me to that dark, damp, musty smelling room in the basement where he would rape me? Do you know what it was like to be told that if I ever told anyone, that he would kill me or hurt my family just like he had killed all those women and children in Vietnam when he was a sniper? Can you even imagine the mental distress that I was experiencing? Because you were not there for me, I just had to shut down and take it.

Even though your husband admitted to sexually assaulting me and his own daughter for years and spent 90 days in jail with work release, you would not accept what he had done and even said that you thought I had drugged him. Do you know how absurd that even sounds? I was only 10 years old when this all started!!!! How would I even do that?

But, worse yet, and more importantly to me, when you were told that I could not come home as long as he was there, you chose him. How could you do that? What kind of a mother just throws her daughter aside like a piece of garbage like that? Was I really that unlovable? What did I ever do to you

to make you hate me so much? Did it break your heart like it did mine? Did you lay awake at night in a strange bed, frightened, and crying yourself to sleep? I think not.

I tried for years to repair our relationship but one night while we were all out having Christmas dinner together, you looked at me and said, "and then there are those little girls who ask for it". When I left that night, I had never been so angry with you and never cried so much. That night, I lost any emotional connection that I had left for you. That night, I knew that I would spend the rest of my life without a mother. You fucking bitch!!!! I am the one that was violated! I am the one you betrayed. I am the one who remembers and relives every memory of every beating you gave me with your daddy's double leather razor strap. I even have the scars on the back of my legs from the switch you tore off our tree and then whipped me with, every step I took home, because I was late. And then there were all the times you tied me to a chair and put me in the corner for hours. But perhaps the deepest scare of all is the one you left behind when you told me that I was just a mistake that you were stuck with.

Ron, I have had nightmares for years. I would wake up screaming in terror, trying to escape the monster in my dreams that was you. I am afraid of the dark and, for years, was afraid to go to sleep for fear that I would wake up and you would be standing there. How was a young 10-year-old girl to understand the paralyzing fear and pain of being raped, and the pleasure of being sexually aroused and awakened? Do you know the shame that caused me? You bastard..., how could you steal what was meant for me and my future husband? It was not yours to take!!! You extinguished my trust for any man or boyfriend that would enter my life for years. You gave me a temper that led me to harm others as well as myself. Due to your actions, I suffered with depression until my late twenties, that, on occasion, almost led me to end my own life. For years after your new life began, I struggled to keep the only one I had.

Even when times seemed to be good, a simple trigger would give me a flashback, sending me right back to when and where all the fear began. You both took away my childhood. Ron, you took away my mother and any chance I had to be happy, free and play with my brother and sister. You took away my chance to have what other kids had, a protective, loving, supportive and respected father. You took away my ability to have respectful and appropriate relationships with others for years. You left a child with nothing but fear, anger and confusion to grow and develop with. To this day, at age 54, I am still trying to learn what an appropriate and healthy relationship between a husband and a wife, and a father and daughter looks like. I am still trying to figure out if I will ever be able to decipher a good man, from one like you. You did not just rape me for two years, you damaged my entire life in ways that you cannot even begin to, and never will, understand.

But, thanks to a few strangers who came alongside of me and understood that I needed to be loved, I am ok. These individuals showed me how to be strong, move on, learn and use the feelings I had about my situation to drive me in a better direction. They showed me how the Lord could help save me from the memories of the two of you, and the Lord showed me how to save myself from both of you. If the two of you could see me today, you would see a woman who is positive, confident, and thriving, but still struggling inside. Neither of you can run away from me or God. We know the truth, no matter what you told yourselves or others. When that chapter in your lives was over, you moved on. But your actions had a huge impact on the rest of my childhood and adult life. Your actions gave me anger, fear and anxiety that no child should ever have to feel or carry in their heart.

There is, however, one more thing that has allowed me to move on..., I have forgiveness and I have, by the grace of God, forgiven both of you. When the Lord saved me, he also showed me how to forgive you. But hear me when I say, do not be mistaken. I did not forgive you because I felt you deserved another chance. People like you do not change and given the chance, I believe that you will harm another defenseless little girl again. I did not forgive you because I felt you had been punished

enough. I did not forgive you because time had healed all my wounds. My scars are still there, and I will always struggle, to some degree, with what the two of you did to me.

I forgave the two of you for myself and myself alone. It is because the anger, fear and sadness are a distraction and something I do not deserve to have. I let the pain and suffering you caused run my life and steal my joy and love for a very long time. It was time to let that all go and find me. All those feelings I had towards you, as well as the ones you caused me to feel towards myself, were like a blanket covering the real me. I forgave you to find myself, and I have. You deserve no credit for this. I survived a traumatic experience and violation at the hands of my mother and her husband, and came out an amazing, smart, driven, kind, loving and beautiful woman. However, you do not get to claim me and my success. I did this on my own with God. My anger towards the two of you is gone. I wasted too much time and energy on you and I learned to put it towards fixing what you broke, and now that I have, I feel you should know what you caused as well as the result. You broke me and ruined my childhood, but you will not have my present or my future. I have persevered and overcome triumphantly.

By the grace of God, I emerged a strong woman from the storms of my life, standing tall, like a giant maple tree with my feet planted firmly in the ground and yet transformed and changed into something even more beautiful than from where I started. A testament of the compassion and unconditional love that I have been given and the forgiveness that gift has allowed me to give to those undeserving of it so that I could let go and move on. For 30 years I struggled to release a darkness that controlled my heart and soul so that I could forgive and heal the shame that bound me.