

# The Cycle of Forgiveness

## *Normalizing rape and repeating the story*

### History

At one time I thought everyone had a secret about their lives that they didn't want to share with others because it was too painful for them and perhaps that is true. It was my way of coping with my reality. Perhaps to some degree we all do have moments that we prefer not to share, but the severity of those moments in life are not equal. My story is perhaps horrible for some yet for others only a dream.

It all began years ago when I was a child. My family was very conservative. At the time, I thought most families were similar to mine. Now I realize that my family was very different. Our religion was extreme. Some friends would tell me that their Catholic religion was strict, but the more I understood the Catholic religion, the more I wished we were Catholic. Catholic girls could wear pants and play sports. They could cut their hair, wear makeup and jewelry, and even date. My story is not about what I couldn't have as a child, but rather what happened to me because of over protection in the wrong things.

With all the restrictions, I thought differently then. I cherished the protection and was scared of the worldly people and what they might do to me. I was scared into thinking that people outside our church couldn't be trusted, but in reality I've learned that few people can be trusted.

Even as a teenager I believed that church people could be trusted. By then I had a warped concept of dating. I pictured courting rather than dating; that a guy would ask the father to date the daughter and that they would go on a date in a horse and carriage with a chaperon following them. Boy way I ever wrong.

### The incident

At the age of 15 my family moved to a different state and my mom stayed behind to sell the house. Dad asked the church where we could stay during the transition and we were split up. (I beg you to never to this to your family.) We lived in different homes until the house was sold. I pleaded to stay with my mom, my dad, or my brother. I knew the family that I was to stay with and I didn't want to stay there. It didn't feel right. But no matter what I said, it was already decided. I was to stay with them. And that was how I went to live with a three time rapist. My life

would forever change.

Before the move I was active in church with dreams of being a missionary and world travel. I loved church and I actively talked about it with others. I loved life and I was happy. My father had bought me a promise ring. I had promised to not even kiss a guy.

We moved. We moved many times before, but this time it was different, very different. I wasn't with family. The family that I stayed with had a father who was very friendly in public but very mean at home. He hugged everyone at church and smiled and laughed. Back then I had a feeling that made me uncomfortable around him. Now I see I recognize it as a creepy child molesting guy feeling. You know the one where you just feel like the guy is a child molester? That's the feeling. I went to school with his daughter and when I came home, I tried to hide and stay in my room which was his office. When I moved in he told me where I could place my things, including my bag and bath towel. He changed his mind several times. At first my bag could be in the closet, then it was in the way and needed to be in front of the closet. Then it needed to be by my bed, then under my bed. Each time I was screamed at. I was told that I was disobedient and that he already told me to put my bag in this place and then that place. The same happened with my bath towel. I could put it in the bathroom on one towel rack, but then it needed to be on another towel rack. The location was changed to my room on the closet door, then the chair, then finally my bed. Each time again, I was screamed at, being told that I was again disobedient. I simply followed the orders and was scared of him. In the end, I kept all of my clothes in my bag, clean or dirty, along with my wet bath towel under the bed. I remember thinking that at least he didn't hit me like he did his own kids. They however were disobedient and they did stupid things. It seemed like they did things to make him mad.

The dad had a strong interest in tucking me in at night. Yes, an adult male tucking in a 15 year old and pulling up the covers to graze her boobs. I couldn't believe he did it then apologized. The following night he tried to help me to bed again. I said I was fine and all but pushed him out of the room and shut the door behind him. The following night he tried to come in again, and I put my foot on the side of the door and said I was tired and already going to bed. I continued to do that for several more nights and he finally left me alone.

One night before I went to bed, the dad asked me to come to their bedroom and I cannot remember why. When I opened the door, his wife and him were having sex. It seemed like he asked me to the bedroom so that I would see that. I felt gross. I went straight to bed and didn't talk to anyone. I was so fed up with the dad and I was starting to hate him.

I hated being there. I hated the food and the smells there. The meat was always too bloody. One night we had steaks and the plate with the steaks was drained three times to get rid of the blood. I became a vegetarian for several years after staying there. The house smelled of wet dog. The dog came and went as it pleased and was never bathed. It peed in the house occasionally and it humped the pillows, sofa, and people. It was disgusting. To this day I don't like when dogs pee in the house, even if its an accident. The smell reminds me of so many bad

memories. The cat was never brushed and was mean. The daughter used a musky perfume. To this day I hate the smell of musky perfume.

The son became friendly. He saw that I hated the family and he hated his family. He had a common interest: staying away from his dad as much as possible. He gave me a sob story about how mean his dad was to him. I saw his dad hit him and I felt sorry for him. The son went out to a local bar to shoot pool and get away from everything. He invited me to come, but I refused. I didn't want to do be in that crowd, the bad crowd.

One night I heard a noise outside my window. It was the son. I slowly got up, hoping his dad would catch him since I didn't think it was right that he disturb my sleep. He wanted to talk and he smelled like beer. I said no and that I was going to bed. He told me that I would be caught for being up. He started calling me names and saying that he only wanted to talk to someone. I finally agreed to talk with him in the living room. It was around 2 in the morning. We sat on opposite ends of the sofa and he talked about how bad his dad was. I listened to be nice and I started falling asleep. He got closer and that made me uncomfortable. I told him to give me space and he laughed. He said he could go anywhere since this was his house. I don't remember how it happened next, but he somehow pinned me to the sofa corner and stole a kiss. He then said that he and I were dating. Hmm... my first boyfriend. I fought him and made such a ruckus that his mom woke up and came out. She yelled at both of us and I was just happy to get away. I saw my family that weekend and I told my dad I wanted to leave. I wanted to get away from that crazy family. My dad said it wouldn't be much longer and that my brother was at school with me. I told him that the Bernie yelled. He said to stay out of his way. If he wouldn't believe me about the dad, how would he ever believe me about the son?

It got worse. The son thought he could do anything to me. He randomly kissed me or slapped my butt whenever he wanted. He continued to imply that we were dating and that we might run away together. I wasn't interested, but I had been raised that if you are intimate, than it is considered that you are married in the eyes of God. I felt trapped. He kissed me and then would say that he spit in my mouth. I hated his kisses, but they also made me feel rebellious; rebellious of the whole system and from this family. I wanted nothing more than to be with my family. As the days passed and my family refused to let me leave, I began to feel unwanted by anyone. I felt homeless and helpless. I hated myself and life. I even asked God to take me.

The son kept asking me to talk to him in the middle of the night and I was starting to get tired during the day. I felt like I was lacking sleep and things were starting to blur together. Since we got in trouble for meeting in the living room, the son wanted to meet in his room. He seemed like my only friend. Even at school kids were mean. One of the girls would flip my skirt up so the guys could see my underwear. They weren't mean at our last school. No one acted like that there. I wanted to move again already. I begged my dad to let me stay anywhere but there. I was so uncomfortable there. I wanted to stay with family. It wasn't an option apparently and they were close to selling their house. We'd be back together as a family soon enough.

I came back to that house devastated. I'd have to endure more from this family and things seemed to be getting worse. The father, Barnie, yelled constantly. The son always wanted to be physically closer than what I wanted. I remember going to talk to him to get him to stop coming to my window and door. I wanted to be left alone but I felt like he wouldn't leave me in peace. His parents seem to ignore that he kept trying to talk to me. I started to drone out the conversations and dream about where I wanted to be in life. Somehow when I checked out, I was groped and then had no shirt. I hate him for that feeling. It gave me the chills yet the house was warm. I wanted to throw up but I hadn't been eating as much since I started living there. It all felt so wrong. He tried to convince me that I owed it to him for being his friend. None of my guy friends before treated me like that. I wished and longed to be back in the safety of my own home, yet I felt unwanted by my own family, forced to be in this position. I opened my eyes and I was still here in this nasty place. I was laying flat on the bed staring at the ceiling, checked out to another world. Suddenly he lay on top of me with his legs holding down my arms. He pulled his penis out and started masturbating by using my own breasts. I hated him. I asked him to stop. Then told him to stop. Finally I begged him to stop. He got mad telling me that he was almost done and I needed to shut up. My arms hurt and I couldn't move him off me. I screamed and he covered my mouth and growled at me, saying something about how no one cared. He went back to masturbating with my boobs and I kicked the back of his head. He laughed. White stuff shot out and hit my hair, neck, and face. It was in my eye even. He then spit in my mouth and then laughed again. He said I should have opened my mouth, that it would have been less messy. I hated him. I wouldn't talk to him for a week or two.

His sister was in the room next door and the walls were thin enough for her to have heard, but she did nothing. The next day she acted like nothing happened and then started picking on me more.

I continued to beg to be removed from that horrible home.

Finally the son apologized. I don't remember how it happened exactly next, only that he wanted sex. I didn't. He said we already did it once so what did I care now? I was appalled that was sex. He explained there was a different ways that were less messy. I didn't want it and told him no. He started getting mad again. I told him "no". I checked out again. I couldn't handle all the yelling between all the other members of the family. I remember him having sex and then telling me he was done. I stopped talking to him completely. He caught me once a few weeks later and told me that he was seeing a new girl. That's when I told my dad, partially. I just didn't want another girl to go through the same thing.

I told my dad that I couldn't wear the promise ring anymore, but refused to say why. He somehow gathered that it was Josh. Finally I could move out of that home. My dad cried when I got my things. So did his dad. Looking back I don't know why. His dad already knew that he had raped three other girls. Why would a fourth shock him? One of the men asked me if Josh used a rubber. I didn't even know what that was and quite frankly, I wasn't watching. This wasn't about me or an us. It was now about the dads. The son could just hide behind his dad and

somehow I was supposed to be shamed for not being a virgin.

## **The pricetag**

My dad met with his dad and the pastor. They decided how much my virginity was worth, or at least that's what I felt. Later on my dad told me that he gave the money to a missionary to Africa. My mom wanted me to use the money for clothes. I wanted to forget about everything. Now I look back wondering how much those three decided my virginity was really worth, knowing it was under \$2,000. To this day I only wonder and I seriously do not want to know. They also decided that he had to do some community service.

## **School and Church**

My parents made me go to church every and the same school. I sat next to his nasty sister until I graduated in a class about the size of 20 or less depending on the subject. Keep in mind that his sister was in the room next door to his in the basement and she would have heard me scream. In my senior year he started dating a girl in my class. I had no peace. I got to hear about how he got tan from doing some community service that he shouldn't need to do, but at least how he was getting tan and muscular. I couldn't get away in church or in school. I started checking out mentally more again.

## **Almost 18**

Josh came to visit the church one day when I was 17. I flipped out and ran to the bathroom. Then stayed there for a long time. Mom says somewhere like an hour or more. I didn't see time pass. That's when they realized that I really didn't consent to the situation. Keep in mind that they noticed that I stopped hugging my brother and father for at least 6 months after the incident. I also would yell a lot more.

My parents then decided to take me to a Christian counselor. They went first, then had the whole family go. Everyone got their chance to open up. I didn't want to. When I finally did, the counselor told my parents everything. I felt betrayed. I hadn't even fully opened up. I was convinced that I needed to file a police report stating that I had not consented to rape, but that I hadn't fought and perhaps had a piece in it. I was advised to suggest that Josh really didn't do that much. The counselor had no idea that I only had just finally opened up about the last portion of the rape, not the first portion. I couldn't say more. I felt paralyzed. I now knew I wanted nothing to do with counselors again unless it was between me and my future husband only.

The counselor turned it in partly to the police and somehow before I got to go to the police I was talked out of telling everything because he already did community service and was getting married, so I needed to be forgiving and own up to my piece in the story. I remember sitting at the police station thinking what shouldn't I tell them. The police officer asked me repeatedly what

hand the pastor had in all of it because she said she had too many rapes coming through that church and she suspected more to the story. I only told about the second portion of the rape where I fought less and it sounded more consensual, I'm not even sure if that was intentional or not. I had a hard time talking to the officer (it wasn't an enclosed area or private). It was quiet, but I could still see male officers walking past. I called to police later and told her more about the story, but she said that it would be hard for the judge to accept the story since it was different from what I said originally. Seriously our system is so messed up that we don't give victims the opportunity to open up with their story. I could barely talk and was having nervous break downs at the police station. It was one of the first times that I could finally tell my story without being supervised, but I had already been told what I should be trying to do: let my rapist get married and move on.

## **Forgiveness**

My parents, the pastor, the principal, and many teachers began to instruct me how to forgive stressing that "bitterness rots the bones" and I didn't need to let this issue consume my life. I forgave him. He was an idiot. I couldn't forgive the pastor or his father. They set me up. The pastor had known Josh raped 3 other girls and legally was not allowed to have any girls in the home apart from his family. My dad refused to listen to me on multiple times and considering how much he settled for and that money was even discussed, I felt that he didn't believe me and was just blowing it off. Then I saw it. It's a cycle of forgiveness. The pastor forgives the perpetrator, the perpetrator tries to stay clean, then rapes again, then the cycle repeats. The perpetrator stays in church, as does the pastor. What then happens to the victims? They leave. They find new hope and start a new life elsewhere and that's exactly what I sought.

## **Dating**

Once I was interested in dating, I couldn't. My parents decided that I couldn't until I graduated high school, then after I graduated, until after I graduated college. Not learning how to date is a major mistake. I hope to one day teach my son how to date in a healthy way. I began to lie to my parents so that I could go on dates. I even lied about having boyfriends which lead to me lying about moving in with my boyfriend in another state. I literally moved across country with my boyfriend that they had never met to get away from everything. We got engaged and we separated after he attempted to strangle me. Later we divorced without getting married (in Colorado, common law takes affect after both parties address one another as spouses regardless of how many years they have lived together).

## **15 years later**

Any guy that I've ever dated gets some serious issues with me. Whenever they try to hug for the first time, I'm very cold and distant. Groping my boobs gets them the silent treatment and I've

even shoved some. At least one point during the relationship, I break down hysterically and can barely breath while I cry. This might seem like I've dated a lot of guys, and I some would say I have while others would say its normal; I just get no where with them. I won't let them in.

It's been over 15 years and I still break down at random times and I'm engaged. The last episode with my fiance was only about 6 months ago. We were fighting and I thought he made fun of me in the same way Josh did. I broked down hysterically again, unable to breath or talk. After his shock in my reaction, he hugged me. All he could do is sit and hold me while I cried and tried to breath. Some may not see why we started dating, he's so macho. But that's exactly why I love him. I need a man who would kick some serious ass if any other guy even looked at me. I need him to have my back and defend my honor, or what is left of it.

I hate visiting my parents home and I hate my birth town. I understand the love/hate relationship Jorge Borges has with his birthplace, but in other ways. I'm proud of my city, but I don't want to be there.

My dating life still hasn't settled down and I'm still going back and forth to my parents and my fiance. A lot of it has to do with my trying to finally trust my parents and let them back in and another part is them trying to control my relationship and align it with church standards. I do not perceive marriage the same because of what happened to me. In many ways I don't want it. In some ways my parents sabotage my relationship by putting demands on my relationship that I disagree with. They see things in my partner that they don't like, but some of those things I love about him. Still though I don't stand up for him or my relationship, I back down and try to comply hoping that my relationship will improve and things will be perfect. I see that I often sabotage the relationship. I don't forgive in my current relationship and hold grudges for everything in the past. I keep my distance after a fight. I also do not acknowledge improvements. In many ways, I'm seeking for my partner to rectify what happened in my past and make me whole again. In reality only I can do that and I still have that to figure out. If I don't ruin this relationship, perhaps I can finally find peace with myself and even have a healthy relationship.

My fiance has helped me to get to the point where I finally forgive my parents for their past choices and I finally talk to them. I still have a hard time that they live in the same house and often talk with the same people who were involved with this situation in the past and with people from that church. Church is supposed to be a sanctuary, not just for the perpetrator, but for the victim. If we are only protecting the perpetrator, then we are only creating future problems.

My rapist is married and has kids now. Yet every time I'm in town, I get a new invite from him through social media. I still don't know how he knows I'm in town. I asked my parents if they were talking to them, telling them about the situation. Their response is that I must be announcing that I'm in town. I don't. That's why I only reach out to a small number of people whenever I'm back in town.

My parents did marriage counseling and seminars at church there. Josh went. He even felt

open enough to ask my father for sex advice in his marriage to spice it up. My dad didn't give advice, but the fact that my rapist felt that he could do that says a lot. My parents won't talk to my son's father who I'm still in a relationship with because we aren't married and we have quite a lot of issues. I'm hurt that my parents still have put themselves in a place where my rapist can talk to them openly and my fiance cannot.

## **Solution**

Realistically I'm not sure there is a solution for my situation. I often feel that any man caught raping women should be castrated after the 3rd offense. They have no business having children. I seriously doubt Josh would be here if his dad was penalized for his past (of which I'm not even sure what that is). Apart from that, victims should not have to talk to people in order for them to defend them. Rape is rape. Each victim has their own story and they shouldn't be told that their pajama pants caused the rapist to suddenly become a rapist. I don't look at a car and suddenly become a driver. I had to learn to be a driver. Rape is learned. I would always suggest the victim move, as far away as possible and that the rest of the family move on as well. Forgiveness is one thing, but habitually placing your family back into the same unhealthy surroundings creates problems with their boundaries.