

The clock struck seven - it's time for bed. Dad isn't here so here's my opportunity. Jax is already tucked in; just me and mom. And I told her - I told her everything. But I never would have expected the night's events after that. At times - yes, I wish I never told her. Things would be normal. She wouldn't be so upset.

*But would Dad of kept doing it to me?*

He only touched me once, but I didn't wanna see what he was showing me either. Now I can't stop thinking - is it all my fault? Why would he do this to us? Did I ask for it? Mom is constantly asking me random questions and I know what it's all about, but I'll play along. I had to meet with strange people in strange places, but Mom said it was all for my protection.

*If it's all for me, then why can't I have a say in what happens?*

I just wanted him to stop, I didn't want him to leave. Jax was sleeping that night. Mom held her gun. I thought someone was going to die. But when it was all over, it was just the three of us again. And we were left broken together... once again.

*She finally found me a Dad, and then she kicked him out.*

Well, time has passed and we start to get in the groove of

things, but something still isn't right with Mom. She's yelling and crying all the time. She is losing it. I want to help, but it seems like this is all my fault. Even Jax flipping out at school is all my fault.

*I just wanted a Dad. I just wanted a family.*

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## CHAPTER 1

The nights were hard and the days harder in the Daley household. Jesserica was trying her best to forget what happened to her. Jax was acting out at school. And their mother pretending that everything will get better - because it has to, right?

The morning came like it always does - before the sun. Mom scurries around the house trying to get everything together and let the dog out. The cold bitter air snaps at her warm body. She exhales her pain allowing it to dissipate with the hot air. The sun creeps over the horizon and Sadie limps back inside. Mom sighs, yet another thing she needs to fix. Mom dumps food and water into her dish and makes her way back into the bedroom.

"Gooooood Morning, guys!"

Jesserica sits up like a machine and starts to head back upstairs to get dressed. She peers back at the bedroom; her mom

leans over Jax. She's always giving him more attention than her. She walks into her pink-ified bedroom. She loves her room, but somethings off today. The floor is scattered with toys; her mom will yell at her about that later. She digs through her clothes and picks out a cute outfit.

JessERICA steps down the stairs and into the bathroom. She looks at her reflection - she wishes her mom would let her wear makeup like she does in dance. If she can do it for dance then why can't she do it any time else? She smirks, she can sneak some lipstick on, her mom will yell, but that's just about all she'll do. JessERICA carefully traces her pink lips with dark crimson red color. JessERICA walks out of the bathroom. Her mom throws her a jacket and shoes. "We're late."

"We're always late."

"Don't sass me, let's go."

Jaxson strikes up another adventure and they are battling sharks and pirates - again.

"Dance battle!" JessERICA tries to change the game. Her mom doesn't acknowledge it. JessERICA huffs in her seat and unbuckles, but her mom doesn't notice again. They pull into the daycare. She drops Jax off and leads JessERICA to her room. Mom crouches down, "I love you, baby." She gives her a kiss and a tight hug, "be good, be nice, I love you and see you soon."

Score, Jessorica smirks thinking to herself, *I got away with the lipstick.*

She walks to the window and watches her mom drive out of the parking lot and rip down the street like Speed Racer. She sits next to her friends at the breakfast table and begins chowing down on her milkless cereal.

Her bus picks her up and carts her off to school. A new year, new possibilities. Mom told her she doesn't have to, or really shouldn't, talk about what happened. That most kids don't understand and it is a private thing and she should only talk about it with her doctors.

Jessorica sits idly by as the classroom around her bursts out in excitement. The teacher stands in front of the children, smiling as she places her hand over the math problem. Jessorica peers out the window, she hates math. She wishes she could be outside with the kindergarteners. They always have more fun than her. Jessorica raises her hand.

"Jessica, I knew I could count on you," the class turns to Jesse and her face burns hot. They never get her name right. She puts on her sickest face and walks up to the teacher and whispers, "I don't feel good, can I go to the nurse?"

"Sure, do you know where it is?"

JessERICA nods sheepishly and heads out the door. By the look of her new teacher, she could probably get away with this for at least another month. JessERICA walks slowly examining the other kid's art works. She stops at the trophy stand. This school is bigger than her elementary school, but it only took her a few times walking the halls to get an idea of where everything was. She has an excellent memory. Which is a blessing and a curse. A blessing because she remembers every time her mom promises her something. And a curse when she remembers what happened to her. Her eyes tear up, but quickly swallows it back down. She walks by a few teachers.

"Good morning, Miss Derkins," She greets her back kindly, but all are interrupted by an ear screeching ring from her pocket.

"That's strange. I don't have this ringtone."

A few steps pass and she passes her music teacher, "Morn-" his phone rings too, "I thought I shut this off."

JessERICA turns around the corner, she smiles largely at her principal, "Hello, Mr. Stills."

"Well, good morning, JessERICA. Off to the nurse's office so early?" JessERICA nods, suddenly his walkie-talkie chimes off, "Huh, it's never done that before." He shakes and messes

with the dials on the top, "Hello. Hello?"

JessERICA looks back and smirks, adults are clueless. She sneaks away; she remembers having to show her Nonnie how to use her phone once or twice. She walks past the cafeteria, the phone hanging on the wall next to the kitchen rings abruptly.

JessERICA watches the kitchen aide pick up the phone, but it still is ringing in her hand. Her odd sourpuss expression sends an uneasy feeling from JessERICA's tummy to her toes.

JessERICA passes by a dark room, but a teeny light catches her eyes. She backtracks a few steps and waits by the entrance of the darkness. Across the abyss is a small light dancing across the shadows. She looks back and forth down the halls. Nobody. She knows if she steps inside the room, the lights will automatically turn on, but what if they don't. She's frozen at the entrance of the room. The phone rings loudly and teases her from inside. She slowly takes one step in, then another.

Something draws her inside. She's inches from the phone, but the lights never turned on. She reaches out fearfully as she laces her fingers around the phone. The phone is so pretty, she knows she shouldn't take it, she knows it has to be missed. But no one is around. No one will know.

A startling noise pulses into the room and she stuffs the phone into her pocket before retreating out of the room. She

races into the bathroom and locks herself in a stall. She pulls out the phone and examines it. So pretty, the sparkling pink case shimmers in her tiny hands. The phone vibrates in her palms. She knows she shouldn't, but she taps it. The screen pops open and a cute hedgehog rolls into view. She smiles to herself.

"Aw so cute," she presses on the hedgehog and the phone shuts off. The lights in the bathroom flicker violently and the stalls rattle all around her. She squeezes the phone guiltily as she flees the bathroom. The hallway is dark. She's alone, not a soul around her. The only sound around her is the light taps of her boots against the laminate flooring. The phone pings; she jumps at the sound. She looks down and a message pops up. She swipes the phone and the message shines from the screen as a hologram in front of her face.

**I'll find the one who has the heart of gold, and a past full of  
pain.**

"Weird." Jessorica turns to leave when the phone burns hot in her hands and shakes violently. She drops it instantly and it truly dances across the floor. She watches in amazement, unable to look away. A whirlwind of hot pink, red, and purple colors spin uncontrollably in front of her. Mindlessly, she is pulled



by a force unbeknownst of even herself, and she steps through the portal.

## CHAPTER 2

The light abandons Jessorica, she cannot tell what is up and down. Her stomach is topsy-turvy and she feels like she is falling from the dark world around her. Jesse's voice abandons her, she opens her mouth; nothing escapes. Her eyes open and she witnesses her fate; she is tumbling and flipping against the colorful cotton candy clouds. Popping out on the other end with a swift poof. The excitement of the city below her quickly ascends into view. She cranes her neck and spies a deserted land far off in the far distance. On the other side is a luscious green island with a port surrounding one side. It flickers like a glitch, and it is gone. She focuses on the city below her. She rips through the sky like a torpedo finally reaching the tallest of the buildings her voice finally catches up with her and she bellows out a high pitch screech. She passes the first half of