

Learning to Trust Again

At 21 when most girls are worrying about college, I was alone with two children to support. My husband, whom I married at 17, was an abusive drunk. With the maturity of a teenager, I married him thinking life would be one big party. Four years later, after yet another drinking spree, he left, never to return. By that time we had two children. I found a low paying job thanks to a man who gave me a chance, even though I had no experience whatsoever. I also found a cheap apartment and a reliable person to care for my children while I worked. One morning I saw a large, dangerous looking knife lying on the front lawn. I picked the knife up, cleaned it off and used it to cut vegetables. Another time, a man was passed out on the front sidewalk. It was that kind of neighborhood.

One night, after working overtime, I began my walk home. It was a dark night with no stars. I walked these streets every day to save bus money. Being young and naïve, it never occurred to me to be scared. Suddenly, a man darted out from some bushes. He picked me up like I was a feather and wound one arm tightly around my neck. He told me if I screamed he would kill me. With his arm still around my neck, he shoved me into the car and raped me. When he was finished, he said, "I'm sorry," and drove off. I walked home in a fog of shock.

I continued going to work, coming home, and taking care of my family. But I began to hate men and wanted nothing to do with them. When I could afford it, I bought a used car. One snowy day when the car threatened to stop altogether, two men that I worked with got together on their lunch hour and fixed my car so well that it continued to run until I sold it two years later. That same year at Christmas, my boss who had two daughters who were the same age as mine, with his wife's help, gave us a box of clothing that his daughters had outgrown, much nicer things than I would have been able to afford otherwise.

When I finally managed to buy an old house in a better neighborhood, a man from work and his brother worked on our ancient plumbing. When I asked how much I owed them, they

said, “No charge.” When a winter storm hit, a neighbor dug me out so I could get to work on time. In summer, I couldn’t help noticing the man coaching Little League baseball at the park near our house or the man walking down the street pushing a twin stroller with two toddlers aboard. Slow learner that I am, it finally occurred to me that there were a lot of good, decent, faithful, sober men in the world who loved their wives, cared for their families and helped others when they could. I began to get over my bitterness and move on.

I am happily married now to my best friend. My children are grown and doing well. I’ve learned not to judge everyone because of the evil of a few. By the way, we live in a much better neighborhood now but I still never walk anywhere alone at night.

The End