

Vol. 1
NUMB
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game changer



**MY JOURNEY FROM THE STREETS
TO YOUR VIDEO GAME CONSOLE**



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game changer

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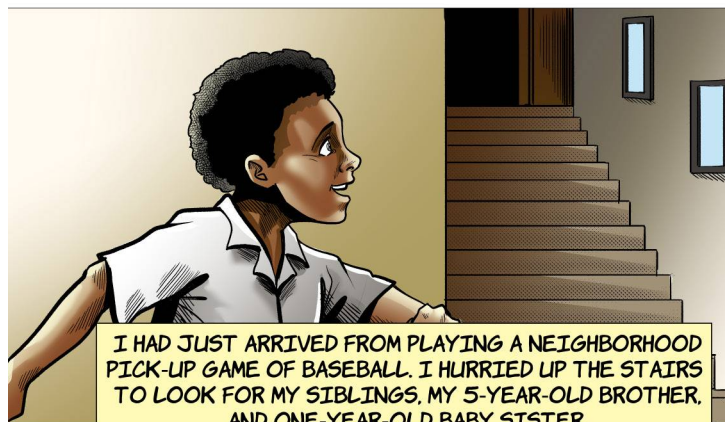
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"I HATE YOU. I HOPE YOU DIE!". THE IMPULSIVE THOUGHT POPPED INTO MY CONSCIOUSNESS. THOSE ARE CHILLING THOUGHTS TO HAVE AT ANY AGE -PARTICULARLY TROUBLING SINCE I WAS ONLY NINE-YEARS-OLD, AND THE PERSON I WATCHED TAKE HIS FINAL, SHALLOW BREATHS WAS MY STEPDAD -THE MAN I KNEW AS MY FATHER.



I HAD JUST ARRIVED FROM PLAYING A NEIGHBORHOOD PICK-UP GAME OF BASEBALL. I HURRIED UP THE STAIRS TO LOOK FOR MY SIBLINGS, MY 5-YEAR-OLD BROTHER, AND ONE-YEAR-OLD BABY SISTER.



WHEN I GOT TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS, I LOOKED IN MY PARENTS BEDROOM AND SAW MY SISTER SITTING ON THE BED AND MY BROTHER PLAYING ON THE FLOOR WITH TOYS.

MY STEPDAD WAS SITTING AT THE EDGE OF THE BED, NODDING.



AS I WALKED TOWARD THE BEDROOM DOOR, I FROZE AS I WATCHED MY STEPDAD FALL OFF THE BED ONTO THE FLOOR...

...SHAKING UNCONTROLLABLY, GASPING FOR AIR, FOAM SEEPED OUT OF HIS MOUTH, AND HIS SKIN TURNED LIGHT GREY.



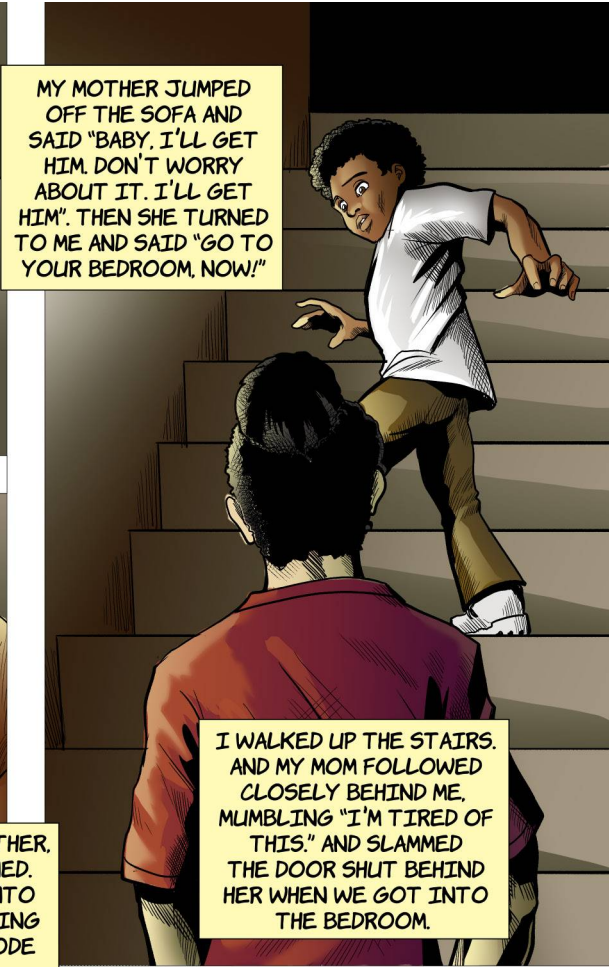
I STOOD THERE FOR A FEW MOMENTS, STARING AT HIS CONVULSING BODY...

AS MY MIND FLASHED BACK TO ALL THE BEATINGS I SUFFERED AT HIS ABUSIVE HANDS.

IT SEEMED LIKE EVERYTHING I DID, RIGHT OR WRONG, ENDED WITH ME GETTING BEAT.



I RECALLED THE TIME I MADE A PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH WITHOUT PERMISSION, AND INSTEAD OF SAYING "WHY DID YOU MAKE THAT SANDWICH WITHOUT ASKING?" HE THREATENED "I'M GOING TO WHIP YOU" AND PROCEEDED TO DO IT.



MY MOTHER JUMPED OFF THE SOFA AND SAID "BABY, I'LL GET HIM. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I'LL GET HIM". THEN SHE TURNED TO ME AND SAID "GO TO YOUR BEDROOM, NOW!"

I WALKED UP THE STAIRS. AND MY MOM FOLLOWED CLOSELY BEHIND ME, MUMBLING "I'M TIRED OF THIS." AND SLAMMED THE DOOR SHUT BEHIND HER WHEN WE GOT INTO THE BEDROOM.

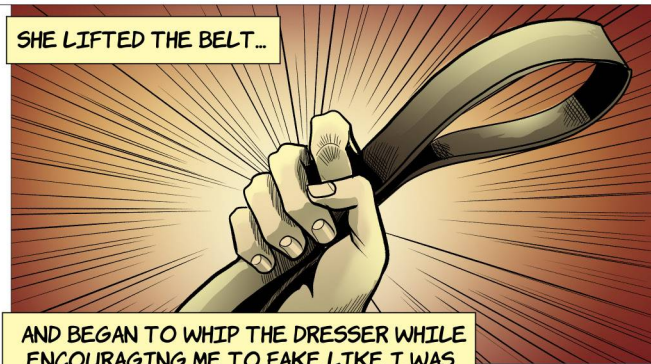


THEN MY MIND FLASHED TO A FEW DAYS PRIOR WHEN MY MOTHER, WHO KNEW THE BEATINGS WERE UNDESERVED, INTERVENED. THAT NIGHT WHEN MY STEPDAD CAME HOME, HE WALKED INTO THE LIVING ROOM AND SAID "WHAT ARE THESE CRUMBS DOING ON THE FLOOR? GO TO YOUR BEDROOM." THIS WAS HIS CODE WORDS FOR "YOU ABOUT TO GET BEAT AGAIN."



"GIVE ME YOUR BELT" SHE YELLED AS SHE PUT HER INDEX FINGER UP TO HER LIPS. THEN SHE WHISPERED...

PRETEND I'M BEATING YOU.

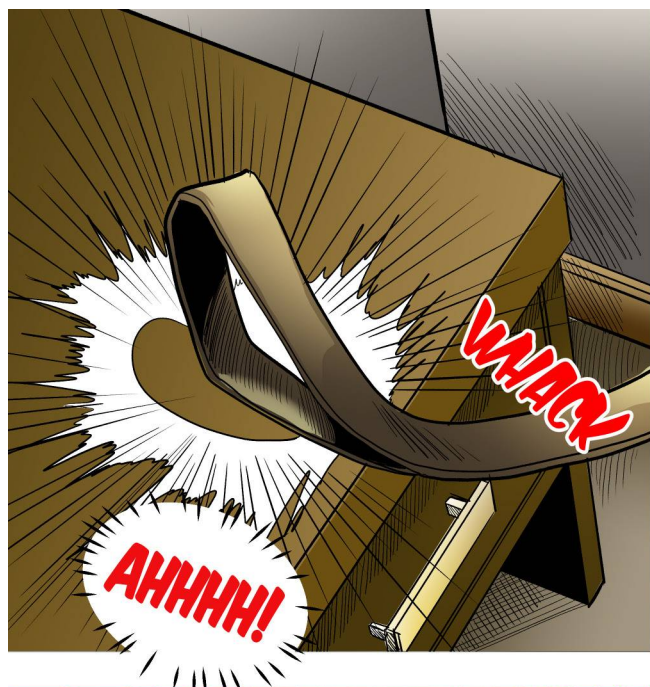


SHE LIFTED THE BELT...

AND BEGAN TO WHIP THE DRESSER WHILE ENCOURAGING ME TO FAKE LIKE I WAS GETTING HIT.



WITH EACH BLOW. "WHACK" I'D HOLLER "PLEASE, MAMA."



EACH TIME HARDER THAN THE PREVIOUS.

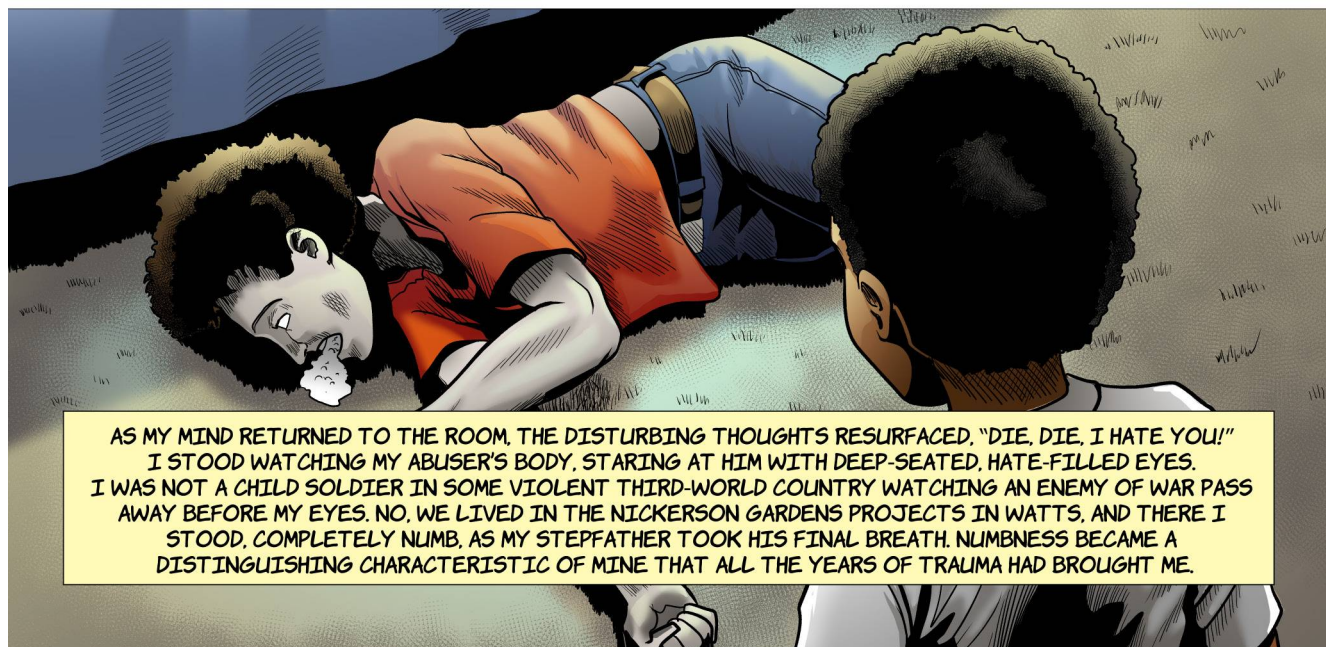


MAMA, I WON'T DO IT AGAIN. I PROMISE!



THE DECEPTION CONTINUED.

WITH ALL THE WHIPPINGS I TOOK, I WAS AN EXPERT AT THE SOUNDS TO MAKE. SHE CONTINUED TO BEAT THE DRESSER, AND I CONTINUED TO MAKE BELIEVE IT WAS ME GETTING BEAT. MAMA HAD GROWN TIRED OF SEEING ME GET WHIPPED FOR NO GOOD REASON. IF I WERE A BAD KID, I WOULD ADMIT IT. BUT I WASN'T. EVEN IF I WAS A BAD KID, I WAS ONLY EIGHT OR 9-YEARS-OLD. OF COURSE, I MADE MISTAKES, EVERY KID DOES, BUT I DIDN'T DESERVE TO GET WHIPPED NEARLY EVERY DAY.



AS MY MIND RETURNED TO THE ROOM, THE DISTURBING THOUGHTS RESURFACED. "DIE, DIE, I HATE YOU!" I STOOD WATCHING MY ABUSER'S BODY, STARING AT HIM WITH DEEP-SEATED, HATE-FILLED EYES. I WAS NOT A CHILD SOLDIER IN SOME VIOLENT THIRD-WORLD COUNTRY WATCHING AN ENEMY OF WAR PASS AWAY BEFORE MY EYES. NO, WE LIVED IN THE NICKERSON GARDENS PROJECTS IN WATTS, AND THERE I STOOD, COMPLETELY NUMB, AS MY STEPFATHER TOOK HIS FINAL BREATH. NUMBNESS BECAME A DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC OF MINE THAT ALL THE YEARS OF TRAUMA HAD BROUGHT ME.

HATRED IS A SICKNESS. BY THE TIME I WAS 9-YEARS-OLD, AN AGE WHERE I SHOULD NOT HAVE CONSIDERED HATE, THE DISEASE OF HATRED HAD PREMATURELY ENVELOPED ME.

IT WAS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE HATE THAT HATRED HAD PRODUCED.



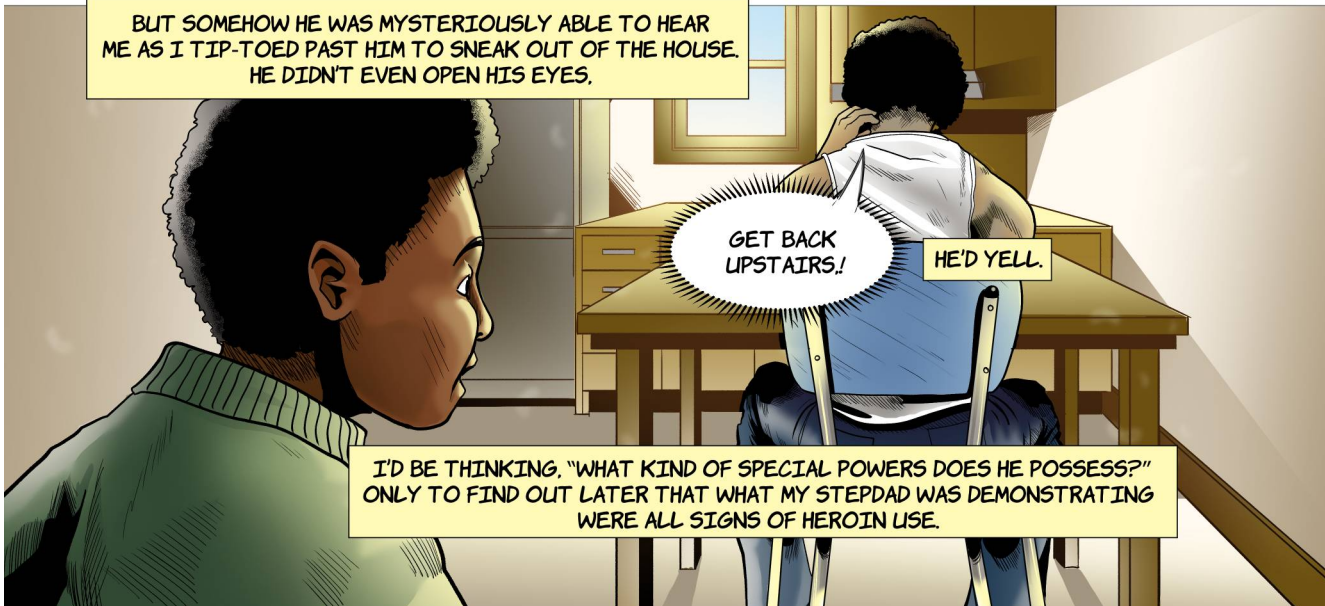
I WON'T PRESENT MY STEPFATHER AS A TOTAL MONSTER, AND ALL OF OUR MOMENTS WERE TERRIBLE. HE WAS A GOOD STEPFATHER IN TERMS OF SUPPORTING AND PROVIDING FOR OUR FAMILY. HE WOULD SOMETIMES TAKE US TO GO PLACES LIKE BUSCH GARDENS AMUSEMENT PARK AS A FAMILY. HE DID HIS BEST TO PLAY THE FATHER ROLE, BUT THE WHIPPINGS WERE OFF THE CHARTS.

MY STEPFATHER WAS A DECENT LOOKING, FAIR-SKINNED MAN WITH A '70'S AFRO. HE WAS ABOUT 6'1 OR 6'2" AND IN GOOD SHAPE FROM HIS MILITARY SERVICE YEARS. I KNEW MY STEPDAD USED DRUGS, BUT I WAS TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT TRULY MEANT.



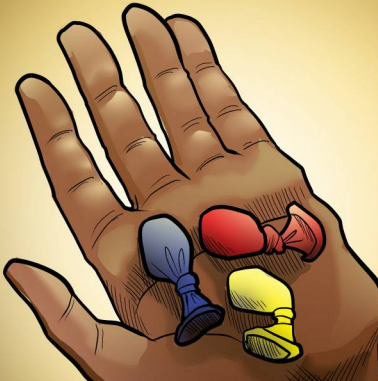
WHATEVER HE WAS DOING, IN MY 9-YEAR-OLD BRAIN, IT SEEMED TO GIVE HIM SUPERPOWERS. THERE WERE TIMES WHEN HE WOULD BE SITTING AT THE TABLE SCRATCHING HIS NECK, EYES CLOSED, HEAD BOWED, NODDING.

BUT SOMEHOW HE WAS MYSTERIOUSLY ABLE TO HEAR ME AS I TIP-TOED PAST HIM TO SNEAK OUT OF THE HOUSE. HE DIDN'T EVEN OPEN HIS EYES.



I'D BE THINKING, "WHAT KIND OF SPECIAL POWERS DOES HE POSSESS?" ONLY TO FIND OUT LATER THAT WHAT MY STEPDAD WAS DEMONSTRATING WERE ALL SIGNS OF HEROIN USE.

ONE DAY I FOUND THREE ITTY-BITTY, Q-TIP SIZED BALLOONS OF WHATEVER HE WAS DOING ON THE HOUSE FLOOR.



I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEY WERE, BUT I HAD PREVIOUSLY SEEN MY STEPDAD HOLDING THEM AND A SPOON AT THE KITCHEN TABLE.

I PICKED UP THE THREE SMALL BALLOONS AND WENT OUTSIDE.



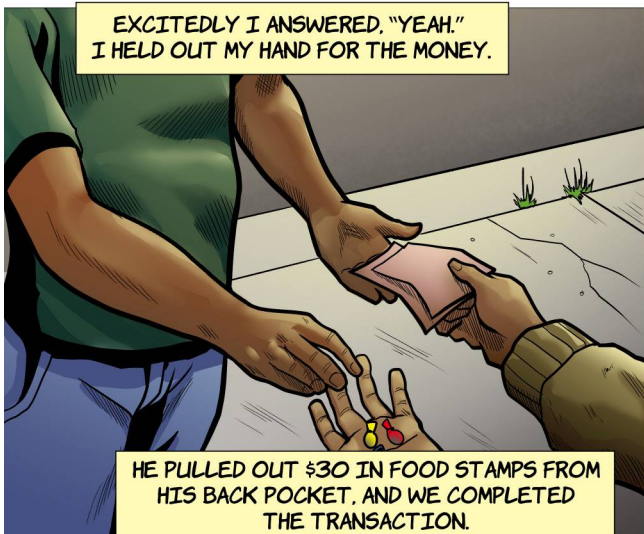
AN OLDER GUY FROM THE NICKERSON'S SAW ME WITH THEM AND ASKED:

HEY, LITTLE MAN. ARE YOU SELLING THOSE?



I'LL GIVE YOU \$30 FOR THEM.

EXCITEDLY I ANSWERED, "YEAH." I HELD OUT MY HAND FOR THE MONEY.



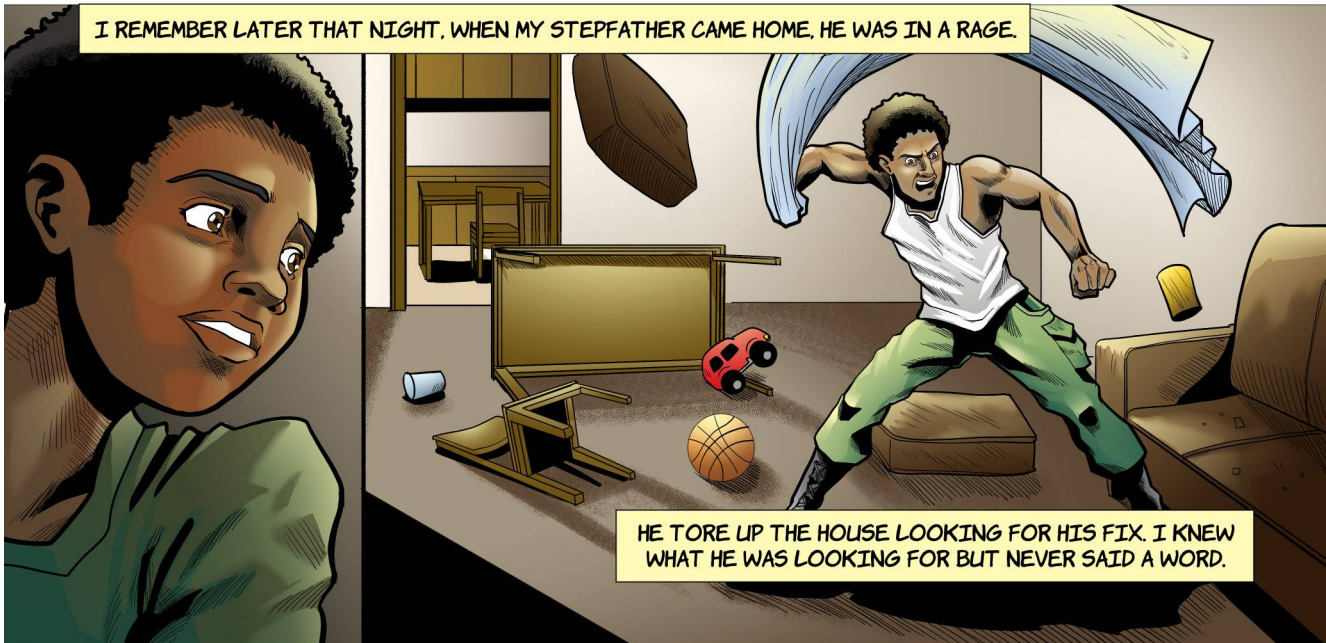
HE PULLED OUT \$30 IN FOOD STAMPS FROM HIS BACK POCKET, AND WE COMPLETED THE TRANSACTION.

I TOOK THE FOOD STAMPS AND HID THEM IN THE HOUSE.



I COULD BUY WHATEVER CANDY I WANTED FOR A WHILE WITH \$30 BECAUSE BACK THEN, CANDY BARS WERE ONLY .20 CENTS.

I REMEMBER LATER THAT NIGHT, WHEN MY STEPFATHER CAME HOME, HE WAS IN A RAGE.



HE TORE UP THE HOUSE LOOKING FOR HIS FIX. I KNEW WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR BUT NEVER SAID A WORD.