

SNEAK PREVIEW

Seeing Beyond the
Shattered Glass

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Prologue

“Kassidie, come here.”

While I sat on the floor with my legs crossed, elbows planted on my knees, and my face resting in the palms of my hands, I could hear my father, Kellen’s, deep voice barreling down the hallway, but my six-year-old eyes were glued to the television screen. J.J., the star of my favorite show, *Good Times*, clapped his hands, wiggled his lanky body, and shouted, “Dy-nomite!” I said the phrase right along with him and smiled. When his sister, Thelma, entered the frame, my smile widened. Nothing in the world was more important to me at that moment than watching the two of them rhythmically exchange insults until their father demanded they stop.

I was still giggling at J.J.’s goofiness when my own father’s assertive tone—much like the tone often used by J.J.’s television dad, James—plowed through the cacophony created by the show’s laugh track.

“Kassidie, come here. I have something to show you.”

The command pinched my ear like an angry parent trying to discipline a wayward child in a public place. My head snapped around, and I saw my father—all six-three, two hundred thirty pounds of him—the Incredible Hulk in blackface. With two long strides, he moved within ten feet of me and extended one of his frying pan size hands. I watched his thick fingers wiggle, beckoning me to come over. When the wind blows, leaves have no choice but to submit freely—so I did.

At six years old, I'd never heard the phrase *fight or flight*. Now, I understand that the churning in my stomach and the way my legs felt like limp spaghetti as my father led me to the bedroom, was my body's nervous system going into alarm mode. But when you are a child and your biggest protector is leading you into a dark bedroom, the desire to fight or flee diminishes. After all, who better to put your trust in than the man you witnessed crush a beer can in his bare hand. Any creature lurking under the bed would surely scurry like a roach.

Unfortunately, I was too young to recognize that the most threatening creature in our house that day was the one holding my tiny hand.

Maybe daddy has a surprise for me, I reasoned.

I craned my neck in time to see him look down at me. The affection that usually embodied his stare was absent. His gaze that day was so salacious it groped me.

"Sit down, Kassidie."

My hand trembled when he released it. There was something weird about the way he acted, a weirdness that made the hairs on my forearm stand at attention.

"What's wrong, daddy?"

"Nothing. I want you to sit on the bed."

My parents' bed seemed to be as large as a trampoline. I often bounced and flipped on it with no fear of falling off. But as I surveyed the flower-print comforter, I could sense that my experience on their bed this time would be far from fun.

What happened next changed me. In fact, all that I am today and all that I've been through—the good, bad, and ugly—can be traced back to what happened once I sat on my parents' bed that day.

"Now, move up by the pillows and lay down."

"Are we taking a nap, daddy?"

He didn't reply. Instead, he moved to the side of the bed and sat down. Without saying a word, he pulled off my pants and pulled down my panties.

What are you doing, daddy? That question wanted to spring from my mouth, but fear kept it trapped behind my pressed lips.

Through tear-filled eyes, I watched my father unbuckle his belt. The jeans dropped, and the huge buckle clanked when it hit the floor. I clutched my bottom lip between my teeth and struggled to stifle a scream when he pulled down his underwear.

Why are you doing this, daddy? That was the new question dancing on my tongue. It, too, was imprisoned, lobbying to get out.

He got in the bed. I flinched at the touch of his sweaty palm. Stinging tears streamed down my face and left tracks that I can sometimes see to this day.

Please stop. That was the last thing I remember thinking before my eyes closed, and his tongue slithered along my chest, down my curve-less body, and nestled between my legs.



The buzzer on the coffee table was as attention-grabbing as the zap of a taser. My eyes darted around the room. Sweat beads dotted my forehead. I rose from my prone position on the couch and stared aimlessly at the window.

“It’s okay, Kassidie.” Dr. Riggio, the woman who managed to unearth my darkest secret, leaned forward in her chair and placed a comforting hand on my knee. “Breathe Kassidie.”

“I’m sorry,” I mumbled and used the heel of my hand to wipe away tears. “I just...I...”

“We had a breakthrough. That’s a good thing.”

I swung my legs around and sat on the edge of the couch. Slower breaths replaced the short choppy ones, but the anxiety that left me wide-eyed and panting moved down to my leg. I fidgeted like a teenage girl waiting to hear the results of a pregnancy test.

“That’s the first time I’ve ever told anyone that story.”

“I know it is. When pain has been locked away for as long as you’ve kept yours, getting to it can take some time. It took some time, but you finally released it.”

I nodded in agreement.

“Next week, we can talk more about how that pain has impacted you and the decisions you’ve made throughout your life. Kassidie, this is a good thing.”

“I hear you,” I said and stood up, “but if it’s such a good thing, why do I feel so sick?”

Dr. Riggio leaned back in her chair, draped one leg over the other, and pointed at the bathroom door in the corner of her massive office.

I followed the direction of her manicured finger and made a beeline to the bathroom. The next five minutes consisted of me puking up everything inside of me—including those innocent questions that had been trapped in my mouth since the day my father molested me.

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