

SEARCHING FOR LOVE

By Jonathan (J. W.) Wilson

J.W.

I don't know exactly where I should begin; all I know is that I have always felt very alone when I was a little boy. I don't know when this feeling actually started; all I know is that I've always had it. In spite of being surrounded by 1,200 people now, I still feel alone. I was the youngest and baby boy. With three older sisters, I was--my mother always told me:

Mom

You were what your dad always wanted.

J.W.

By the time I was old enough to really know anything, all the girls were already gone out of the house. I remember feeling I couldn't wait to be gone too.

To say I wasn't loved, I guess would be a lie. I mean I knew I was loved – but whether or not I felt it, or could tell you what love was, is another matter:

[Background set up – Dad watches T.V.]

See, I had food to eat, I had clothes to wear *[Mom: Places shirt on J.W.]*, my parents took me places. . .So I couldn't figure out why the feeling that I wasn't loved. In fact, I was more fortunate than most of the young boys that grew up in the projects. I had two working parents that lived in the household. In fact, I was what some people would consider spoiled – meaning I had a little bit of everything I wanted. But tell me, how can a person that has everything he wants, have nothing he really needs? What I really wanted, what I really needed, was for my mom and dad to listen to me, to hear me, when I yelled at the top of my lungs:

[Yelling] Mom, Dad, stop fighting!

[Background – Mom and Dad sitting in chairs facing each other.]

Mom

You never respect me.

Dad

You don't own me. I can do what I want to do.

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You don't own me. I can do what I want to do.

[J.W. kneeling down looking upward toward the sky.]

J.W.

Neither Jesus, Allah or any other God could stop them from arguing, and believe me, I prayed to them all.

See, in my home, I learned that love and betrayal worked hand in hand. I learned you could not have one without the other. So I learned to take and give love at my discretion – that was how I wanted, when I wanted, and who I wanted to give it to. It was safer that way, 'cause when Mom and Dad fought, they said things to each other that were disrespectful, intolerable, unloving, unforgiving. . . And you want me to love? Hell no! Love ain't nothing but a tool that brings pain and I want no part of it.

[J.W. – turns and looks at Dad.]

What was wrong with you, Dad? Why did you let her do that? Why didn't you fight back?

Dad

If it wasn't for this boy I would've been gone.

J.W.

See, I made up my mind a long time ago not to let any woman disrespect me the way mom disrespected dad. So I ran away--not physically because I didn't have a job and I would have starved to death--but mentally. I ran away mentally and detached myself. So, I started to hang out with the "cool boys."

[Background: Cool Boys listening to radio and talking/laughing.]

You know, the ones that always seemed to be standing in front of the building with the big JVC radio that never ran out of batteries. Those were the ones that my mom always warned me not to be like. But things had really changed now, and I wanted to be just like them boys.

[Mom stands there staring at Cool Boys.]

I remember me and my dad used to go out on the weekends shopping. I used to love those days 'cause my dad used to let me drive. I still remember the smell of the raw fish on ice as he picked out salt fish or mackerel for breakfast Sunday morning.

I remember one day Dad directed me down some streets. He told me:

Dad

Hey, boy, pull over by that house over there.

J.W.

So I pulled over. I watched my dad get out of the car, knock on the door, and a woman came out. It was my sister's girlfriend Geralyn. I watched as he talked with her for a while and I remember Geralyn kept watching me. My father then kissed Geralyn on the mouth, got back in the car and told me:

Dad

Boy don't tell your momma about that there.

J.W.

That's the first time I heard the voice whisper:

All

Betrayal.

J.W.

How could I not tell my mother? And to make matters worse, Geralyn had two kids that attended the day care center where my mother was a bookkeeper. I remember going to my mother's job, waiting for her to get off of work. I would see Geralyn all the time. She wouldn't smile and neither would I. It was like we kept a dirty secret between us.

That's the second time I heard the voice whisper:

All

Betrayal.

J.W.

I didn't want to be the cause of my parents fighting anymore, so I said nothing. I heard the voice whisper again:

All

Betrayal.

J.W.

There were times in my house when there moments of peace. That was only when Mom and Dad were both in their rooms with their door shut.

But then, suddenly, without warning, I came home one day to find a note from my mom that said:

Mom

Your dad had an accident. We're at the hospital.

J.W.

I ran four blocks to the hospital where I found my mother and father sitting in the emergency clinic. My father had a blood-soaked bandage three quarters the way up his arm. I looked at his face as my mother explained to me:

Mom

He cut his arm at work.

J.W.

My father was a garment cutter. He used a blade that was two feet long. The cut was so deep that it severed some nerves and some tendons. His arm was patched up, and we went home.

The house was deathly quiet for the next couple of weeks. I actually wanted them to fight because then I'd hear them talking to each other.

It never occurred to me that when I saw my father sitting inside the emergency room, that the bandage that he had wrapped around his arm was the same cloth that he carried in his back pocket as a handkerchief. It never occurred to me that if my dad had a cut so deep, how did he ride on an hour train ride from Manhattan to Brooklyn with his arm bleeding like that?

I found out many weeks later that Mom had cut Dad in a huge fight with a butcher knife. I heard the voice again.

All

Betrayal.

J.W.

In life, they say the first things learned are hardest to forget. And I find that to be very true. And so after many years of failed relationships--more pain, more hurt--what have I learned?

If I've learned anything, I have learned that we are all created to love one another.

If I have learned anything, I have learned not to blame these things on my parents.

If I have learned anything, it's because I have seen too much, and I couldn't go back, even if I wanted to.

If I have learned anything, I've learned that loving someone is trusting--is giving them the ability to destroy you, but trusting that they won't.

If I have learned anything, I have learned that I am willing to take that risk.