

G.S.

My name is Guy. I live in Lomita, California. My mother and father were born on the East Coast. I've been all over the country. My trauma is a continuation of the trauma my family has experienced. My mother ended up institutionalized for her mental health. My father also. That's where they met, in a psychiatric facility in 1983. It's almost funny, like some terrible cosmic joke.

They had a tumultuous relationship. They never got married. One of the times [they] separated, my father kidnapped my brother and me. For about two or three months, my mother had no idea where we were. My father was very abusive...sexually abusive too. He raped my mother, brother, sister. To this day, I have nothing to do with my father. He's still alive unfortunately. Sometimes, if I don't want to get into all the particulars, when people ask me, "What does [your] father do?" I tell them, "Oh, he died when I was very young."

'The family mistreated her.'

My mother was the youngest of six. She left school in the 8th grade, partially due to her poor health. Her family mistreated her because she required so much attention. During her childhood, her older brother raped her in the family's bathroom.

She married her first husband at 14; the marriage lasted seven days. He started stabbing her and throwing her down the stairs. She returned home to her mother and father battered and heartbroken. Later, she bore two children with her second husband—my older half-brother and half-sister. This marriage also ended in tragedy; her husband was murdered in Richmond in 1981.

'My father was raped.'

My father was born in 1960 and I know that he didn't have the best life. He did a lot of petty crime as a teenager stealing things; one time he got in trouble for grand theft. In 1981, my father was kidnapped at gunpoint and raped by a man in Richmond. For the longest time I thought this was complete bullshit... *this is just my father making shit up again*. But about a year ago, my older half-sister found a newspaper article about that kidnapping and assault. Now I'm like, *wow...*

My father was getting into a lot of legal trouble, and he said, “F**k it! Let’s go west.” My parents wrote a bunch of bad checks all across the United States until they got to Colorado. That’s where I pretty much stayed until adulthood. Almost as soon as we arrived, it was discovered that my father had been molesting my older half-brother and half-sister. This had been going on for five years; they were eight and nine. He’d also make them have sex with each other. My father was convicted and sent to prison in ‘88. I was three years old. When he got out three years later, he moved to Arkansas.

One night, my brother told me that my father left because he was involved with the murders of three boys. I looked it up online. There it was: my name, with all these terrible things my father did. They had a huge case file that went back to the ‘80s. He didn’t face any consequences for what happened. Arkansas is where he found another woman with children and started molesting them. He married this woman. I’ve communicated with the children; they talked to me about what my father did to them.

My father is definitely a pedophile. He’d seek out vulnerable women with children, prey on them. One of the documents in my father’s case file is him chatting on these web forums. He was openly talking about how he was molesting my older brother and sister; he was proud of it, not remorseful at all! He’d talk about how my older brother and sister loved him. It was disgusting. He should have been in prison until the day he died. Three boys are dead because they kept him out of prison. He’s still not in jail for some reason. On top of it, I’m named after him, his exact name. I was *Jr.* I ended up changing my name legally.

‘We were terrible children who deserved to die.’

From about age seven to nine, we were homeless at different points. We’d stay in shelters [or] friends’ houses. We were sleeping in cars...whatever we could do to stay as safe as possible. My stepfather eventually convinced my step-grandparents to let us live in the basement of their house. This was about 1994. From age three to eleven, my stepfather was extremely abusive to me and my brother. He’d lock us in closets, in the basement...he’d throw us down the basement stairs. We slept on the tile floor under the pool table. He’d burn us with cigarettes, hit us in the head with frying pans. One time, he took my hand and pressed it down on a coffee iron.

We were normal kids; it wasn’t like we were hellions. But to hear him tell it, we were nothing but scum of the earth, terrible children who deserved to die. My sister—my younger sister from him—didn’t experience that; she could do no wrong. Did we resent our sister for that? Yeah. I often talk about it. The whole time this was happening, the same thing was happening to my mother. He’d throw her down the

stairs. I watched as he pushed her into a television set. My mother was frightened for her life, for our lives. It was about that time I started having suicidal thoughts. I was nine when I was first hospitalized for suicide.

Eventually my stepfather had an aneurysm and died. I remember feeling relief. *It's finally over.* We were finally able to move.

No one knew she'd been diagnosed with schizophrenia much earlier.'

I was in and out of foster homes a few times in elementary school [because of] my mother's illness. She'd wake up in the middle of the night and say, "We have to move...there's a white car following us." The white car is here meant we have to go. We eventually moved to a tiny town in Colorado with maybe a thousand people. It was me, my brother, sister, and mother. I was around 12 or 13.

One day my mom was acting very strangely, talking about how she was already dead, and we didn't exist...everyone's out to get her. I called 911 and they convinced her to go to the hospital. At that point they told us she was diagnosed with schizophrenia much earlier in life. My sister went to her grandparents. They put my brother and I in a juvenile detention center while waiting for a space to become available [in foster care]. We didn't have anywhere else to go.

He started urinating on me...inside me.'

My brother and I were put in one of the rooms with seven other bunk beds. I was on the bottom bunk; my brother was on the top. One of the dudes started looking at me, laughing at me. He was much older and bigger than me. He was like, "Oh, you're a faggot." He exposed himself to me. He's like, "Get on your knees...faggot like this." He started urinating on me. He told me to open my mouth. My brother was in the top bunk just kind of watching.

I was so scared; I opened my mouth. He put himself inside, continuing to urinate. The most f**ked-up thing about it is [that] he just kept laughing. That night, it was decided that they were going to find us another place to stay, but the damage was done.

My mother was in the state hospital for six months. Eventually, we got to go back with her. We were very poor; my mother didn't work. She got welfare payments and stuff. We had bunk beds.

One night, I wake up, I'm like, *what's going on?* My brother was holding shut my nose. I saw he was naked and erect. My brother was 11 months younger than me, but much stronger and more masculine. I was a

weak, uncoordinated kid. I struggled with him, but he was really hurting me. He ended up doing that often. He'd hit me or wrestle me into submission so he could do whatever he wanted to me. That went on for a few years. Throughout middle school, I was struggling with suicidal ideation, dealing with a lot of stuff...

'Your brother's done hung himself.'

I was 15 and my brother was 14 when my mother got sick again. They told us we were too old for the foster system; it was overloaded. I'd been working since I was 14, so I had a bit of money. My boss was a mentor from church and a friend [so] the state heard my case and granted me emancipation. I lived in a hostel for a year, working three jobs and only making about \$500 a month.

Something happened before I moved out on my own. I was a sophomore, sitting at the kitchen table with my mother and two sisters, doing a fundraiser for my French class. My mother ventures into the bedroom and comes screaming back, "Your brother's done hung himself!" She throws the phone on the ground...I'll never forget that. He's hanging from the balcony. My mother lifts him up and unties the noose, starts doing CPR; I call 911. He ends up surviving. He had some problems with speech after that. [Later], he had other suicide attempts. Once he took some pills; another time, he purposely drove his car off a road but didn't get hurt.

'I knew this was an instance of gay bashing.'

When I was 17, I was already experimenting with survival sex, interacting with older men to get food, my rent, clothing...a few bucks here and there, to supplement the meager income between paychecks. One night after work, there were these two guys I saw; they had a dog. I started to walk away, but they come after me, shouting, "No faggot...get back here!" The next thing, I woke up in the hospital and all my teeth on the left side were broken. I was black and blue all over my head. I was concussed; my brain was bleeding. They thought they (the attackers) hit me with a bat or brick. I filed charges [but] they never found the guys. I knew it was an instance of gay bashing, but I wasn't out to anyone. I couldn't say that.

I was a good student and my teachers loved me, but I wasn't very popular; I was bullied constantly. I needed to get out of that place. [So] I joined the Army. It was one of the best times of my life. I was a pretty good soldier and a nurse. When I was stationed in Wisconsin, I got called into the commanding officer's office one day. The First Sergeant said, "Call your family. Your brother's dead." I was like, "What? Which brother?" because my older brother had epilepsy. I had no idea my younger brother committed suicide.

Once I got through to my mom, they're at my brother's funeral. The news f**ked me up. I ended up drinking cleaning fluid. They hospitalized me for suicide, then swiftly discharged me. By that time, they'd discovered I was gay. This was before the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

'The homeless community is actually a community.'

I decided to find a place where I can be myself. I did a Google search of queer-friendly cities and Twin Cities came up. I knew I was going to be homeless no matter what. They had good services there. I thought my experience as a nurse would get me in the door in hospitals. The only thing I was licensed for was an EMT (emergency medical technician), but I didn't drive. I was on disability for bipolar disorder and my muscle disease. I stayed in shelters, slept in parks, [and] on trains. I was doing survival sex again. I also attended college and got my bachelor's degree. I accumulated friends, a good number of queer people of color. I became the street medic. This is something they don't tell you about, but the homeless community is actually a community...we try to help each other as much as we can.

One night I was in a park and three men approached me; two tore off my clothes. One forced himself on me; I'll never forget it. He had milky cataracts and a growth on his penis. They took me to the hospital, did a rape kit. After I reported the rape, I was talking to friends. There were ten of us who'd been raped by the same dude. I was dumbfounded, asking, *why is this person still able to roam the streets?*

'I can't get the mental health care that I need.'

I began working in nonprofits doing homeless and queer advocacy. I wanted to be a therapist and started doing clinical work, but it was triggering, causing flashbacks, nightmares. I got hospitalized for suicidal ideation. Nothing was working. Around March of 2011, I had a manic episode, delusions; I jumped off a bridge, saying I could fly. I was hospitalized for two months and consented to electroconvulsive therapy. I haven't had a manic episode since.

I moved to LA in 2012. My husband and I are celebrating 10 years together. Two years ago, I worked for two suicide prevention and crisis hotlines. Prevention is important. I tell everyone, "Sometimes the best way to help yourself is to help others. Don't be afraid to seek attention when you need it. It can save your life; it can save someone's life." Suicide is preventable. Crime and violence can be preventable. Make it a priority.

Recorded at:
Lomita, Los Angeles County, CA
3/12/21
11:59 am

