

Plastic Prison

Mother Nature's reign pounded relentlessly against the window as if she were an angry neighbor. The wind was its voice, screaming its lungs out. I watched each knuckle, each punch at the window. You could tell Mother Nature was angry, but her intensesness soothed me. I turned my back to the fists and walked steadily toward the couch to watch the news. I was home alone so the television always stayed on.

As I turned up the volume, I suffocated the frustrated shouts. I was almost at the perfect volume when the television grew black. A wave of anxiety washed over me. I turned to face the window. Mother Nature was growing impatient. I could see she was becoming very furious, and this time her wrath frightened me. Her voice, once a stern tone now resembled a witch's voice. Her fists were boulders smashing into the window instead of stones. Then her pernicious laugh shook the house followed by a flash of her sinful smile. I nearly jumped out of my skin when the television burst back to life. The wave that was drowning me, washed away.

I grew hungry from the sight of The Outback commercials. I mustered enough energy to take my hourly stroll to the fridge. The shiny beast hummed its favorite song. Before opening the grand door, I once again examined the note my mom had left for me. *Nichole, Dad and I are going to visit grandma. I just went grocery shopping, so there is plenty of food. Remember, clean up after yourself. We will be back sometime tomorrow evening. Love you, Mom.* I stared at the piece of paper as if it had put me in a trance. When reality struck me once again, I gathered all the food I thought would please my taste buds.

I came back to the living room to find the window from which I stared out of was opened. I tried to remember if I had opened the window to scream back at her irritated shouts. For the life of me I could not remember. I did not hesitate to walk over and shut the window. Her wrath had gotten all over the floor, but I didn't care. I just left it there. The couch called for me and I obeyed. The television soon put me to sleep.

My eyes were wrenched open to the sound of music. I looked to the television to see it lifeless. My heart was beating rapidly. I could hear it in my ears. Maybe it was outside. I glanced at the clock: 1:30 a.m. It was wrong of me to believe that it was outside. Mother Nature was still throwing a tantrum, which only made the situation seem more alarming. My hands were searching for my phone. I rolled to the ground to look for it under the couch; no luck. I squinted toward the television stand; there we kept a house phone. It was gone. I froze. Someone was in my house. I felt as though someone had a vacuum and they decided that the oxygen in my lungs was too dirty. I was breathless. I did not know what to do. Then the music shut off.

The silence consumed the air. The floor squeaked from movement up above. Whoever it was, was coming toward me. My brain told my feet to run toward the window and run to

safety, but they wouldn't allow me to get up from the floor. Water blurred my vision. I let out a small whimper. My head swung around looking for a place where I could hide. My mind was blank; all I could think of was to act like I was sleeping again. I crawled onto the couch once more, and I lay back down hoping that this would work. My eyes fluttered shut with tears racing down my face. I had so many horrific thoughts attacking me; they felt like knives tearing away pieces of my brain. The more the floor boards growled, the faster they came.

The pungent smell of a man's cologne replaced the sweet smell of oxygen. Tears were trying to break free of my closed eyelids, my eyelashes the bars that held them back. I tried easing my tension by turning over to my side so my face would be hidden. I could feel his stare on my back waiting for me to make a mistake. I felt a swift wind. He was right next to me. A harsh slap met my back. His touch made my skin crawl. My eyes darted open freeing the tears. I began to shake like I was outside in zero degree weather with no jacket. I didn't sit up. I hid my face even more which caused an even harder slap to the back. I could feel the couch cave in a little; he sat next to my knees. His warm hand was on my hip.

His hand started to pat my hip. "I want to play a game. Oh, how cliché that sounds, but it will be fun," he growled. His hand stopped, and the couch went back to its normal position. I felt his masculine hands wrap around my shoulders and yank me up. He placed me on my feet; my eyes were now shut again. He slapped me across the face to remind me that he was in charge. "The game I have decided on is hide and seek. I will give you around 40 seconds to hide, maybe. If you try and break free you will be met with a surprise." I couldn't concentrate on his murky voice; I was too focused on my melted cheek. "The rules are if I don't find you within an hour I will leave, but if I find you before then oh, it will be fun." He turned around and came back with a bag. He laid the contents on the coffee table: a rope, a knife, a rag, and tweezers. "On your mark, get set, go."

I prayed as I ran up the stairs. I have lived here my whole life, and I can't think of one hiding spot to save my life. I scrambled to my room. Too obvious, but I must try the window. He had nailed it shut. I felt as though a big, dry ball was stuck in my throat. I could hardly walk. I stumbled to the attic. I was small enough that I could either go in the crawl space above or lay in a Tupperware bin. I took my chances with the Tupperware bin. It was such a tight squeeze, but I made it work. I lay in wait, having no idea when the hour would be up.

The man who I didn't get a chance to thoroughly look at made the stairs moan underneath his weight. I started to have doubts with my hiding spot. Tears lined up at the edge of my eyes as if they were about to run a race. The gun was fired and they were off. It was a silent sadness, but my breaths were becoming heavier and louder. I heard doors open and shut in the distance. The smell of the plastic was overwhelming. All I could see was darkness, black. My heart was in my ears. The beats of my heart were not their normal sweet hum it usually

was. He was growing closer to the attic door. I could hear the knob turn. It felt as though the knob and the air I was breathing were connected. The more he turned it, the less I could breathe.

“Oh, darling I know you’re in here.” He sounded demonic. “My my where could you be?” I heard things being turned over. He was destroying the attic. I heard the crawl space door open. I let out a sigh of relief, but it must’ve been too loud because I heard the door slam shut, and his footsteps were right next to me.

I drew my eyes shut as I felt pressure on the lid. All of a sudden I didn’t have the ground below me. He grunted as if he had a boulder fall on his stomach. I was swinging freely; it wasn’t enjoyable like it would be any other day. The uncomfortableness was consuming me. I had the desire to stretch out my legs, but they were restrained by a plastic wall. The horrific thoughts appeared into my mind again as we approached the steps.

Still in my plastic prison, he dropped me to the ground. I felt as though half my body was broken. A scream of pain emerged from my body. “How sad, you see you had only ten minutes left.” His voice was muffled. “That must really be a bummer for you. Well, I hope you have a fun trip.” Although I couldn’t see him, I knew he had a malicious smile painted onto his face. I braced myself for the worst.

The sound of the plastic bottom on the floor was hypnotizing. I realized he was going to push me down the steps. He stopped as I teetered on the edge of the top step. “Boy, it would be a shame if I just let go.” Soon enough he did. I closed my eyes so tight; I’m surprised they didn’t fuse together. My head was the ball between two rackets. My body was an old rag doll that a dog would viciously whip around in its mouth. I felt as though the bottom of the stairs would never come. I felt a warm liquid swimming across my face. I don’t remember screaming, but I’m sure I did.

When I reached the bottom of the steps, I knew my torture wasn’t over. His laugh mocked me. The pain I was experiencing was so strong; I was fading in and out of consciousness. The lid opened. The rush of light clawed at my eyes. His masculine hands once again grabbed me around the shoulders and set me on my feet. This time my feet didn’t answer his command. I fell to the floor. He kicked me over and over again. My eyes were shut, and the voice of unconsciousness was whispering to me to come to her. I was trying to obey, but each time his foot made contact, my eyes were forced open. His kicking stopped, and I was able to reach unconsciousness.

“Nichole? Nichole?” My eyes were so heavy. I opened my mouth to speak but I couldn’t. “Honey, where are you? We came home early.” My mom’s voice was of an angel.

“Mom.” My voice sounded if I had been smoking since I was two. It was so painful to speak. He must’ve kicked me in the throat. I couldn’t get up, but I used my one good arm to slide myself along the floor.

“Nichole, oh my gosh!” My dad saw me and instant tears appeared. “What happened?” I shook my head violently. “We need to get you to a hospital now.” His voice was firm, but it was gentle.

The hospital reeked of disinfectant and sickness. The doctor told me I was lucky I didn’t break my head open or break my neck when I was pushed down the steps. I had bruises smeared across the left half of my face. They were dyed onto my arms, legs, throat, and stomach. Every movement I made I wanted to cry. I had scratches engraved above my right eyebrow. I assumed they were made after I had blacked out. Then the police came through the door.

Questions upon questions were thrown upon me. I couldn’t answer most. I didn’t look at his face long or hard enough to put out a description. I felt as though I was being suffocated by them. The world started spinning. I started shouting, screaming, “I don’t know!” I felt so alone in a room crowded with people. I was scared out of my mind.

Arriving home, I felt cold chills slithering through my body. The one place I was supposed to feel safe in made me feel like I was standing in the middle of a snake pit. I shuffled to my room. I stared at the nails that restrained the window. I was queasy, but I forced myself onto my bed. I lay in agony. My happiness was being held hostage by a man that was no longer near me. My computer gave me the notification of an email. Easing my way to my desk, I bit my lip from the bitterness the beatings brought me.

The brightness of the screen melted my vision. They soon focused on the words of the screen. I read it aloud. “My darling, did you enjoy the game? Of course you did. I am sorry to inform that I wasn’t able to finish the game. Therefore, it is not over until I am completely done. Maybe I will come for you; maybe I won’t.” My stomach felt like it fell out of my body. I was just about to yell for my parents when the sound of the phone rippled through the air.

“The police called Nichole.” She sounded breathless. “They caught him, but we have to go in now to identify him. I know you’re tired and scared, but we have to do this.” An awkward yet kind of comforting smile appeared across her face.

My eyes were wide as we arrived at the station. Mother Nature was calm now. She was probably tired from her night rage. I felt like I was in a stupor as we passed through door after door getting checked every five seconds for weapons. We finally arrived at a viewing window.

There a man sat in handcuffs grinning as though he had a secret that could ruin someone's life. I stared at him, examining every inch of him.

My thoughts were interrupted by a police officer's voice. "Is this him?"

"I don't know. Could I hear him say something?" My breaths were rapid, and I was holding back tears.

"What would you like him to say?"

"I want him to say let's play a game." I shut my eyes waiting for the man to speak.

He cleared his throat. "Let's play a game." I collapsed to the ground gasping for air. His murky voice haunted me. My tears were making lakes on the ground. My parents helped me up and he was looking right at me. "I know I can't see you my darling, but you will always see me. As for the game, sadly we won't be able to finish it." The pressure that was on my chest was gone. The nightmare I thought I would have to live for the rest of my life was over. I wouldn't have to live in fear. I was safe.

I survived.