

chapter 1

Darkness cloaked the cellar, broken only by the amber glow of the streetlight filtering through the narrow windows high up on the wall. David, eleven years old, lay helpless on the damp, earthen floor. Wally, his father, glared at him through blue blood-shot eyes that smoldered in the pale light. “Think you can look at me like that?” Wally’s breath was heavy with the sick-sweet smell of liquor. “Think I’ll let you get away with that? In front’a my friends?” He lifted a coil of electrical extension cord from a hook on the wall. Gripping the plug in one hand he spread his arms wide apart and stretched the length of cord between them. He moved in measured, deliberate motions and transferred the plug to his opposite hand, doubling the cord and letting it dangle menacingly at his side.

“Dad, please,” David pleaded. “I didn’t look at you. I didn’t do anything.”

Whap! The biting sting of the extension cord landed across David’s back. “Don’t talk back to me, boy!”

Whap! The cord struck him again. “Ya’ stupid lyin’ moron,” Wally growled. “Ya’ think I’m blind?”

“No,” David begged. “Please!”

Whap! The cord ripped into David’s flesh again and again. The young boy’s body jumped and twitched with every strike. Wally glowered

over him. “Ya’ think I’m that stupid? God hates liars—and I do too! Ya’ stupid Jew bastard.”

Whap! “I’ll teach ya’ some respect.” Wally drew back the cord and brought it down against David’s back once more. And then something inside him snapped. Again and again he drew back the cord and whipped it across the boy’s legs and back, his arms and shoulders. On and on he went, sweat dripping from his forehead, his arms swinging in maniacal rhythm, the cord ripping through David’s shirt, tearing it to shreds as each stripe took Wally deeper and deeper into the grasp of anger, hatred, and lust.

“Stop!” David screamed. “Stop! Please!”

Trapped now in the pleasure of his drunken frenzy, Wally ignored the young boy’s cries and plunged further and further into the agony of his victim. Driving with all his might to release the tension that welled in his body, he worked the cord from side to side, whistling it through the air and then jerking it back at just the right moment to make it pop against the boy’s flesh. With each lash against David’s now bared back, bright red blood splattered against Wally’s hands and face, setting his body aflame with the intensity of an animal on the attack, conquering, and spending itself in the pleasure of inflicting pain.

Finally, winded and spent, his arm aching with fatigue, Wally let the cord slip from his fingers. He bent over and propped his hands against his knees, gasping for breath.

David, still clinging to life, listened to Wally panting in the dark. A heavy, musky smell filled the room. Not quite urine, not quite sweat, it had the scent of something uncontrollable and raw. David knew what was coming next. He’d been through this before. Always it was the same. His father drank himself into a stupor then turned on his oldest son. Sometimes on the kitchen floor, sometimes in the cellar, but always with the extension cord, or his belt, or his fist. And when he had exhausted the muscles in his arms, he turned to the ones in his legs. A whimper slipped from David’s throat. And then it began.

“Humph!” he gasped as the toe of his father’s boot crashed against

his side. Searing pain shot through David's limp body. A warm trickle of blood oozed from between his ribs. David squirmed to the right, brought his knees up close against his stomach, and curled his body in a fetal position.

"Humph." His father's boot struck again. David's heart pounded as he gasped for breath, but no breath would come. Panic seized him as he struggled to fill his lungs with air in quick, short gasps.

Then his father's hands locked around his neck. David was plucked from the floor and lifted into the air, higher and higher. So high he was certain he would bang his head on the kitchen floor above. Instinctively, David clutched at the hands that held him, trying to relieve the pain that shot through his side, desperate to pry loose the fingers that quenched the flow of air to his lungs.

Wally's laugh shook the timbers above. "What do you think now, you moron? I'll kill ya! Yer nothin' but a piece a garbage." David twisted from side to side and kicked his legs furiously. With his last breath he cried out in a raspy voice, "Let me go...I don't want to die!"

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Suddenly, a hand nudged his shoulder, jiggling him from side to side. "David, David," a voice repeated softly. "Wake up. Wake up."

David's eyes popped open. He stared up at the ceiling and blinked, trying to remember where he was. He turned his head and looked blankly at the woman lying beside him in bed. She smiled at him. "It's me. Sue."

David rubbed his eyes. "What time is it?"

"Three in the morning."

"I can't stand this," David sighed. He took a deep breath and tried to relax. "Night after night. It just won't go away."

"What was it this time?"

"The cellar." He rested his head against Sue's arm. "He was beating me with that extension cord." David shuddered. "It was that awful dream...but one I've actually lived." He ran his hands over his face and

pushed his dark hair back from his forehead. “Why would a father do that to his son?”

“Wally Ellis is a sick man.”

“And why won’t these dreams go away?”

“Because deep inside you there’s an eleven-year-old boy, and he’s feeling a lot of pain. You’ve buried him deep inside your mind, but he’s still alive. You need to learn to love him, David.”

“You are the second person who ever believed in me. I love you, Sue.”

“I love you too.” She wrapped both arms around him and pulled him deeper beneath the covers.