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PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION



When I was left alone at home with my abuser, the abandonment was constant, but the neglect was also reflected in the little things, like food. She often cooked only for herself, leaving me to my own fate. When she did feed me, it was usually the same: white rice with a fried egg, and every now and then, a steak.

Today, as an adult, I can prepare my own meals easily, but when I was a child, what I was left with was a lack of attention and care for even the most basic needs.



Episodes that really impacted me when I was little - When I cried because of the way I was treated, my abuser had the habit of putting me in the kitchen, with the door closed, alone, without any kind of consolation or support.

Little did I know that on the other sides of the walls, floor and ceiling, there were people listening to me. Too bad they did nothing but listen.



I was never very comfortable at home. Ever since I was little, I've always avoided the presence of my abuser, for fear of what might happen if we crossed paths, because it would be another opportunity to suffer verbal, psychological and physical abuse. That's why I've always kept to myself in my room, barely visiting the rest of the house.

In order to go to the toilet or eat, I needed to know where she was, because any situation could lead to conflict. I would often go several hours without eating or even with a full bladder, and I remember sneaking food into my room and putting the food wrappers in my school bag so I could throw them away the next day without her finding out I'd eaten something.



At the age of 12, depression came as a result of a life marked by violence and bullying at school. At that age, I began to hate my image and believe that I was worthless. The internal pain became unbearable, and it was at this point that I began to develop a problem with self-mutilation.

This was one of the most difficult problems to solve.



A childhood of physical, emotional/psychological and verbal abuse left many broken pieces in me. I was very much denied the power of choice and was told by my abuser that everything I did was not worthy of being considered something I wanted to do.

Everything I did had no value or was always poorly done.



Getting out of this trap was a long and painful process. For years, nobody knew what was going on in my home, nor was I fully aware of the abuse I was suffering. My abuser's manipulation made me question whether I was really wrong, leading me to believe that I deserved that treatment and that things could get better.

Even after I filed a complaint of domestic violence against my abuser, I continued to face daily abuse - verbal, psychological and physical.



For many years I had no clear vision of myself. Due to manipulation, I didn't know what I really liked, what I was feeling and how I was feeling it, I didn't really know what I was thinking and sometimes I didn't even allow myself to think about certain subjects.

These abuses left me with many questions and uncertainties - I didn't know who I was and there is nothing worse than living without knowing who you are, there is nothing worse than living in a body, in a house that you don't know.



For a long time I felt that I had a responsibility to look after and take care of everyone around me. Today, I realise that I'm the only one responsible for myself and that each one is their own responsibility.

Once I dreamt of my abuser accepting the help she so desperately needed in order to be a little better, and I wished for it and did a lot to make it happen. Today, that no longer weighs on me, because I've realised that I can't help someone who doesn't want to be helped.

At the end of the day, I am my only luggage, and in that luggage I carry what no one else will carry for me.

APAV - Portuguese Association for Victim Support

Victim Helpline | 116 006

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