

AN OPEN LETTER TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSERS

by Diane Hawkins

Dear Father,
Step-father,
Grandfather,
Brother,
Uncle,
Babysitter,
Neighbor,
Whoever you are--
You who see that innocent child playing happily in her yard,
lying peacefully in her bed--
You who are tempted to suavely enter her private domain and
take a little sexual joy for yourself,

My heart cries to you from its deepest depths, "BEFORE YOU TOUCH, please, PLEASE, PLEASE, oh please, consider what damage you are inflicting upon her."

"Just one time," you say.
"She won't be aware; she's sleeping."
"She's too young to even know it's wrong."
"She'll think we're playing."
"I won't go all the way."
"She needs to learn about sex."

Yes, you have your excuses, your reasons, your alibis; but deep down you know that it's your own self-centered pleasure and the need to feel your power that lies at the heart of this lustful desire. Oh, selfish man, will you not realize that the power of love and self-control is by far the mightier sword to wield. It leaves no scars of guilt or shame or remorse--no scars on you and no scars on her. Scars are forever, my friend. The wounds may heal but the scars never ever completely disappear. Do you really want to wound her? Do you really want her to bear the permanent scars of your selfish pleasure? What has she done, I ask you, what has she done to deserve such a destiny?

"You talk of wounds and scars and destiny," I hear you say. "I'm talking of only a touch, only a caress, only a feel. I do not mean to damage her."

And that is just why I am writing to you. You do not know the depth of agony that touch, that caress, that feel will cause that child to bear. The fact that she has been betrayed by one in whom she fearlessly put her love and trust will be too overwhelming for her to handle as a child. The reaction you see will be small or even one of positive receptivity as she drinks in the feeling of pseudo-affection for which she has perhaps been starved, but don't you know that down the road, yes, down the road some day she will have to deal with this memory of violation and abuse? Sooner or later she will know that those were hands that moved not in love for her, not in warm affection, but only for themselves. They took; they did not give. They took that which was most precious to her, that which was to be hers alone.

And then the pain; the searing, tearing, tormenting pain; will wrench the very depths of her being--the

pain of betrayal, the pain of humiliation and shame, the pain of being used instead of loved, exploited instead of protected. And that pain won't last just a day, nor just a week. It will go on for months and months and perhaps even years as she resurrects those long buried emotions which she could never express as a child, those emotions that subtly continue to hold her life in dismal bondage. They will all need to come out in order for her ever to be set free from their power.

It will take much strength and courage on her part to walk the long, fiery road to healing; but if she doesn't, she will continue to be plagued by deep inner hostility, depression, psychosomatic illnesses and malfunctions in many areas of her life. It will undoubtedly affect her ability to relate to men in a healthy way. She will be caught between the extremes of fear and sexual frigidity, on the one hand, and promiscuity on the other, knowing how to relate to men only through sex, forever craving the true love and affection she never got as a child. She will have difficulty in forming deep, trusting relationships. Her enormous load of repressed anger will unexpectedly explode at inappropriate times and usually at those she loves the most. If she has children, she may be hindered in developing the normal intimacy of the parent-child relationship. She may even be inclined to mistreat them, thus continuing the cycle of abuse. In any case, the joy of motherhood will probably be much decreased for her as she battles feelings of inadequacy, guilt, self-hate and depression. She will also be greatly predisposed to alcoholism and drug abuse, unconsciously trying to escape from the inner pain which haunts her so relentlessly.

These, my friend, are just a few of the damages she will suffer from your selfish act. Do you really want her to be marred in this way? Please, I beg you again, please consider these facts-- BEFORE YOU TOUCH!

Painfully written by . . .

One So Touched

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