

## **Excerpt from Chapter Thirty-Two: And Then There Were Seven**

In less than a minute, forty years of being left in the dark, forty years of not knowing her story slammed me backward. My face was covered in tears.

As I listened to what she described, I was once again overcome with shame and guilt. I was looking into the face of my little sister, and her face was filled with anger and disgust. No, her anger and disgust were not aimed at me. Her enmity and loathing were reserved for the two people who had made most of her childhood a living Hell. She made it clear her revulsion and animus were only for Henry and my Mother.

At age fifty-six, I was sitting on the couch of a sister I had not seen for years, and I was sobbing away saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't know. I had no idea until ten days ago. Until ten days ago, I had no idea he molested the two of you, too."

With a shocked look on her face, she said, "Whoa, wait a minute. You didn't know?"

"No, not at all. When I told James, he was just as stunned as I was. He said, 'What are you talking about? He got to the twins, too? When? In what house? How?'"

Shocked, she asked, "You guys really didn't know?"

Crying, I said, "No. Never. Not until ten days ago. Remember, during those seven years, we brothers had never heard anything about Brenda and Sharon being molested. We didn't find out until that day on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. What was going on was kept from us boys for almost seven years. Unless you girls had told us, there was no way we could know. Mom and Henry weren't about to tell us. After 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue when we found out about Brenda and Sharon, we thought you

twins had escaped him. We were sure you two were safe. I was sure he may have wanted to go after you, but he missed his chance when everything came out on 12th. Then ten days ago, we found out that we were so wrong, and like they did with our oldest sisters, Mom covered up what happened to you two as well.”

“Are you kidding!!!!” Her voice rose with a bite of anger.

“No!” I said, “The first I heard of it was from Sharon, who told me just a few days ago that you might want to share some information for my book. She said she wouldn’t give me details. She said you didn’t give her permission to tell me much of anything. She said you wanted me to know that something happened to you twins, too, but if I wanted details, I would have to get them from you. I was told you were willing to share the information if it would help tell the story and help other brothers with their pain. She said I should know you have some horror stories, too. One is much worse than anything that happened to her. That was all she would tell me.”

Watching tears stream down my face, she said, “Nicky, it’s okay. All these years you boys didn’t know, I had no idea you didn’t know what had happened to us. We just thought you boys didn’t care.”

I said, “We knew nothing. So this is why you twins stopped talking to us? You thought we knew what happened to you and didn’t care.”

“We sure did,” she said.

She then proceeded to tell me stories about what had happened to her, stories I had been sure could never have occurred because Henry had never gotten to her. I thought for decades she had escaped him, gotten away clean. He hadn’t molested her. How could he? After so much time has passed, how could I not know? I was sure they had told us boys everything in 1977. After 12th

Avenue, how could Renée and Teresa have kept something like that a secret, not after what we went through...not anymore.

Sure, Brenda and Sharon had kept it a secret for seven years, but they eventually told us boys on 12th Avenue, believing we could not be the only ones in the family not to know. Once they told us what he did to them, anything about anyone else should have come out that day. It had too. I was sure of it. The girls had no reason to keep additional molestations secret any longer, especially about the twins.

Sitting up straight, she began speaking softly.

“Let’s see. Where do I begin...”

As she began to speak, the look on her face conveyed each word before she voiced it. I knew before she completed her first sentence, “Let’s see. Where do I begin...,” he had gotten to them too. My stepfather Henry had molested all four of my little sisters, a goal I believe he had set when he walked into our house and into our lives for the first time that night in Gardena, CA, in 1966. That day I believe he looked around and saw four little girls and thought to himself, “Let’s see. Where do I begin, and when?” He must have.

My sister continued, “I know the first house and the first time were on 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. I was five or six-years-old. He once brought us three baby girls into his and Mom’s bedroom together and...” As I listened to her bravely tell me what happened, it was apparent what happened to Renée and Teresa was worse than what had happened to my two oldest sisters. . . much worse, at least based on what they have shared with me.

The twins had kept it a secret for the same reasons my two oldest sisters had years ago, threats of hurting or killing their brothers if they told us, guilt, shame, fear, intimidation – Molestation’s Fearsome Foursome – the same sick tools used by sexual predators against victims

all over the world, no matter the country, economic standing, education, political affiliation, religion, or race. It's always, always, always the same threats. It is mental and emotional terrorism at its worst because they are terrorizing innocent, defenseless children.

Before she began telling me her story, she also learned something from me that totally surprised her. During the years of our not talking, Brenda had no idea it was I who finally drove Henry out of our Victoria Ave. house in 1986. She thought one day he had had enough of our family and just left, or that my Mom had finally found the courage to put him out. She didn't know I had given Henry twenty-four hours to leave our house. She didn't know I told him if he stayed another day, I was going to kill him. Like my sisters keeping their secrets, I never told my sisters or my brothers that it was I, threatening death, who drove him out of our lives for good.

“The very first time he molested us twins, we lived on 53rd street. It was about 1970 or 71. That is the first memory I have of Henry molesting me. Even though what happened on 53rd was horrible, the worst things happened years later.”

I asked, “What could be worse than his molesting you? What could that possibly be?”

“I will tell you, but first, I'm going to share a couple of stories before I tell you that one. The first story is about me, and the second is about Teresa, I'm going to save the worse thing he did to me for last. Nicky; it's really, really bad.”

Listening to my sister, I was reliving all the stress and trauma of that day in 1977. Just when I thought I knew everything there was to know about my family, there was still more information shroud in secrets and lies.

After I had put Henry out of our house in 1986, I was positive I had saved my twin sisters from the horror. But now my world was being flipped upside down one more time with the knowledge that I had been too late. After all I did to try to prevent him from getting to the twins, I

learned he had beaten me to them. He had gotten to them ahead of me. Guilt and shame flooded my heart once more. As I listened to her talking, the ground underneath my feet began buckling and cracking. The more she talked, the wider the crack got, and the more powerful the earthquake inside my head pounded. Of all places, the past revisited me inside my sister's apartment. The quake had brought along an old friend, the Messenger of Misery, to remind me of the soul mark he had placed on my heart. A mark, like a compass, had guided the Messenger of Misery back to remind me I was to never be rid of him. Ever!

“Nicky, it was horrible. When it first happened, we were in kindergarten or the first grade, about five or six years old. The house was empty except for us three baby girls. All three of us were told to sit on the couch and wait until we were called into the bedroom. First he called Sharon. After a while, he called me in. After he was done molesting me, he called in Teresa.

When it first happened, Teresa didn't know what was going on because Sharon and I was called into the bedroom before her, and she was in the living room sitting on the couch, innocently waiting her turn. Waiting to be molested. Poor Teresa, she just sat there, alone, waiting, waiting, waiting.”

I can easily picture Mom's and Henry's dirty white bedroom door next to the front door of the house. Beyond that door was a room of nightmares for my sisters. With the bedroom door open, it looked like most any other bedroom. It had a queen-sized bed, two nightstands, two lamps, a short two-sided chest of drawers, and a battered white vanity table with perfume bottles haphazardly covering it. On the floor were two wire shoe racks – one for him and one for her. By all accounts it was a typical bedroom. However, when the door was closed, it was transformed into a chamber of nightmares.

“Whenever he desired us, we were in their bedroom with him, alone, for about thirty minutes at a time. As soon as I was in their bedroom, he had me stand in front of him while he sat on the bed. A bottle of lotion, baby oil or Palmer’s cocoa butter would be next to him.”

My mind reeled as I heard her slowly and calmly describe what happened. This had happened to her, too, on 53rd!

“After I sat on the bed, he said to me, “It’s okay. Your Mother knows, but don’t say anything to anybody.”

Listening to my sister I cringed because I’d heard this story before, except before, it wasn’t about the twins. It was about my two oldest sisters. It is all playing out the same way. He tells them, “It’s okay. Your Mother knows.” He reassures them they are safe with him. He uses his position of stepfather and protector to convey reassurance and comfort. He tells each of them that he cares and loves them, as he prepares to do horrific things to them. How perversely he manipulated the little girls, using the most powerful tools parents have – love and trust. How sick.

“He [Henry] would say to me, ‘Don’t say anything. It’s okay. Honey, I want to rub this cocoa butter on you. Before I do, I need you to take off your clothes.’”

I quickly lifted my head up and just stared at my sister. Tears flowing down my face, I shook my head thinking, “Not again! Not again!”

“Nicky, I took my dress off. When I was done, I was standing there, thinking to myself, ‘Okay what now?’ He then said, ‘Honey, I need you to take off your undershirt and little panties.’”  
What the fuck!

“Slightly tilting my head and shrugging, I said, ‘Mom knows?’ He leaned in slightly, and whispered, ‘Yeah, she told me it was okay to go ahead and do this to you.’ After I took off my undershirt and panties, I was standing in front of him completely naked. I was so scared. He then

said, and I'll never forget this, 'Now, lay down on the bed on your stomach, and open your legs wide.'"

My breath caught in my throat. No! No! No! Not again! Jesus, not again! Slowly, I closed my eyes. I could clearly see the scene playing out. It played out the same way it had played out with my two oldest sisters. I didn't know what to say or do. I was upset, I was getting angry. I was so sick of hearing about these horrors in my family.

When we lived on Exposition Blvd, my little sisters had matching blue and white dresses with polka dots on them. When they wore their matching dresses and matching scuffed up black patent leather shoes at the same time, they looked like triplets. They were so cute. I remember the day the three of them had a picture taken out in front of the house with our new puppy, Fluff. I keep a copy of this picture in a folder on my desktop.

They have smiles on their faces. Each of them is happy, innocent, unafraid of anyone or anything. The picture promises a life full of joy, happiness, and wonder is beckoning them forward, ready to embrace them. Whenever my youngest sisters describe Henry's molesting them, this is the picture and the clothes I imagine them wearing.

"Then he began pouring cold cocoa butter on my back, a few drops at a time. I can feel the drops hitting me, now. To this day, I hate the smell of cocoa butter. I can't stand that smell. Then he started rubbing my shoulders and back. Then he started putting cocoa butter on my butt and legs. He kept saying, 'Relax, it's okay.' He would rub, then pour cocoa butter. I turned my face away from him, closed my eyes as tight as I could. I didn't want to see his face.

"When he was done putting cocoa butter on my back, he started on my butt and legs. First it was my butt – rubbing and rubbing. Then he went to my legs. He spent a lot of time between my legs. When he was done with my backside, he had me turn over. I rolled over onto my back, but I

closed my legs and squeezed them as tight as I could. Then he started the cocoa butter rubbing again. He poured cocoa butter in his hands and then started rubbing my shoulders. Then he put some on my chest. Rubbing my chest over and over. He went from my chest to my stomach. I could hear him breathing heavy and fast. Ugh! I didn't like what he was doing to me, not at all. But there was nothing I could do, and I was too afraid to scream out for help.

“When he moved his hands down to my legs, he rubbed the top of one leg at a time. When he was done rubbing both legs, he said, ‘Honey, spread your legs apart.’ I didn't want to open my legs, but he used his hands to force them open. I was so scared I was shaking. Once he had spread my legs as far apart as he wanted, he started putting cocoa butter on my legs, and then he put his hand down there and... He spent a lot of time down there.”

“When he was done with me, I got up, and walked out of the bedroom frightened and shaking. I didn't turn around to look back at him. He told me to tell Teresa to come into their bedroom. I told her he wanted her, but I was too scared to tell her what he did to me and what he was going to do to her. She just got up off the couch looking at me. She was so scared. She walked across the living room floor, passed the front door, and went into their bedroom and closed the door. I sat on the couch with Sharon and waited until he was done with her. Nicky, he molested me so many times on 53<sup>rd</sup>.”

She continued, “The last time I remember his having me lie down on the bed and rubbing me with cocoa butter was when we lived on Wellington Road off Washington Blvd. and Crenshaw. He did that to me the whole time we lived there, from 1974 to 1976. Unlike when we lived on 53<sup>rd</sup> when he waited for the house to be empty, he started coming into our bedroom late at night when everyone was asleep.”

“Nicky, he came into our room and started all over again. But now he actually lay down next to me, to start rubbing the cocoa butter on me. Just as on 53<sup>rd</sup>, I could hear him breathing hard when he was rubbing me. By the time we had moved to Wellington Road, I was old enough to know his hard breathing meant he was probably masturbating, but I didn’t want to look. I kept my eyes shut. This happened over and over until one day he changed his approach. One day, everything was different.”

*“What do you mean everything was different! What did he do? Jesus, not that!”*