

Volume 1

The Inception

INDESTRUCTIBLE

Journey from Pain to Promise

ShaNita Nolan

Indestructible Volume 1

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INTRODUCTION

The family structure is broken and I know why. Parents and families are important in shaping children's ability to make good choices from an early start. It is vital that parents create environments that are healthy, nurturing, affirming, and loving in order for children to thrive and grow. In addition, parents are also charged with training their children and modeling Christ-like values, virtues, attitudes, and behavior.

Unfortunately, dysfunctional families are a reality in our contemporary times. Many parents, through no fault of their own, emotionally neglect their children and fail to model appropriate behavior. As such, some children are miniature versions of their parents, byproducts of their environments, and are the evidence of their parent's life failures. Consequently, when these children grow up, many will eventually experience failure in their own lives as adults. Thus, emotional and parental neglect can

become blind spots that, if not addressed, are passed on from one generation to the next.

After growing up in a dysfunctional home with parents who were broken and emotionally neglectful, I fully understand the depravity of children. Thankfully, in my case, after years of repeated failures, disappointment, and pain, my sad story takes a turn for the better. I was blessed to have had some great mentors who poured into me and who reminded me that God had provided me with the power and authority to rewrite my story. Not only that, I learned that I have the power and the authority to put an end to the generational curse. A generational curse that had robbed me of a healthy childhood and hindered my ability to connect with my emotions, and to have healthy relationships that model Biblical standards.

The seeds of longing to write about my life were sown a long time ago. It was only after a pivotal point in my marriage; however, did I gain the confidence to tell my story. Writing a book is a

serious undertaking. Even more so a book of this kind which unearths the various aspects and experiences of my life that have contributed to me becoming the woman I am today. Some of these experiences have been quite painful, even life altering; but all for the purpose of developing my character in God. I shed many tears as I recounted distant and suppressed memories of unprocessed pain, befriending them only long enough to examine the lessons learned so that I could pour out my heart to you.

Writing this book has helped me to put into perspective the traumatic experiences I've had in my life; and has also enabled me to move forward from the pain of my past to the promise of what the future holds. This introspection has helped to clarify choices made for me by important people in my life over the years, and to take ownership of, and responsibility for the personal life choices I have made for myself. These and various other reasons have strengthened my resolve to write this book. So,

irrespective of the tag or label that one may attach to this book-memoir, autobiography, family history, or something else, this has been an honest attempt to share some components of my life. Through the telling of my story, perhaps you will witness the vulnerability, humanity, and the challenges that children, young-adults, and women face as they navigate through this journey called life. This is more than a book; it is a guide to a spiritual journey that inspires hope, encouragement, and self-empowerment for those who are bogged down by fear, disappointment, shame, and failure in life.

My name is ShaNita Nolan, and this is my story.

Chapter 1

THE EYES OF A CHILD

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4, NIV

Children are not at liberty to choose their parents and vice-versa, therefore, it is truly "the luck of the draw." Children don't come with manuals so most parents are just winging it, or they simply replicate the behaviors modeled by their often emotionally immature and disengaged parents. Let's face it, some parents are broken, ill-equipped, and emotionally unable to care for themselves much less care for a child. Apostle Paul provides biblical instruction to all fathers regarding relating to their children. The scripture reads, "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up*

in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV). In reading this scripture, it is evident that there is an expectation for (fathers) to teach their children the ways of the Lord. In today’s society there are many single parent households; and in some cases, fathers are absent and not engaged in the lives of their children. Even if fathers are present in the lives of their children, many are broken, and emotionally deficient. Some also, lack godly character, competence, or convictions, and have no clue of the “ways of the Lord.” Although I recognize that the Bible references “fathers”, but mothers should also model the ways of the Lord. Mothers should create a loving and affirming environment in which their husbands and their children can continually grow and thrive. In reality, both mothers and fathers should model and exhibit the fruit of the spirit.

How can anyone teach something that they do not know for themselves? I am glad you asked. The answer is no one can give anyone what they do not

have, or in this case, a parent cannot teach a child what they do not know. Emotionally deficient and broken parents are incapable of creating an environment that is healthy, nurturing, validating, supportive, or loving. Parents cannot model a Christ-like attitude, love, virtue, or values if they do not study Scriptures; and if they do not seek healing, guidance, and wisdom from God or those individuals who can equip and pour into them. What I find sad is you can spend a lifetime being lost, broken, emotionally deficient, repeating failure, and modeling negative behaviors based primarily on negative thoughts and experiences that have been passed on from one generation to the next.

I grew up in a home with young, emotionally immature parents who provided for my physical health, welfare, and safety, but neglected my emotional well-being. I don't blame my parents for their state of being. They did the best that they could under the circumstances. I love them both

dearly, and I am grateful for what they did for me. Not unlike many parents, my parents were good people but lacked emotional self-awareness and solid parenting skills. As such, they each struggled to give my brother and me what we truly needed to be emotionally healthy.

During my childhood and adolescence, and later in life, the evidence of my emotionally deficient upbringing manifested itself in many negative ways. Ways, that would shape and form who I would later become as an adult. I struggled many years with learning how to handle stressful situations. I often stifled my voice, negating the value of my emotions, thoughts, and feelings. This formed a gaping hole in my heart that would continue to grow over the years, leaving me feeling emotionally isolated, unseen, and alone.

Over many years and even still today, I lack an emotional connection to my parents. I do not feel safe to share with my parents my hopes, fears, pain, or even my joys. For a long time, I thought I was

the only one who felt that way. That was until I met and married my husband. Spending these past 12 years by his side has revealed what a lack of emotional intimacy and a feeling of emotional loneliness can do to your self-esteem, ability to empathize with others; and to your ability to have and maintain genuinely healthy relationships.

While my husband and I have had different life stories, we both grew up in dysfunctional homes with emotionally immature parents who failed to provide emotional support, comfort, connection, and the care that we both desperately needed. While I was not physically abandoned by my mother as my husband experienced at the age of four, I was abandoned emotionally and grew up without sufficient empathy. Thus, I often felt insecure and rejected by both of my parents. That said, I am grateful to God for my maternal grandparents John and Dora (aka Madeah); and my paternal grandparents Dennis and Nettie Ruth

who provided me with some level of emotional support, comfort, and care.

I was born at Andrew's Air Force Base in Camp Springs, Maryland to a teenage mother on a snowy day on December 24, 1966. At the time of my birth, my father was a soldier in the United States Army, serving in Vietnam. When I was conceived, my mother was in her senior year of high school. My mother was a straight-A student who graduated with academic distinction as the valedictorian of her graduating class. Among her many awards and achievements, my mother also received scholarships to Temple University, Clark College, Franconia College, and Syracuse University. While out on the road with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), she had the opportunity to meet Civil Rights advocate and attorney Constance Baker Motley.

Since my mother already had a passion in life to advocate for people who were marginalized and disenfranchised, her introduction to Mrs. Motley

exponentially increased her inspiration to become a Civil Rights attorney. However, her dreams never came to fruition. She became pregnant and soon after graduating from high school, married my father. Before my parents got married, and after learning that my mother would not be taking advantage of her scholarships due to her pregnancy, my father promised my mother that he would eventually send her to college. However, soon after they were married; my father quickly changed his mind. When my mother relocated with him to Washington, D.C., my father told my mother, "Women don't need to attend college." According to my mother, my father believed women should be "barefoot and pregnant," taking care of their husbands, children, and their homes.

Although my father's first tour in Vietnam was mandated, after learning that you could receive a bonus for going to Vietnam, my dad voluntarily served two additional tours. During his absence, my mother worked for the federal government, and

attended Strayer College, which is now Strayer University and Washington College at night. After my father returned from his last tour in Vietnam, life for us changed for the worst. The once quiet man that my mother had married returned from Vietnam emotionally and mentally traumatized by the war. He was angry, depressed, and suffered from what they now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Back then, it was not enough for him to abuse alcohol and drugs; he was also physically abusive to my mother.

I recall a time when my father attempted to beat me with a clothes hanger because I was afraid to come to him at a family reunion in Florida. My paternal grandmother, Nettie Ruth, got so upset by my father's behavior that she had to take her "nerve" pills to calm herself down. My father only backed down after Grandma Nettie Ruth stood between the two of us. My father would often make a spectacle of himself, embarrassing and humiliating both my brother and me during many family gatherings.

My brother and I were frequently awakened in the early hours of the morning by the sounds of my father returning home after a night of drinking and womanizing. He would wake my mother up and demand that she cook something for him. He would also wake my brother and me and force us out of our bed and into the living room. Once there, we would be torn as my mother would tell us to go back to bed, and my father would tell us not to move. Life at home for my mother, brother, and me was often crazy and chaotic. Although I am naturally quiet, gentle, and soft-spoken; over time I became quite nervous and withdrawn.

The best times of my life were the summers and school years I spent with my maternal grandparents in Putney, Georgia; and in Enterprise, Alabama with my paternal grandparents. We spent the majority of our time with Madeah and Grandpa John in Putney, however, Grandpa Dennis and Grandma Nettie Ruth would often drive up from Alabama to pick us up to spend several weeks of the

summer with them. I always admired how well both my grandparents got along with each other; and how much they loved my brother and me. It was while spending time with my grandmother Madeah that I came to know and to trust the Lord. Madeah taught me how to pray, emphasized the importance of studying the Bible, standing on God's promises; and told me to trust God as my source for everything that I would ever need in life. She told me that God's grace is sufficient, and that He was my provider, protector, Redeemer; and that God could do anything without fail. It was Madeah who encouraged and inspired me to be the person who God created me to be no matter what.

Grandpa Dennis was a Deacon at his church and was very active in the Church of Christ. In contrast, my Grandfather John only visited the outside of the church when he came to drop off a truckload of food prepared by my grandmother for an evening service or revival. My grandparents owned 12 acres of land that had pecan trees, hogs, chickens, cows, rabbits,

a few goats, and several dogs, and cats. I have countless fond memories of mimicking Madeah by singing old hymns while gathering eggs from the chicken coup, or while assisting Madeah with chores around the house.

Wherever Madeah went, I was not too far behind. I especially looked forward to walking with Madeah through the fields on the way to Sunday school and church. We practically spent all day at the church on Sundays and I loved every minute of it. We would attend both Sunday school and the Sunday morning service at the church; which was pastored by my uncle, the Late Henry Chapman. After church, one of the highlights of my Sundays would be when my Auntie Marietta, Uncle Henry, and their children, Alvin, Towanda, Darryl, Michael, Jocelyn, and my favorite Thaddeus, would come by to finish off whatever food was left over from breakfast. Madeah was the best cook, and she would always cook enough food to feed an army. After eating, we would often rest up a bit and return

to church service in the evenings. My time with my grandparents, Auntie Marietta, and my cousins in Georgia were some of the most beautiful moments of my life.

Madeah was famous for keeping a stash of money rolled up in a handkerchief hidden away in her room. Sometimes she would quietly call me back to her room, go into her stash, and stuff some money into my hand. Madeah would tell me not to tell anyone, and I wouldn't. She also kept Juicy Fruit gum and peppermints in her purse at all times. Whenever I smelled or saw Juicy Fruit gum, I always thought of Madeah.

Madeah would often put snuff in between her cheek and gum. She also kept a small can with tissue at the bottom and would spit snuff into the box. I was mesmerized when I saw her spit out snuff out between her two fingers when we were out in the field working. Having no idea what it was at that time, one day I got into Madeah's snuff. I just wanted to try spitting out snuff between my two

fingers as I saw her do. I was horrible at it! Also, when I tried to spit out snuff, saliva ran down the side of my lip. It was so disgusting! I was thankful that Madeah did not catch me but I felt so guilty about it that I ended up telling on myself. Madeah chuckled when I told her what I had done, then she took me outside to demonstrate how she did it. She also told me not to touch her snuff anymore. I was grateful that she did not get a switch and tear my tail up as she often did to my brother who was always getting into something.

I was heartbroken that my mother stopped sending us to Georgia for the summers. It always gave me something to look forward to. I talked to Madeah as often as I could, but it was simply not enough. I needed the encouragement and unconditional love that she gave me. It was the kind of love that my mom was ill-equipped to provide.

By the time I was in junior high, I was so withdrawn and depressed that my mother believed I could benefit from counseling. While I am grateful that

my mother saw the benefit of counseling, it turned out to be just another reason for kids to tease me. See, my dear cousin thought it was necessary to explain to other kids why I left school early once a week. She told a few kids who then told other kids that I was seeing a shrink. Naturally, I was referred to as crazy. I also had a green birthmark on the side of my head that I hated, especially since this was a time when the television show, “The Incredible Hulk,” was quite popular. Kids would taunt me and say things like, “Don’t mess with her or she will turn into the Incredible Hulk girl;” and they would say, “You won’t like her if she’s angry.” If not that, the kids would ask if I got hit across my head with a frying pan, or they would make other silly jokes about me.

My mother worked two jobs while completing her bachelor’s degree at night. She often worked on Sundays and as a result, we did not attend church very much. Shortly thereafter, God would surely hear my prayers because we soon moved into our

new home. In our neighborhood, the Fairfax Baptist Temple Church sent a bus to pick up children and adults who wanted to attend service.

My brother and I were ecstatic, and we eagerly awaited the bus every Sunday morning. We sang in the children's choir and participated in other activities that took place at the church. This was exactly what I needed and turned out to be even more effective than the counseling. I was twelve years old when I felt compelled to accept Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. It was one of the most memorable and life-changing moments in my life.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with the person, and they with me.

Revelation 3:20, NIV