

# After

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*I'm dead. I've died with so much on my mind. I guess I can tell you. You won't hurt me. I've already paid the worst price. But if you want to, I will tell you my life story. Secrets I couldn't tell you. If I were alive. But, who am I? My name is Jesse.*

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<b>Chapter 0 - The First Year of My Life</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 1 - First Day of the First Grade</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - Second</b>	<b>4</b>

## 0 - The First Year of My Life

Where do I begin? Maybe with my birth. With the last minute flashbacks when you die, you see things so clearly.

Yeah, that sounds like a good place to start.

I was small then. A healthy baby, they all said. Healthy weight, healthy height. I was perfect, except for one thing.

My parents didn't want me.

"No, she can't be mine," my mother, Christa, said. "Too chubby. You must have switched her with someone else's. I don't want them to have their child lost like mine is. I'm so sorry."

The doctor looked at her like she was high. I wouldn't be surprised. "No, ma'am. This is your child. And she isn't too chubby. She's exactly right."

"Oh, well then," Christa exclaimed. "Why don't we just take all the 'exactly right' children!"

"Christa, please," my father, Jake, said. "Just let the doctor do his work and-"

Christa glared at Jake. "Please, dearest. Quiet down. Your constant babbling gives me a headache."

"Sorry, dear," Jake mumbled.

And if that was just my first few moments, think about the rest of the year. The next few years.

You have a good image in your mind.

Good.

Half way through the year, I started laughing. I found everything funny then. Christa said that my constant laughing "gave her a splitting head-ache, doll."

That just made me laugh harder. The harder I laughed, the more agitated she got until she smacked me. It never really hurt, but it shocked me into crying. After that, it was up to Jake to stop my crying. It worked, and he became my true parent then. No matter how many times he sucked up to Christa, he was my shelter. The strong man when I was weak. And, as I learned later, I would never have a man like that again.

# 1 - First Day of the First Grade

Since you already have a pretty good idea of my younger life, I should probably jump to the first grade.

I didn't go to Kindergarten, since they are no longer forcing you to go. I wish Christa and Jake would have forced me to go. Everyone was so far advanced in this whole thing, I felt confused. They told me that all my practice problems had to be turned in. What? For a grade. What in the devil was a grade? Soon I got used to that whole thing, and the practice just got harder and harder. I couldn't believe it! Why would they do this to me?

I had one friend. Her name was Rachel. She wasn't in my class. I needed her a lot, though I could only see her during recess. We made the most of every recess. Even when it was freezing outside, they would still force us outside. Rachel always looked for me, no matter what. I was happy for that. One day, Rachel came up to me, her face streaked with tears. This was one of my good days, so seeing her sad was hurtful. How dare she cry on my best day ever?

"Are you okay?" I asked her. She smiled at my concern.

Wiping away some tears, she said, "I'm not going to be here tomorrow. Or ever again."

Good day over.

I completely freaked. "No, you can't! You can't leave me, just like that! I need you! You don't know how much I would!" I started crying rapidly. "No! No! Don't leave me! You-!"

"Jesse, calm down," she said. "I'm sorry I can't stay. My mom got a new job an hour away. We have to move. I'm sorry."

It was a long time after that I became even close to 'fine' again. I tried to get over that. I really did. When Middle school hit, I was so depressed that I didn't really care for anything. Except for everything. I had a very weird childhood.

By the end of first grade, however, I managed one other friend. His name was James. I was happy for him. He finished the year on the honor role. And, guess what I got as a congratulations for finishing the year off right.

You got it.

Nothing.

## 2 - Second

Well, second grade. It was somewhat important. At least, one day. Yeah, that's when it started.

I was sitting with James. It was time for Science. We were lab partners. We had to find out if salt, sugar, or flour dissolved. I thought it was flour that did, but was proven way wrong. I didn't like to be wrong. And I wasn't about to stop stirring until it either dissolved or went all over the floor. Sadly, all it did was get over James.

"What did you do that for?" He roared at me. I didn't know what to do. "What, can't you take a hint? Flour. Doesn't. Dissolve. Get it now? Or do we have to carve it in you stupid, thick head?" I started crying. "I'm sorry, I didn't know." The tears came down faster than I could stop them. "I'm s-sorry. I di-didn't kn-know!"

"Oh, great. Now she's crying. Oh, we want to call your Mommy? So sad. WA, WA, WA! Ha-ha." Then he lost himself in his laughs.

The teacher wasn't in. Mr. Nugget never was during the experiments.

What I did next, I wasn't proud of. I'm still not proud of it. I punched him. Square in the mouth. He didn't see it coming. He fell on the floor.

"Who needs their Mommy now, huh?" I screamed at him. "Who's the baby now?"

Mr. Nugget came running in and saw James on the floor, blood running from his mouth. He never asked what happened.

After that, James never spoke to me again unless we were forced together as lab partners. He hated my guts, I knew it. But I couldn't tell him I knew. He was my only friend before then. I never got another friend after him. I didn't want to hurt anyone else. I didn't want to be hurt again.

Christa, when she found out, just told me that getting the calls from school gave her a headache.

Funny, everything that anyone did gave her a headache.