

Her Life

She was born on the 31st day of October in the year 1999 to two loving, and caring parents who promised to keep her safe for the rest of her life. It wasn't always easy, but now, 20 years later, they have kept their promise. When she was born she passed all of her hospital tests, hearing included which was important because her mother had been a deaf and hard of hearing teacher since she had graduated from college. As she began to grow up, she continued to easily pass all hearing tests. However, something didn't feel right to her mother so she asked her daughter's pediatrician if she could have her take a more elaborate hearing test. When she went for the test, her pregnant mom sat in the sound box watching her three year old daughter perform multiple hearing tests. When the tests are administered, the patient raises a hand when he or she hears a noise, this shows the audiologist what and when he or she hears. As the higher frequencies sounded, the girl sat there not even knowing that the noise had appeared. When the audiologist saw that the girl was not responding, she tried again. This time the same thing happened. The audiologist looked at the girl's mother, who had started to cry and cover her face with her hands. Looking at her the audiologist said, "I'm so sorry, she can't hear in the higher frequencies, but you already knew that, didn't you." After a few more tests to confirm what they already knew, she was then officially diagnosed as hard of hearing.

Later, her mother and father decided to tell their parents. They all sat down in their kitchen, as the young girl and her newborn sister played in the next room. When her parents broke the news, her grandmother on her father's side stood up and insisted that there was a mistake. At this exact moment, the young child walked up to her grandmother to see if she wanted to play. As the grandmother replied, she turned her head. The young girl then grabbed

her grandmother's arm, saying, "Grandma, I can't hear you when you do that. You have to look at me." After hearing those words, her grandmother thought back to all of their times together, realizing that this happened often, when she talked and faced away from her granddaughter, she wasn't able to hear her. This made her grandmother realize that her granddaughter might, in fact, be hard of hearing.

Fast forward two or three years. She was now ready to start school. Her parents decided that it was best to go to the school that had experience with children with hearing loss. She started at this school in kindergarten. She made friends, the kind that supported her, and whom she could stay in contact with after school ended. She did well in school, and moved up each grade level at the same pace as her classmates. Her life was good, until she reached middle school. In middle school she faced many barriers. Growing up most people had them, feared them, felt belittled by them. Middle schoolers often face bullying. This girl didn't have a typical bully, not the kind that sits behind her in class, or threw paper at her, no. She was bullied by someone much worse, her principal. When she started in middle school, she was excited. She wanted to prove herself to be a good student. Sadly, she fell behind in some classes, but she kept trying. Her principal saw that she had hearing aids and started making little comments in passing. This then led to small conversations, then to meetings where the principal told the 11 year old girl that because of her disability, she wouldn't get anywhere in life. Her principal, the person whose job is to protect her from this exact type of harassment, told her that she would never graduate, never have friends, never be loved by anyone but her parents. Slowly this young girl stopped being herself. She never wore her hearing aids; she stopped smiling, laughing. She started to believe that others were better than she was.

After three years her parents called their final meeting with her principal, the school board, and all of their daughters' teachers. In this meeting, her parents listened to the woman in charge of hundreds of children's education, unashamedly tell them what she thought of their daughter. She said that their daughter wasn't bright enough to complete her school. With no expression on her face, the young girl's mother listened to the principal tell her that her daughter wasn't enough. After an hour, she stood up, and from across the table looked into the principal's eyes and told her what she needed to hear. The first words that came out of her mouth were, "You're an embarrassment, not only to yourself, but to your school. You sat there for an hour telling us that our daughter, one of the students you're hired to protect, isn't good enough because she's different. You have no right to treat our daughter like this. You have no right to treat anyone like this. You shouldn't be able to run a school if this is how you treat children. If this is your method of education, I don't want my children to have any part of it." After this statement, she and her husband walked out of the room, and never went back again.

After leaving this school, she started over. After three years of torture, she was finally able to be herself again. It only took a few months for her classmates at her new school to notice her differences. Again, she stopped wearing her hearing aids, stopped talking to her family, and stopped being herself. Because she didn't know what it was like to be respected, in middle school or highschool, she went from one abusive boyfriend to the next. The years of being told she wasn't good enough caught up to her. Because of the adults, classmates, and boyfriends telling her she wasn't good enough, she suffered from mental illness. One boyfriend constantly abused her physically and mentally. For two years she was in constant torture, thinking it was love. As she slowly started to gain strength, self respect, and self worth, she tried to end her

unhealthy relationship, not knowing what he was capable of. As she tried to leave him, he kept coming back, physically and mentally threatening her. But finally she was able to say goodbye.

Her life shouldn't have been like this. It shouldn't have been this difficult, painful, suppressing. After high school, she actually gained self confidence, self worth, self love, and knew how to use those qualities to become the amazing talented, and strong woman she is today.

