

## **The Room.**

I have a room where only a few people are invited. It is not a physical room, of course, but rather an emotional space within me. This was always the case, especially when I was much younger, despite terrible, long-term, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, I managed to keep this room available for very special people only. My delusion was believing that perpetrators were a unique, scarce set of people, and that the new people I was meeting would be different. However, by the age of five, my character was set to rebel against all authority, even if it was trying to help me, and all physical contact, but especially by men, with the single exception being my father, who agreed with my mother to give me away at birth yet he came to get me back at five. No one knew of my rapes, beatings, solitary confinements, and threats of death because I never told anyone. And that was where I found myself; no one knew my story, and no one asked. At five years old, I was conscious of what I had experienced, and my experiences made me vigilant of adults because they were potential predators.

A predator to me was anyone who got authoritarian or physically close to me. Every opportunity that presented me with a choice to be with people or alone, I chose alone. That changed after I discovered girls. However, that changed just as quickly, with me preferring to be alone again at most opportunities. Being alone afforded me happiness and the peace of knowing I was safe. Having to go to elementary school, especially after kindergarten, was a terrible experience for me, because suddenly, teachers thought they were in charge of me. If they demanded I do something I didn't want to do, or had already refused to do, they didn't know my choice wasn't going to change, and I wasn't going to do it. Detentions, suspensions, and significant difficulties at home, including physical beatings, ensued, but still, I would not comply. My fear of people prompted my countermeasures to save my very existence..

Life became a mosaic of what I had learned and what I was being punished for not knowing.

Behaving had meant complying to rapes so I didn't get beaten, and that's what I knew. Memories of my short life hounded me.

Freedom entered my life at seventeen when my father ordered me to leave his house. I was finally big and strong, and I had learned how to win at life. I carried a gun and went places others wouldn't go; I went alone, unfazed and unafraid. I had a survival instinct that I could rely on. I was selfish with my friendships, always taking what I needed. Although I tried to give my best, it wasn't enough because I didn't know what society's expectations were. I took what I wanted until I felt as if walls were closing in around me. My fear of discovery forced me to flee to places where no one knew me.

And then one day, I came to know that my body was my room, and I needed to occupy it solely. I know that sounds like it should have been obvious, but it wasn't, probably because I was rarely allowed the requisite security or safety. Once I learned that I could claim and then defend my room, I set about making it a space that was mine alone and accessible only by invitation from me. I took down all the abuse pictures that I had saved, along with all the images that told the stories of the injustices, betrayals, and the negativity which had permeated and influenced the formative years of my life. The process was neither quick nor straightforward, but one that required me to focus, to learn to speak to myself positively and lovingly, and, finally, I was able to forgive it all, which, surprisingly, was the easiest part.

My room is spacious and uncluttered, and I love hanging out in it.

The End.

Written by Peter Skeels © 6-6-2025