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by Aubrey Booser

He never told me not to tell.
He never said this is our (little) secret.
In fact, while he was molesting me, he never
said a word.

How did he know I would stay silent?

He knew from experience.

This wasn't his first time.

He had learned that so far young members of his
family were proving unable to speak...not yet
capable of putting their fresh trauma into
words.

My first experience with sexual abuse left me
feeling paralyzed. I froze. I didn't start
kicking and screaming like we would all hope a
child would do. It's embarrassing even now to
admit, but I didn't fight back. I didn't say no.
I didn't run from the room in search of someone
to tell. I laid there, unable to move or make a
sound.

The morning after I was still processing what
had happened to me the night before. I was
trying to process it while my grandma was making
waffles and with him right there. Right next to
me at the breakfast table. What was I supposed
to say? He surely wouldn't admit it-he'd say I
was making it all up-that I was a little liar.

I would spend the night at my grandma and step-
grandfather's house almost every weekend it
seemed. When I was older my father would always

ask when I returned home (from anywhere) if everything was ok, and more specifically, if anyone had touched me. He would often add, "...because if anyone did..I'd kill 'em." Panic would immediately set in, and I would answer NO! as quickly as I could in hopes of ending the conversation. I had every opportunity to tell, but telling was never an option. My parents were best friends with these people. Me telling would ruin that relationship. More than ruin, my telling would end it. In a few minutes I could single handedly take my mom's mother away from her...one of my dad's best buddies. I was going to keep this secret for as long as I could. This meant I had to continue living life with my predator by my side for years. It was torture. When I was 15 I finally did it. I couldn't take it anymore. I did not want my abuser at my 16th birthday party or my high school graduation. I told my story. And what happened? He denied it. I was devastated. Thankfully, 45 minutes later he admitted everything he had done to me.

Soon after, my mom and I went to the police only to hear that my statute of limitations had run out.

My grandmother chose to stay with him.

My mom still lost her mother.

I finally had the courage to tell, and nothing good came from it.

If my statute of limitations had not run out, I could have sought justice.

He could have paid.

His future victims could have been spared.

I told before my 16th birthday. That was MY time.
No one victim's timeline is the same.

A victim of a coach may fear being cut from the team he or she has worked so hard to be on.

A victim of a boy scout leader may fear extreme embarrassment and shame of having a same-sex encounter.

A victim of a priest may fear not being believed when going up against someone so powerful.

A victim of a family friend may fear for his or her life if it was threatened.

A victim of a family member may fear breaking up the family.

Every victim has a unique set of circumstances.
A deeply personal reason for when and what they choose to share with others. And that choice should be their own, not the government's.

Thank you.

