

## Chapter 7

### Institutionalized

Once Rob was contacted. I was taken to a detention center in Colorado Springs until there was an opening for me in a lock-up facility outside of Denver.

Me: When I leave here, where am I going?

Guard: Speak to your caseworker. He's handling this.

I thought, what's with the secrecy? Where could they possibly be shipping me off to that has to be in such confidence? I would say, "Fine" to their empty responses.

Me: Then let me speak to my case worker.

Guard: He'll be here in a few days. He's checking on a few facilities for you, and I'm sure as soon as he finds something, he'll get in touch with you.

But a few days turned into a few weeks without any answers. Was he just going to leave me here and forget me? Why wasn't anyone answering me? Then finally one day he came.

Guard: Michelle, your caseworker is here to see you.

Me: I'm leaving? I guess he found a place for me.

Guard: Apparently so.

After getting what little I brought with me to the detention center, I walked to the front of the building, and there stood Rob.

Rob: So are you ready to go?

Me: Of course. I've been ready. Where are you taking me now?

Rob: We ran out of options as to where to place you. You keep running away from wherever I put you. This time you won't. I'm placing you in this facility until you're emancipated.

Me: Emancipated? What is that?

Rob: Until you're old enough to be on your own.

Me: That's two years from now. I'm only 15. What did I do that justifies being locked up?

Rob: Michelle, there's nothing else I can do. This has already been arranged. In the past, I let you choose where you wanted to go. You know that. But your behavior shows me that I can't trust that you'll stay where I put you. I didn't say a thing. He was right on all counts, though he didn't know why I kept running away from the foster home. All he ever saw from me was a delinquent girl.

It took a while to get used to all the rules at this Youth Center. Whereas before I had freedom, now every bit of freedom was a privilege given and taken by The counselors that controlled the center. I never could get used to that mentality, but I did conform after awhile. The facility was sectioned off into dorms, with one lock-up unit called "The Cells." Which for me ended up being solitary confinement.

~O~

There was a girl named Kara who used to share everything with me. Her grand parents would visit with her and every time they left she would look for me and share what ever they brought for her with me, on one occasion it was chips and salsa. She also had a pet rat and when ever she had her rat

usually running around on her shoulders she would ask me if I wanted to hold him. She always showed me that she cared. I would pal around with her in school trying to take what ever classes she took and always sitting next to her you never know what kind of day your going to have when you sit next to Kara. One day while in psychology class. The teacher was talking to the class about hypothesis, which is something expected to happen. Kara tore up a bunch of paper and she told the teacher. My hypothesis is that half of this paper is going to blow into the air and the rest will be stuck in the air conditioning vent and before the teacher could yell NO it was done confetti was flying every where. It was funny, another time Kara and I were in science class and we made a rat maze for our science project. At first the rat jumped over the walls of the maze so we sealed the top and the rat tried to run through. Then the rat ate through some of the cardboard walls, which wasn't part of the plan. So the third time we coaxed the rat through the maze putting cheese throughout the maze in the direction we wanted the rat to go. The rat once it figured out the maze ran it faster and faster, finally success we both got an A. We had a library on campus and Kara read so many books, she was very smart and funny. I loved her she was a very funny loving interesting friend. One day she was sad and didn't want to talk about it. I wrote I love you and I care about you over and over on a piece of paper I tore up the piece of paper and handed the notes to a few mutual friends to give to her. It made her smile and she told me she loved me too.

~O~

Teresa she was my class mate in math class. She lived in another dorm on the other side of campus. I was so attracted to her. She was a beautiful red headed girl. We were sitting in class and one day my heart started racing, I told her that I liked her a lot she sat next to me that day and during a movie clip she reached down and grabbed hold of my hand, she held it for the entire film, it was the most incredible feeling I ever had. I really liked her. The way she looked, the way she talked, and the way she moved. But when she went to her dorm she told the staff that I was attracted to her. I was questioned and told that I was not allowed to talk to the other girls. Whenever I would see her in the hall ways my heart would skip a beat, but I knew that she would tell on me if I spoke to her.

~O~

In my dorm room I became friends with a girl named Mandy. From the moment I met her, I knew we were meant to be friends. She seemed to be my opposite, which fascinated me to no end. I would spend every possible moment I could with her. Just watching her entertained me. She was such a perfectionist, and I had never met anyone like this before. I would ask her: "Why do you worry about your room so much? You keep cleaning and organizing it, and it's already clean and organized." She would just shrug off my question and laugh. I loved everything about her with the exception of one habit she had that I'll never be able to comprehend. It frightened me and made me anxious. I didn't understand it, and I couldn't do anything to stop it.

Anorexia / Bulimia

**Mandy and I would always sit together in the cafeteria, and I as always would sit there and watch her pick at her food. She wouldn't eat much of anything, and whatever she did manage to eat she would complain of being too full. I would push her to eat just a little bit more, and she would just to satisfy me. But as soon as we got back to the dorms, she was off to the bathroom with the intention of making herself vomit what little bit of food she had eaten.**

**Me: Why are you doing this to yourself? You hardly ate anything. You're too thin as it is.**

**Mandy: Michelle, go outside. I'll be there in a minute. I'm almost done.**

**Me: Stop doing that, Mandy. You're driving me crazy. You're hurting yourself. Can't you see that?!**

**Mandy: Michelle, I've been doing this for a while now, and nothing has happened to me. Just don't tell anyone, please. You know I'll get in big trouble if the staff find out about this.**

**Me: And you don't think the staff knows that you're still doing this? Look at you. You're a skeleton.**

**Mandy: Don't get mad at me. I don't want to have to do this, but the staff make me eat, and the food just sits there in my stomach. It's so uncomfortable. I can't very well burn it off; they hardly let us exercise in here. I know you don't understand. Just please don't get mad at me. Just let me get this over with. I'll be out in a minute, I promise.**

**Me: No, damn it. Stop it!**

**I grabbed her by her arms and tried to pull her out of the stall but she broke free from my grip.**

**Mandy: I said, I'll be out there in a minute, damn it!**

**Me: Fine! Kill yourself. See if I care!**

**I backed out of the stall, stomped out of the bathroom and slammed the door behind myself. As soon as she finished gagging, she found me pouting somewhere in the dorm area.**

**Mandy: I know you don't understand, Michelle. I know you just don't understand.**