

Autumn Raynne  
Memoir and Personal Writing  
University of Denver  
June 2018

Reminisce

*May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010*

*Sent from Monroe Country Jail*

*Received May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010*

*Arrived at Monroe County Dept. of Human Services*

*Dear Autumn—Hi Babey!*

*I just got your letter today. The one you wrote over a month ago!*

*I'm so sorry you never got one back until now, but I've been waiting to hear from you guys. I guess other people make decisions for you when you get something! It was such a cute letter! I know how much you girls love me—all of you, and you guys are my world—all I have to call mine! I miss all of you more than words can say, and more than you'll ever know! Time will make everything better—it's the waiting that so hard! I hope to keep seeing you guys once a week! I'm waiting until this weekend to get out. Everythings not over yet. I will have to go to court Aug. 28<sup>th</sup> that's when they decide my future. I wil be in contact with you when I get out—to see you (all). Unfortunately we cant' live together for a while. I'll work on that—I'm sooo sorry! I love you guys! I'm glad school is going well. I know you'll do good on our MCT Test you always do. I'm glad your having fun with sports that's good for you. It's also fun! Church huh....well, I'm glad everything is goin alright. I hope to see you soon. I miss you so much to. I don't really do much in here the only thing to look forward to is seeing you guys I don't have a phone—so I have no contact with anyone. I don't know whats goin' on out there. It's hard to pass the time when you have nothing. We do have a TV and microwave. Get to go out every few days. Food sux! Mail if someone sends it! Canteen—we order personal hygene, candy, cookies, drinks, Chinese noodles. My mom put \$ on me so I can get that stuff if I want. We get to look at*

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*guys in the yard, and hallway when the door opens like at breakfast, lunch, dinner time. Visit the girls in here play cards. I have a Walkman radio AMFM. And that's it! Well we clean our rooms, and dorm everyday except weekends. Saturday most of the time we clean out the shower, and take everything outside in yard to clean mats, and curtain. At 6 am they un-lock our cells, and at 10:30 we get locked down. Eat breakfast at 7AM lunch at 11AM dinner at 4 AM. You can snack in between just cant use microwave after 10:30. Well babey now you know what I've been doing. So bored tired of this place. By the time you get this letter I should be out (till august) so you cant write me back here, but I'll see you soon and let you know where I am. I love you! (heart drawing) and miss you guys soooooo much*

*Love Mom (another heart drawing)*

I folded my mom's letter and slipped it back into the envelope that my social worker, Ms. Jennifer, gave to me. The return address was from the Monroe County Jail, about 30 minutes from where I was living with a foster family.

"What did ya think?" She asked. It was mandatory that social workers read every inch of the letters sent from their parents to their children before they could pass them on. I hated it.

"Yeah."

"...That it?"

"Yeah, I liked it." I was sitting in the back seat of the car looking out of the window while wiping away a runaway tear off of my cheek.

My relationship with my mom is a complicated one. If you were to ask me her favorite food, favorite school subject, or her hidden talents, I wouldn't pass the test. Never did I feel like I knew her, although we lived together most of my life. Sometimes she was a stranger to me.

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When we were young, there was a lot of her working, but there was also a lot of us moving. I went to probably 5 or 6 different grade schools, all in different cities. Wherever we were, bad things seemed to follow close behind. It never mattered where we went. Something followed.

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“Autumn, baby, can you grab those bags?” My mom had us pulling out all of our belongings from the car, making up about 8 trash bags. Her friend gave us a ride to a storage facility from the homeless shelter we used to stay at. I was tired. Picking up the trash bags and carrying them into the facility hurt my arms, I just wanted to sleep. The next morning I didn’t know if I was going back to school.

For weeks since staying in the homeless shelter, mom would wake us up at 4 a.m. in the morning for our commute across Las Vegas so we could make it on time. First, we would ride the bus and then walk up most of the empty Strip, take more busses, and eventually reach my elementary school. I didn’t have a lot of friends in my second grade class. I didn’t want them to know that I didn’t have a home to bring them over to for play dates. I barely had clean clothes.

“Mommy, it’s cold in here,” my younger sister whined.

“I know baby. I know.”

“Do we live here now?” Chimed in my older sister. My mom couldn’t look at us after shutting us inside a small storage unit. We had one or two flashlights to help us see, and one of the spotlights were on my mom.

“No, silly. Just a couple of days and your auntie Lacey will come pick us up. We’re going back to California girls.” She had this cute kid voice that she used with my younger sister to make her feel better. Each of us had a jacket of our own that we could use as a makeshift blanket for the next couple of nights. All of our trash bags were in a pile towards the back of the unit.

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Mom wrapped her arm around me and together we all cuddled close, skin sticking against the plastic bed underneath us.

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The concrete hallways creeped me out. No doors, no people, just a cold and grey concrete tunnel. There wasn't a light at the end, but a door with a guard in front of it. He wore all black, with combat boots, a bulletproof vest, and a holstered gun on his hip. As my social worker led my sisters and I to the visiting room, I steadily stayed behind her to avoid the guard. After we made it to the end, he opened the door with a keycard and had us follow him inside where there were a few large, metal tables. My sisters and I sat at one of the middle ones, while Jennifer stood nearby.

We were looking at another door where the prisoners would come through anxiously. The last time I saw my mom was when she dropped us off at school over a week ago. They were still looking for Jay, her boyfriend who was wanted by authorities. About a week ago, I had broken my finger while playing soccer in my P.E. class, and we drove to another city just to go to the doctor. On the way back, we were stopped by police. After some questioning they let us go, but little did we know that we were followed all the way home. Not long after driving up, FBI and state marshal vehicles drove in behind us looking for Jay, my mom's boyfriend. He disguised himself as his identical twin and eventually they left. Then they took my mom the next morning for questioning and she never picked us up from school.

The moment I saw her, my heart dropped. Another guard walked her in; she was cuffed at the hands and feet, with a chain connecting the two pieces. Her hair was knotted here and there, and her eyes were dark and sunken in. As little as she was, the yellow jump suit kind of fit her. Well, it didn't really fit and she looked like a banana, but I was so happy to see her. We jumped

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up and had a group hug that lasted a couple minutes. Tears filled all of our eyes and we hugged again. I missed my mom.

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My high school robotics teacher gave me a ride by my house the evening before I would join the rest of the team at the high school. Early the next day our robotics team would travel from Gulfport, Mississippi, by bus to St. Louis, Missouri for the World Robotics Competition put on my FIRST Robotics. A few of my friends on the team were also going and we could not wait. I would thankfully spend some time away from home and away from my mom's asshole boyfriend, Steven. Recently he had become more abusive to my mom, and he has been taking any money that she had so he could buy alcohol and more cigarettes. Just the day before, he was throwing things in the kitchen in front of my mom yelling about how he needed a drink so damn bad. I hated that piece of shit.

The truck made its way down Commerce Street, about 5 minutes away from my high school. My friend Anna was in the front seat while I sat in the middle of the backseat so that I could see out of the windshield. As we started pulling up to my long driveway, I immediately spotted my mom and her boyfriend coming from the other end of it. My teacher slowed the truck down and stopped near the opening of the driveway as we witnessed the pair arguing. Steven's face was red and veins were showing, but we couldn't hear them. No one said anything, but then it all happened too fast.

Steven started shoving my mom to the ground and yelling even more, but she kept getting up and they continued into the street. I told them not to worry about it, but my teacher was speechless and didn't want me to stay at my house. I got out anyways and went into the house and gathered my things. I kept my cool until I made it inside. In the distance I could hear them

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still yelling back and forth, and once I went into my room I started crying. My mom embarrassed me in front of friends. She's never done that before, and it made me so angry. She never could for once choose us over her boyfriend, and her children were the ones that suffered the most. Here I sat on my air mattress with my head in my hands, sobbing. I just didn't want my teacher calling child protective services on my mom. I wouldn't have been able to bear it again.

When I left the house with my stuff an hour later, I saw the red and blue lights flashing down the road, with my mom and Steven leaning against the cop cars.

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"Okay girls, Stephen and I are going to bed now, but you can have your mother over for however y'all want in the living room. Have a nice visit, I'll wake you up in the morning before we go to the airport. Love you." My best friend's mother, Sandy, said as she closed the door to the living room. In the morning, my sister and I were going to fly to San Diego to live with Aunt Lacey and her two boys.

We didn't have much of an option, although I had more than my sister. Either I had to leave everything I knew behind for a better future, or I could have stayed in the high school's locker room with a few of my belongings, waiting it out until graduation. Never did I want to go to college in Mississippi, so I ended up making the decision to find opportunity elsewhere. It pained me, because this would be the last time I ever live with my mom again. Earlier my sister called her and told her where to find us so we could spend one more night together. My best friend's mom was kind enough to drive us to the airport in New Orleans the next morning so we had to be up early.

When my mom showed up, we altogether walked down the street to a K-Mart for snacks. The whole time we goofed around, and everything seemed close to normal again. Before the

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boyfriends, before foster, before the heart ache. I hated that we ended up being evicted from the house, and that my mom ultimately put us in this situation. She finally hit the point to where she couldn't take care of her own children anymore. We watched a movie when we got back, and we just snacked and talked. We reminded each other of my concerts, our late night grocery shopping sprees, the time I went to one of my sister's street fights and ended up running from the cops. My mom wasn't ready to say goodbye.

It was around 11 p.m. when my mom said, "Hey girls, it's getting kind of late. I probably have to go now, I have to walk back up to Steven's mom's place and it will take me a while." We sat in silence for a few seconds, and we walked her outside to the driveway. We hugged, and my mom would ramble on through tears about how much we needed to stay together and take care of each other; we were all we had in this world and we would be okay, and we would do well. We watched her walk down the street with the only dim lamppost shedding some light her way.

"Mom! Wait!" Skyla yelled to her, and she started running toward her, with me following quickly in suit. We tackled my mom one more time, and this time the hug lasted a little bit longer.

"Girls, I love you so much. I'm so sorry for this. I love you so much." She let us go and she once again walked down the street, eventually becoming a silhouette in the lamp-lit night.