

In the darkest part of St Hartins town I stood about to board a bus to get away from the town that has a very dark aura. I'm leaving home and everything it offers. Freeing the people of my existence. As I finally got on a cut and joined vehicle as hastily as I could for fear that the inside people had noticed my disappearance. I'm being very paranoid right now as I do not know what awaits me on the other side of St Hartins. Once we had gotten to a very good distance from my city, I decided to rest my head and calm my mind. It is indeed a big step I have taken but not taking the risk is a risk instead. Now I will share my story with you.

My name is Lundyn. The girl that everybody thinks is a burden. So today I have decided to run away. And free everyone of their burden. At least I can do just that. But now I'm beginning to think if I made the right decision to find peace and sanity.

I stayed with my family of five and I was the middle child. I wasn't actually suffering but my needs were neglected. I was the disappointment of the family. Although my grades were good. They were just disappointed altogether. My mom would leave every house chore for me while my siblings would lazy around and make more mess. When I try to talk about it they'd say I complain too much for my age or I'll be a parent tomorrow and my kids will mess up the place and if it's how I'll complain then. I never really asked for anything knowing fully well it will end between the lines of "entitled, demanding, ungrateful and unworthy". I never really had friends over to the house for the fear of my parents embarrassing me and them. I wasn't taken to parties because I was hyperactive and they just didn't know what it was. I was told to stop smiling because my teeth were too big and my gums brown. They'd never allow me a new dress except for hand me down from my older sister. Sometimes I feel the need to be jealous. I do get jealous. Jealous of my siblings. Jealous of the freedom to express speech without sounding disrespectful. The freedom to say no. The freedom to ask for things without being demanding. I longed to be heard.

It's not an easy fit to be the middle child especially in an African home.
In my African home. Sadly.

I do anything and everything to make the people around me smile at me but it never seems to work. It's either you do it and they complain it's not good or you don't do it and they say you don't do it at all.

Most of the time, I feel cursed. Useless, because the way they smile when the first and last child impresses them is not the way they smile when you surpass their expectations. You'd think nobody cares and they all call you the disappointment, the mistake, the black sheep and it leaves me wondering where and when did I go wrong.

Why is it that they don't ask for more from my siblings or make their efforts look like nothing. But my case was different. I tripled my efforts.

Just to see them approve of me and hug me the way they hugged the first and last born.

I felt love deprived at one point. I thought I was never good enough. They made me think I was nothing, called me names they'd never called the other, worthless. I was sad.

Maybe it's because I'm naturally judgemental.
Maybe it's because I'm filled with hate.
Maybe it's because I didn't feel like it, so I chose to hate it.

Maybe it's because I felt pressured and I just wanted to be Free. Maybe..... there's a lot of maybes.

Maybe I was too temperamental to figure and understand people inside and chose to give people outside me!. Then I got ruined by their negative judgment and decided I was no good. Too jealous of the love I didn't receive so I avoided getting the love I needed or supposedly deserved. or I just wanted to rebel against the people around me because I saw I was no good and would never take correction so I decided to fight back. if I had just stayed to understand and never to seek help from outside. if I had just loved myself and allowed people to love me. if I didn't feel abandoned, dejected,hated, rejected all the time. If I didn't have an answer for every question. if I wasn't trying so hard to please the inside people and look perfect unto the outside ones. if I had learnt to be grateful like they said I wasn't. if I was forgiving as I thought I wasn't. I was happy just for myself, maybe things would never be so difficult for me. I never had to compare myself to others because It has been instilled in me by the inside people who posed to be so perfect and make me feel less, unworthy, unwanted, undeserving. Maybe..... just maybe if I was obedient like I know I wasn't. if I had listened to instructions like they said I didn't. if I didn't choose to go against every order from every adult. if I didn't choose to turn a blind eye to every person that had good intentions for me..... Maybe if I didn't feel so cursed.

it's built over the years. the guilt I mean.

I have become depressed and the depression keeps building day by day. The foundation has taken root and solidified deep inside my heart. my heart is now a dark place and I no longer see light. I have become wanton for attention. The jealousy and envy I feel towards people who are able to smile without feeling guilty.

I have become worse than an attention seeker. I have become what I most hate.

I have begun to despise my innermost being.

the thought of not being good enough, manageable.

I'm what Nigerian mother's refer to as "e nor let Dem chew e nor let Dem swallow".

The inside people who posed to be so perfect make me feel less than trash on the moat side. that being able to stand my own ground at an early age is a demon possessed behavior instead of just being a stubborn and strong willed child.they called me destructive because any thing I would touch would "magically" break and they called me a liar because I wouldn't own up to those accusations and had an explanation for every damn thing I did.

most times I would think if all middle children were cursed with being the disappointment of the family. but my own disappointment was strange.

and I would think that I'm the only cursed middle child left in the world because the rest are cut off from their own inside people.

that I would not have an innocent children's fight without being called a bully.

I don't know who to blame for making me unwanted. them for the way they treated me or me for not being able to belong.

The things they did and said to me are forever engraved in my heart and I can never forget.

2 months ago

It was a Friday morning that happened to be our school's end of the year party. Like every other time I wasn't bought a party dress and shoes. I had on a dress my older sister wore to her junior

secondary school graduation. It was a little bit torn but there was nothing a little thread and needle couldn't fix. I had sewn it and made it look presentable but my spirit was lifted. My mother had gone to the market and spent half of her savings to buy my brother the reigning "timberland boots and chinos trousers. I looked with envy as she dressed him up that morning and I wondered why I got no such treatment. Moving on, it was raining outside and she gave him an umbrella and told me to watch him so he doesn't lose the umbrella. "Why do I get to watch him when you gave the umbrella to him? If he loses it then it's his fault". I said out of annoyance for my mother's misplaced judgment. I wasn't ready for the slap that came next. "You think he's going to remember where he keeps it when he is done playing with his friends? You come home without this umbrella and see what will happen ". My mother screeched. I was deeply hurt that she didn't think I would love to play as well. Either way I held my tears till I was out of her sight. Once I had gotten to the bathroom I let it all out. Who should see this happening would think I am a house help. I stayed there until I was sure my face was rid of tear streaks. I had learned to hide my little facial expressions from a little age. At the arranged time of the party she boarded a bike to take her and my brother to school expecting me to trek after washing the dishes on the sink. Left for me I wouldn't have gone to school if I hadn't had awards in my name. I washed the dishes and cleared up the places that needed clearing and ran out. My body made my movement smoother as I wasn't really heavy. I got to school in no time to see my mom and brother waiting at the gate for me. She gave me the look of "watch this umbrella and my dearly beloved son" before leaving the school premises. Immediately I stepped foot into the school compound, my worries fled and I began to look for my friends. The few friends I have made looked at me with weird faces and I already knew they were directed at my gown and filed slippers. I ignored it until they started taking pictures and pushing me away. They'd leave me out of every conversation because I "couldn't relate". I took the hint and looked for where to sit. Waiting for my awards in due time. After a while the MC ordered for a quiet place and the school supervisor began with the announcement for awards. I waited eagerly and patiently until it was my turn and they called me over and over and my name was finally cleared from the list of award winners. With joy in my tummy I rushed home to show my parents my awards but stopped abruptly remembering my brother and the umbrella. I ran back to school as fast as my legs could carry me and began to frantically search for my brother. I finally saw him but without the umbrella. I slowly approached with a pit in my stomach from fear. "Where is the umbrella?" I asked to receive silence. He was staring at my hand filled with gifts from the awards calling. Only then did I notice there was nothing in his hands, not even the umbrella. "Where is the umbrella?" I asked again but he still didn't answer. So I decided to bring him out of his trance with a slap. At that point he looked at me square in the face and slapped me back. Shocked from what just happened I slapped him again and we engaged in a barrel on the ground. People tried to separate us and finally succeeded. The fight ended with me panting and him crying. I picked my belongings on the floor I forged out in search of the umbrella. After multiple and endless searching I gave up, hoping my mother would understand but that was just my wishful thinking. Knowing my mother, she will stop at nothing to make sure I paid for that umbrella even if it was with my tears. I got home ready for the beatings I know would come for losing the umbrella and fighting with my brother. I knew he was taken home by my mother's friend and obviously she will pin all the blame on me. At this point I just didn't care if I was wrong or right. I knew they would always see what they wanted from every situation. I was beginning to

get tired. I saw my mother at the gate with my dramatic brother. Inhaling the stale air, I braced myself for what's to come. "So you misplaced the umbrella and beat up my son? Is that what you've been doing behind my back? Maltreating my son?". Is she serious right now? I asked myself. Is she really talking about maltreating? I tried not to roll my eyes, hoping this should be over quickly. While she went on and on with how I was maltreating her son I looked my so-called brother dead in the eyes knowing he had lied to my mother or maybe her friend did because every single thing she said was a lie. She just wanted to have a reason to hit me today. She dragged me inside the compound and slapped me for the second time that day but it didn't sting so the beating will be subtle. She continued to hit me, when she didn't get any reaction from me she tore the dress I was wearing. That gave her the desired reaction. She let me go and turned to my brother as she calmed down from the boost of strength from beating crap out of me. I went to the room I shared with my sister and dropped my awards on the floor and got a dry rag to clean off the sand from them. While still cleaning my mother burst into the room with rage in her eyes. "Oh God not again" I whispered under my breath. " Why did they not reward my son and why did they pack all these for you?" She asked a question that sounded absurd. "Mama these gifts are mine because I merited them. He wasn't given anything because his name wasn't on the award list" I croaked holding my tears knowing what was about to happen. "So you think you merited all of these gifts and your brother didn't?. In Fact let me see, there's rice and there are books. Give them to your brother immediately and enjoy your certificate with your name on it". She dictated taking the refreshments while leading my brother out of the room. There I sat staring at my empty bed. All that I waited for from the beginning of the term was taken away from me to satiate my younger brother. At this point I was tired of these people. I couldn't live like this forever. I was depressed and slowly fading. I needed an exit from all this negative energy.

Present

Series of similar incidents followed. I kept on planning my escape slowly so as not to raise suspicions. I kept friends at arm's length. I never had a boyfriend for the fear that I'll be caught and disgraced. Now I'm free. On the road to nowhere in particular. The last bus stop I'll begin my new life. I rather be suffering under people I have no blood ties with. Do I feel guilty? No. I have freed them from the eye sore they've always complained about. Now is my turn to truly live.