

## *Dear Diary,*

**T**oday, I am journaling my story. I am giving an account of what it feels like to be the mother of a victim of a violent crime....sexual assault, to be specific. Perhaps it will make a difference in the life of another mother who may be going through a similar situation. Perhaps it will bring strength, comfort and hope to other family members who are surviving the trauma associated with their loved ones' encounter with violent crime, not only here in Trinidad and Tobago, but across the globe. But, of equal importance, it is the first time that I am actually sharing this information with anyone, so hopefully it will bring some measure of relief, closure and healing for me as well.

When I think back to that eventful night in question, and I reflect upon my first reaction to the news when I heard it, I sit in wonder and amazement at the awesome God whom I serve.

*“It is a dreadful thing to be the mother of a rape victim and the mother-in-law of a victim of a brutal chop wound.”*

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The truth is, I really did not understand what my daughter was saying to me when she called me on the telephone, after the incident on that fateful night. Her voice was in a state of panic...I thought she was telling me the baby was coming...I thought she was going into labour (because she was pregnant and almost due). But what I heard her say at the tail end of her panic-stricken appeal was, “...look they going with the vehicle.” At that point, I was jolted into the reality that it was not the baby that was coming, but realized that there was some sort of criminal activity taking place....bandits were stealing my daughter and son-in-law's vehicle. So I quickly ended the call with my daughter and dialed my son and my eldest daughter to alert them of what I just learnt about the vehicle being stolen. They told me they were on the way down to my daughter's home, so I told my son to pass and pick me up.

*Diary...* as a mother, there is nothing that could have prepared me for what was about to unfold as the night progressed, almost in slow motion.

When I first arrived at my daughter's home, I did not see anything different or out of the ordinary. As a matter of fact, I did not go into the house at that point but remained in the garage area. I really wanted to go into the house to use the bathroom, because from the minute I received the news when I was at my home, I felt like I wanted to urinate. But in all the excitement, I did not get an opportunity to do so, plus my son had arrived to pick me up. I still wanted to use the bathroom, but I felt like I was bolted to the ground, so much so, I was unable to venture inside.

*Diary...* while standing in the garage, I am feeling my blood freezing cold...my blood felt like it was turning into a block of ice....inside of me is panicking, but I am hearing an inner voice telling me, “**be calm, be cool.**” How on earth was I expected to remain calm and cool when I had no idea what was the state or condition of my child and my son-in-law? With much difficulty, I tried to remain calm, but I still did not dare go inside. I kept consoling myself saying, “at least, my eldest daughter was inside with her.” However, the need to pass urine became even more overwhelming for my bladder, and I soon had no

other choice but to go inside the house to use the bathroom. I asked the police officer who was standing outside the door, if I could go in. He told me I could, but that I should walk more at the side.

“Walk more at the side?” I asked him, with a confused look in my voice.

He said, “Yes, I do not want your hands touching and contaminating anything that would require police fingerprinting.” So I obliged.

But *Diary*, in the midst of all this, I am trembling like a leaf, on the inside.

When I went inside the house, I did not see my daughter....she was nowhere in sight. But when I reached the entrance to the toilet, the urgency to pass urine disappeared instantaneously.

*Diary...* the pool of blood I saw there at the entrance to the toilet, made my blood crawl. It was at that point that I discovered that that was the location where my son-in-law was brutally chopped.

*Diary...* I did not know how to cry....there were no tears...everything inside me just seized up...I wasn't scared, I wasn't worried...I was just there...numb!

When I stood there and looked at the blood on the floor, I said, “Jesus, if all that amount of blood come out of my son-in-law and he still alive, Jesus, I thank you!”

With that, I made a right-about turn and headed back outside and stood there, no longer feeling any sensation whatsoever to use the washroom.

On my return outside of the house, the same police officer who was standing there earlier, asked me, “Yuh alright?”

I asked him why he asked me that, to which he replied, “Yuh look like yuh see a ghost.”

I replied, “I did.”

*Diary...*

I remained outside until my two-year-old granddaughter awoke from sleeping and a neighbor brought her outside to me. I cradled her in my arms. She was asking for her mother. Now I had to answer her questions, not knowing what to say to her... not knowing how to react so that she does not panic. But in her spirit, she knew something was not right. That child knew something was dreadfully wrong! I have no idea what time I had arrived at the house, but I knew we remained there until the wee hours of the morning until the police left. I still remained outside. I did not go back inside. At that time, I don't know what else had transpired ....I did not even know what condition my own daughter was in at that time.

But *Diary*, when the dust cleared on the days that followed, and I was at my eldest daughter's home, I began getting bits and pieces of the story which I then pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle. My daughter did not want to tell me the whole story...she did not know how I would have reacted or responded to the truth. She did not even want her own sister to hear what had occurred.

Eventually, she told us.

*Diary...* to tell you the truth, I am still numb. It's almost three years, yuh know... but I am still numb.

There was a Sunday when she was relating us part of what happened...My eldest daughter started to bawl when she heard what really happened to her sister...***I had to tell her to calm down...take it easy...relax...relax.*** You know what it is like to be told by your daughter that she was savagely gang-raped by three bandits, during the latter half of her pregnancy? You know what is like to know your son-in-law lying in a hospital bed with a severe chop wound to his head, fighting for his life?

*Diary...* I felt numb when I heard the news ....I had no tears, nothing....and I am still numb.

But you know what has kept me, *Diary...* I said to myself, "They could have been dead!"

My eldest daughter said, "It was better they was dead!"

*Diary...* but I am still seeing God in it...I was looking at the bright side of this tragedy... tried seeing the good out of it, as a mature person. They still alive *Diary!* They still alive!

I asked the Lord, while standing in the front porch one night, "Lord, you does tell me things, (that was a Tuesday night...I won't ever forget that day)... I was in Laventille all day long, praying and ministering to people all day long, and tonight this is my report? You eh even tell me nothing? You eh even give me a sign that this was going to happen?"

**The Lord replied, "This is not between you and them....this is between Me and them."** And

that is what fix me...that is what stabilized me....I have never asked Him that question again.

**Instead, I keep thanking God everyday, for saving their lives.**

But you know what keep me too *Diary...*

I could never imagine what was going through their minds when this horrible event was taking place...but my daughter

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*She said, she could have fought them...yes could have fought for her life, but when she saw what was happening to her husband, she decided to stop fighting. Her husband too could have fought them...fought for his life, but when he saw what was happening to his wife and the fact that it was impossible for him to defend her, with a massive chop wound to his head, he too decided to stop fighting. Each of them, in the midst of their crisis, was looking out each other. If one of them was selfish in any way, it would have cost the other one his or her life. Somebody would have died! Definitely!*

*Diary...* I am learning everyday to be sensitive to their emotional state and to be a source of prayerful support to them and their children (my adorable grandchildren).

I remember... it was two days after the incident, my daughter (who is the victim) took her distraught sister by the hand and was able to comfort and reassure her with these words: ***“They can touch my body, but they cannot touch my soul.”*** With those words, her sister said she felt a surge of relief and peace enveloping her; that which has kept her heart and mind to this day.

But I still see God in all of this, *Diary*. I still see God. They could have been dead... they could have been paralyzed. But God is so awesome!

***I continue to thank my God that He did not allow them to die. I thank Him for choosing to keep them alive for a godly purpose.***

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*Excerpt from an interview with a Mother of Victims of Sexual Assault*

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