

One Woman's Courage

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Table of Contents

[Chapter 1 Growing Up](#)

[Chapter 2 Problems](#)

[Chapter 3 What Should Beth Do?](#)

[Chapter 4 Courage](#)

One Woman's Courage

Chapter 1 Growing Up

George and Betty White lived at 332 Oak Street. They had a two-year-old. Her name was Beth. George and Betty's best friends, the Connors, lived at 336 Oak Street. Tom and Jill Connor had a two-year-old. Her name was Jean. The two little girls liked to play together.

Betty and Jill had coffee in the mornings. Beth and Jean played with toys. Betty and Jill said, "I hope our girls will always be friends."



When they were five, the girls went to kindergarten. Beth walked to Jean's house, then they walked to school. They liked going to school. They were best friends.

When Beth was about ten years old, she heard her mom and dad fighting. It made her feel bad. She went to Jean's. She told Jean, "Sometimes my parents fight. It makes me feel bad."

Jean said, "Stay with me til you feel better. It will be okay. Don't worry."

Beth said, "I try not to worry, but I don't like it."

A few weeks later, Beth heard her father shouting at her mother. He said some bad things. Beth heard her mother cry. That made Beth want to cry, too. She told Jean about it. Jean said, "Let's go for a walk. It will be okay."

It wasn't okay. George shouted at Betty a lot. One night Beth heard her father hit her mother. She heard her mother cry. She heard her father say, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'll never do that again."

A few weeks later, Beth heard the same thing. She hated it. She said to herself, "I will never live like that! I will never stay with a man like that!"

Beth told Jean about it. Beth said, "I wish I could live at your house. I wish I had enough courage to tell Mom and Dad I want to live with you, but I don't."

Beth stayed at Jean's many times over the next years. When the girls were teenagers, they were still best friends. They started to date. They had fun together.

Three years later Jean said to Beth, "I have been going out with Ron for a long time. We want to be married. We are so happy!"

Beth gave Jean a hug and said, "I am so happy for you and Ron! I hope you won't live too far away. I will miss you!"

After Jean and Ron were married, they lived in an apartment. It was a long way from Beth's house! Things were better at Beth's house. She never heard her father shout or hit her mother again. Beth missed her friend Jean, but she didn't stay at Jean and Ron's very much. Now that Jean was married, it wasn't the same.

Beth met a good-looking man at work. His name was Todd. He asked Beth to go out with him. Beth was happy to spend time with Todd. Todd was always nice to Beth, but sometimes he was not very nice to other people.



One night, Beth and Todd went for a hamburger. It was very busy and the waitress didn't come for a long time. When she came, she said, "I'm sorry you had to wait. We are so busy!" Todd said, "You should work faster! I don't like to wait." Beth felt bad for the waitress. She said to herself, "I wish I had the courage to tell Todd how I feel."

Sometimes Todd and Beth went to see Jean and Ron. Beth and Jean were happy to visit. One day Jean said to Beth, "Ron and I are going to have a baby. We are so happy about it."

Beth was happy for her friend. She thought, "I wish I were married. I would love to start a family."

When Todd asked Beth to marry mm, Beth said yes right away.

Beth and Todd got an apartment a few blocks from Jean and Ron's. Beth made the apartment look nice. Todd had a good job in a factory. Beth worked part-time in an office. They saved as much money as they could because they wanted to buy a little house. Todd was very careful with money. He wanted Beth to tell him about every penny she spent!

Chapter 2 Problems

One day Beth phoned Jean. She said, "Todd and I are going to have a baby. I don't think Todd was very happy about it when I told him. He said he was, but he went to the living room and watched TV for the rest of the night. I think he is worried about not having enough money to buy a house."

Jean said, "Come over for coffee tomorrow night. We'll talk it over. It will be okay."

The next night, Beth said to Todd, "Jean and Ron asked us over for coffee and I said we'd come."

Todd said, "I wish you would ask me about things before you say we'll do them!" Beth said, "I'm sorry, Todd. I'll remember next time."

The four friends had a good visit. Beth loved to hold Jean's baby girl.

After they left, Ron looked worried. "What's wrong?" asked Jean.

Ron answered, "I don't think Todd is very happy about their baby. He is worried about money. He wants to buy a house. It seems very important to him, maybe more important than the baby!"

Jean said, "Beth is worried, too. She said she wants to work right up until the baby is born. That way they will have money for a down payment on a house."

A few weeks later, Beth called Jean. She was crying. "Oh, Jean!" she cried. "I feel so sick and tired. I have to stop working. I'm afraid to tell Todd. He is so worried about money."

Jean said, "Can I come to see you? We can talk about it."

"No," said Beth. "Todd will be home soon." "Call me tomorrow," said Jean.

The next day Jean waited for a call from Beth. Beth didn't call. She didn't call the next day. Jean called Beth and asked Beth if she was all right.

Beth said quietly, "Todd is going out. Can I come over?"

Jean met Beth at the door. Beth looked tired and sad. Jean asked, "What's wrong?"

Beth answered, "I had to tell Todd I can't work any more. He was so angry! He shouted at me! It was just like Mom and Dad. Oh, Jean! I'm so afraid!"

Jean felt bad for her friend. She said, "Maybe Todd will be happier when the baby is born."

"I hope so," said Beth. "I really hope so."

Chapter 3 What Should Beth Do?

Beth and Todd's beautiful baby girl was born a few months later. They called her Lori. Beth loved her so much! Todd liked to show Lori to people. He always said, "Pretty nice baby, eh? She's the best!"

Lori was a happy little baby at first. Then she got her days and nights mixed up. She slept all day and she was up most of the night. Beth stayed up with Lori because she wanted Todd to get a good sleep. She tried to keep Lori quiet.



One night Lori cried and cried. Beth couldn't get her to sleep. No matter what Beth did, Lori cried. Todd woke up and he couldn't get back to sleep. He got up and shouted at Beth, "Can't you keep that kid quiet? I need my sleep!"

Beth said, "I'm sorry!"

Todd went back to the bedroom and slammed the door.

In the morning, Todd said, "I'm sorry about shouting. It's just that I need a good sleep when I go to work so early."

"I know," said Beth. "That's okay. Lori won't cry every night like that!"

Everything was fine for a few months. Todd and Beth saved all their money. They didn't buy anything they didn't have to. Soon they would have money for the down payment. Todd was getting excited. Beth said to herself, "I hope everything works out!"

One day Todd was home early. Beth met him at the door. "Why are you home early?" she asked. "Are you sick?"

"No! I'm not sick!" shouted Todd. He went into the bedroom and slammed the door. Beth was worried, but she didn't say anything. She made supper. When it was ready, she called, "Todd, come and get something to eat."

Todd came to the table. He didn't look happy, but Beth didn't say anything. At last Todd said, "We have to go on work share at the factory. There isn't enough work for all of us to be full-time. Everybody has to take a cut in hours. There goes our down payment!"

"That's okay," said Beth. "We can wait a little more."

"No! It's not okay!" shouted Todd. "I waited so long already! I'm sick of waiting!"

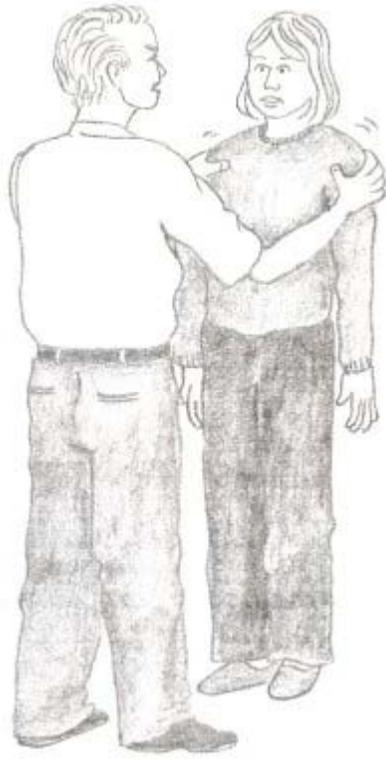
Then Todd got up from the table and went to watch TV. The shouting made Lori cry.

"Can't you keep that kid quiet?" Todd shouted.

Things got worse. Lori got a bad cold. Beth had to take Lori to the doctor and she had to get medicine. It cost a lot of money. At the end of the month, Todd was very angry. "Why do you spend so much?" he shouted. "We'll never get a house!"

Beth was angry, too. She shouted, "I can't help it if Lori gets sick! I can't help it if she needs medicine! It's not like I spend money on pretty clothes or going out to eat! I never get to do those things!"

Todd's face turned red. He went up to Beth and held her by the arms. "Don't ever talk to me like that again," he said, "or you'll be sorry!"



A few weeks went by. Jean tried to call Beth, but the phone was shut off. She waited for Beth to call her. One day she went to Beth and Todd's apartment. Beth came to the door. There was a big black mark beside her eye.

"Oh, Beth! What happened?" asked Jean. Beth said, "Todd and I had a fight about money. He was so angry he hit me. I guess I made him mad. Maybe it's my fault."

Jean said, "It's not your fault that Todd hit you! It's Todd's fault. He can't hold his temper. That's not your fault."

Beth looked tired and sad. She said, "It's just like Mom and Dad. This is not the first time Todd hit me and it won't be the last. Last night Lori wouldn't stop crying. Todd picked her up and shook her til she stopped. He could have killed her! I know I have to do something. "

Jean said, "You can go to a women's shelter. You can keep Lori there with you. They will help you. Maybe Todd would do some thinking."

Beth said, "I just can't go to the shelter. Can I go to your house for a few days?"

Jean answered, "Yes! Pack some things. I'll get Lori ready."

Beth packed some things. She said, "We have to get out of here before Todd comes. I'm afraid of him now."

Beth left a note for Todd. She told him she would stay with Jean and Ron for a few days. She told him not to come for her. She went with Jean to her house.

Beth said to Jean and Ron, "I don't want to stay with Todd, but I'm afraid to leave. I wish I had more courage."

When Todd got home, he saw Beth's note and he was angry! He banged his fist onto the table. He went over to Ron and Jean's and banged on the door.

Ron went to the door. He told Todd to wait outside. Ron walked to the car with Todd. The men went for coffee. Ron tried to talk to Todd about his problems, but Todd got more and more angry. At last Ron said, "I can't talk to you any more. You will not listen. You need help. You have big problems and you aren't working on them. Don't come to our place. Leave Beth alone. She will come home when she is ready," said Ron.

Chapter 4 Courage

Todd didn't get help. Beth and Lori went home in five days. At first Todd was glad to see Beth and Lori. Then he started to get angry about everything. He shouted. He hit Beth on her face and arms. He said if Beth went to Jean and Ron's, he would hurt them all.

Todd left the house. Beth was crying and shaking. This time she didn't call Jean. She packed some things. She went next door and called a taxi. She asked the driver to take her to the women's shelter. She said to herself, "I can do it! I know I can do it!"

Beth didn't know what the shelter would be like. One of the workers, Madge, opened the door. She said, "Welcome! Let me hold this beautiful baby while you bring in the rest of Your things."

Beth put her things inside and paid the taxi driver. Beth was still shaking. Madge said, "Come with me. The coffee pot is full and we have milk and food for Lori."

Beth took a few days to think. She didn't call Jean because she knew Todd would go there. She didn't want Jean and Ron to know where she was. She said to herself, "It will be safer for everyone."

Madge and Beth talked about some things that Beth could do. They talked about Beth starting a new life for herself and Lori. They talked about going back to Todd. It was very hard for Beth. She knew her mother had stayed with her dad. She told Madge about that. Madge said to her, "Are you and Todd the same as your mother and father? What is best for you and Lori? Take some time to think about everything. You will know what is best."



Soon Beth started to feel better. She called her mother. Her mother said Beth should go back to Todd. Her mother said, "I stayed with your dad, and it worked out all right."

Beth answered, "I'm not you! Todd isn't Dad! Todd isn't getting better. He's getting worse. I had the courage to leave Todd, and I have the courage to start a new life with Lori."

Beth called Jean. Jean said, "I've been worried about you and Lori. I thought you might be at the shelter. I didn't talk to Todd when he came over. Ron talked to him. He said Todd was going to start a fight. Ron told Todd to go away or he would call the police. Todd's boss called one day to find out if we knew where Todd is. He said Todd isn't going in to work."

Beth said, "Sometimes I wish you and I lived on the same street again. You helped me many times. Now I have to work out my own problems. I'm not going back to Todd. I'll call you soon."

Beth started a new life. Madge and other people helped Beth. They helped her get ready to look for a job. Madge helped her look for a place to live. Someone told her about places she could get good, used clothes and furniture. Someone helped her find day care for Lori. Beth went back to work.

One day Beth called Jean. Beth said, "Guess what! Lori and I are in the brick apartment on Elm Street. That's only two streets over from you! It's almost like it used to be when we were only two houses over from each other! Can you come over and bring your baby?"

Jean laughed and said, "It's so nice to hear from you! I know the place you mean. Tell me which apartment and I'll be right there! We can start teaching our girls how to be best friends!"

Many people are abused -
women, children, men, elderly people.
There are people who will help.
There are shelters where people can be safe.
Look in the telephone book for the number.

To Lenora and Donald Nicol
Best friends

This book is not based on the lives
of specific people.