

## IT'S NOT JUST A GAME

Jem Nalder

My friend's coming over today, he's older than me. But he's nice, so I like him. We always play games together. He's arrived now, we're riding our bicycles but he tells me he wants to play a different game. I find that weird, I thought he enjoyed this particular game. He says to me in a strange tone that I should wait for him near that sheltered space, so I do. He whispers that this is a secret game, I can't tell anyone otherwise we'd get into trouble. He slowly pulls down my pants, tugs off my underwear, and then does something he knows he shouldn't have done. He invades my personal space. He takes away my innocence. All I know is that it is just another one of his games. I've never been told that this is bad or wrong. He calls me naive but I don't understand. Eventually, that day becomes more like a bad dream, one that I can only remember vaguely.

Years have passed and hormones rush into my system, as do memories into my mind. This causes me to become sick. My ears have become attuned to the distant sounds of thunder. I try to forget what happened. It makes me want to die, remembering it. Now I'm starting to have feelings for people, maybe it's just my age, but when I think about relationships I feel repulsed. I just desperately want to be normal, but there's always something that makes me hold back.

Winters pass, the dreamlike state I was once in now becomes a harsh reality. The beginnings of self-harm appear on my skin and dark thoughts rush into my head, leaving a permanent ringing. Blocking out the memories is the only thing that could help, but to do that is such a long process. I can't stop thinking about how I could have let myself be touched and violated at such a young age and not know any better.

I'm now in my late teen years. Suicide attempts litter my past. Scars from harm to which I have caused myself as a result from the horrible trauma left over. Psychologist after psychologist, councillor after councillor. Nothing helps anymore. They all seem nefarious. Death seems to call me with a mellifluous voice. Addictive, sweet. I keep being told to meet with just another psychologist. I refuse. As soon as they see me they would give up on me, just like everyone else. How could anyone want to deal with me? Such a mess, filled to the brim with unexplained pain.

Today's my birthday and although I have lived those years, life has always been slightly empty, never entirely full. I'm filled with confusion. Society tells me that I'm not allowed to feel so sad. My trauma is legitimate, but I shall always feel that it is not. And although my experience of sexual abuse has made me scarred and changed me I will not stand another day to which I shall allow it to take over me.

I am that one in five females and that sixty three percent of women who have previously reported sexual abuse as a child and then a followed report of rape. I am that one in twenty males who are two times more likely to have unprotected teen sex, five times more likely to

cause teen pregnancy, I am that three out of four who knew my abuser. It all starts with a game. A small, innocent game. Nothing more. Nothing less. I wish that had been true.

*Bibliography*

*<https://victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/effects-of-csa-on-the-victim>*