



**Excerpts from *Please Stop Laughing at Us . . . One Survivor's
Extraordinary Quest to Prevent School Bullying***

“Honey, look at me,” I said, grabbing hold of both her hands, and squeezing them tightly. “Tell me what you gave him.”

“My virginity,” she answered, avoiding looking directly at me. “When his parents were away for the weekend, I went over to his house. He had candles lit and music playing. It seemed perfect. Then, while we were, you know, in the middle of it, I heard somebody in the other room. Suddenly, a bunch of his friends burst in and started laughing at me, yelling, ‘Stupid slut, like any of us would ever hang out with you.’”

My heart ached for this girl. I wanted to scream until there was nothing left in me. “Do your parents know?” I asked.

“No. I’m too ashamed to tell them, because they’ve been so proud that I’m a ‘good girl.’ I’m afraid this will just destroy them.”

“How can I help?”

“They’re coming to your seminar tonight. Can you help me tell them?”

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“I’ll blow this school up,” he said, enraged. Comely, with piercing blue eyes and wavy blond hair, he looked more like a California surfer than a high school student.

“Why are you so angry?” I asked. “Why do you want to destroy the school?”

“I think I might be gay. There’s a few of us here—you know, gays and lesbians? We take so much abuse, and not just from other kids but from adults, too. It sucks. I asked the principal if we could start a Gay and Lesbian Club. They have one at my cousin’s school. Anyway, the principal said we couldn’t and to keep my filthy secret to myself.”

“I’m sorry.” I responded. “That principal was wrong. I’ll talk to him. But you know that violence will only make this worse. Do your parents know you’re gay?”

“Yeah, right—*my* dad? No way. I want to tell my mom, but she’s already dealing with so much. She’s depressed, takes these pills for it, but they make her kind of out of it, you know? Can I maybe just e-mail you once in a while, when I need to talk?”

“Sure,” I answered, handing him my e-mail address.

By now, a throng of kids had gathered, and were waiting in line to see me. Some wanted hugs, others a sympathetic ear, others specific advice. It was the same at every school. Their parents were either too wrapped up in their own lives or had stupidly concluded that bullying was just a normal part of growing up. How could anyone assume cruelty is normal?