

Can Broken Wings Still Fly?

I love spring time in Tennessee! I think that is my favorite time of the year. On Saturday mornings, when the sun is shining and the birds are singing, like they are this morning, I like to lie in bed and reflect on things that have happened during the week and in my life. My favorite thing to imagine is what it would be like to live with my real dad. I can imagine him loving me so much and spoiling me with whatever I want. I often think about why he never calls anymore, but I bet it's because Thomas, my mean old stepfather, won't let him talk to me.

Momma says Thomas loves my little sister, Tauryn, and me the same, but I don't really feel like he does. Since Thomas is Tauryn's dad, he seems to do more things for her than he does for me. He seems to even look at her differently. "My baby this, my baby that," he always says.

I remember when I desperately wanted my last name to be Miller like everybody else's, but now I'm glad my last name is Campbell. The older I get, the more I learn about Thomas. He is mean to my mother and me, especially when he has been drinking. I'm just glad he has to

work on Saturdays and I don't have to wake up and see his old ugly face!

Hopefully, the day will soon come when I'll get to see my father. That is, if Uncle Willie D. gives me the roundtrip ticket to Chicago I asked for as a graduation present.

I had been thinking about Tauryn earlier and how she has been having a lot of mood swings. She's really into watching her movies. She can see a movie three or four times and still cry in the same spot every time. Lately she's been spending a lot of time watching sad movies where the person dies at the end. Her favorite movie seems to be "Beaches" with Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey. She watches that movie over and over again!

Sometimes I wish we could be as close as we were before she got in high school. We used to have so much fun together, but now we seem to be at each other's throats most of the time. Sometimes she acts like she hates my guts.

She's pretty smart for a tenth grader, but I can't get her to stop talking country and using street slang. Whenever she's talking to me, she usually refrains from using so much slang. Most of the time when she's on the phone talking to her boyfriend, Darnell Murphy, or some of her classmates, she talks as country as Momma and Thomas, and then she throws in

the slang. I try to ignore her, but sometimes I can't stand it and I ask her to speak correctly.

She's definitely in the "wanna be it" stage. She has to have the cutest boyfriend at school, wear the latest fashions, and her hair has to be "beat," as she calls it. I tell her that's cute and all, but what really matters is what you have inside your mind, body, and soul. But her response is always, "I ain't even tryin' ta hear all dat." And that really appears to be the case.

"Sasha!" Momma called.

"Ma'am?" I responded.

"Get yo behind down here and clean up! You been in dat bed all mornin'. Come on down here dis minute and git dis den and kitchen clean."

Rose Miller will always talk like she's still in Bewelcome, Mississippi, where she and Thomas grew up. She's never been one to let anyone sleep late on Saturdays. She has told us over and over again that her mother made her and her brothers get up early on Saturdays to do chores and it didn't kill them; the same would hold true for Tauryn and me.

I got up and threw on some old sweats and a T-shirt. When I got downstairs, Tauryn had finished the cleaning she had to do and there she was watching "Beaches" again.

"Tauryn, why do you keep watching that sad

movie over and over when you know it's going to make you cry?" I asked.

"Cause I want to! Why don't you jus' mind yo own business, Sasha!" she shouted.

"Well, forget you then," I said.

"Forget you, forgot you, I never thought about you!" she shot back.

I raised my hand in the air as if I were one of the Supremes singing, "Stop, In The Name Of Love" and said, "Poof, be gone!"

Tauryn burst into tears.

"Dog, Tauryn, what's wrong with you? I was just kidding," I said.

"Jus' leave me alone, Sasha, you don't understand me!"

"What do you mean I don't understand you? Why are you so sensitive? Are you having problems with Darnell?" I asked.

"Why it's always gotta be Darnell? Why you always down on him? He's probably da only one who has ever really loved me!"

"No, he's not, Tauryn. Don't ever think a boyfriend will love you more than your family."

"Nobody in this family loves me. Jus' leave me alone!" Tauryn shouted.

The argument caused Momma to start hollering again, "What's goin' on in dere?"

She stormed down the hall with her big lead-filled feet.

“Tauryn, what chu cryin’ fa?” Momma asked.

“I was in here watchin’ the movie and Sasha came in here messin’ wit me!”

“I did not!” I responded, “I just asked her why she keeps watching “Beaches” over and over when she knows it’s going to make her cry.”

Momma glared at me.

“Why don’t you git yo tail in dere and do what I told you ta do!”

“Momma, I wasn’t doing anything,” I said.

Momma pointed toward the kitchen.

“Go, and I mean it!” she commanded.

I stormed out of the den and into the kitchen. I was slinging things around the kitchen until I heard her lead-filled feet again coming toward the kitchen door.

“Sasha,” she yelled, “you keep it up, hear? If you break anythang in dis kitchen, I’m gon’ beat yo butt! You understand me?”

“Yes ma’am,” I softly responded.

As I immersed my hands in the warm water, I started to think about Tauryn crying so much. There had to be something wrong and I had to find out what it was. Tauryn cries during most sad movies, but for her to cry just because I said “Poof, be gone” wasn’t like her. I had to somehow build her trust in me so she could tell

me what was bothering her.