

THE EXTRAORDINARY INSPIRATIONAL STORY

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A Child Called

"It"

One Child's
Courage to Survive

DAVE PELZER

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arch 5, 1973, Daly City, California—
I'm late. I've got to finish the dishes on time, otherwise no breakfast; and since I didn't have dinner last night, I have to make sure I get something to eat. Mother's running around yelling at my brothers. I can hear her stomping down the hallway towards the kitchen. I dip my hands back into the scalding rinse water. It's too late. She catches me with my hands out of the water.

SMACK! Mother hits me in the face, and I topple to the floor. I know better than to stand there and take the hit. I learned the hard way that she takes that as an act of defiance, which means more hits, or worst of all, no food. I regain my posture and dodge her looks, as she screams into my ears.

I act timid, nodding to her threats. "Please," I say to myself, "just let me eat. Hit me again, but I have to have food." Another blow pushes my head against the tile counter top. I let the tears of mock defeat stream down my face as she storms out of the kitchen, seemingly satisfied with herself. After I count her steps, making sure she's gone, I breathe a sigh of relief. The act worked. Mother can beat me all she wants, but I haven't let her take away my will to somehow survive.

I finish the dishes, then my other chores. For my reward I receive breakfast—leftovers from one of my brother's cereal bowls. Today it's Lucky Charms. There are only a few bits of cereal left in a half of a bowl of milk, but as quickly as I can, I swallow it before Mother changes her mind. She has done that before. Mother enjoys using food as her weapon. She knows better than to throw leftovers in the garbage can. She knows I'll dig it out later. Mother knows most of my tricks.

Minutes later I'm in the old family station wagon. Because I'm so late with my chores, I have to be driven to school. Usually I run to school, arriving just as class begins, with no time to steal any food from other kids' lunch boxes.

Mother drops my oldest brother off, but keeps me

for a lecture about her plans for me tomorrow. She is going to take me to her brother's house. She says Uncle Dan will "take care of me." She makes it a threat. I give her a frightened look as if I am truly afraid. But I know that even though my uncle is a hard-nosed man, he surely won't treat me like Mother does.

Before the station wagon comes to a complete stop, I dash out of the car. Mother yells for me to return. I have forgotten my crumpled lunch bag, which has always had the same menu for the last three years—two peanut butter sandwiches and a few carrot sticks. Before I bolt out of the car again, she says, "Tell 'em . . . Tell 'em you ran into the door." Then in a voice she rarely uses with me, she states, "Have a nice day." I look into her swollen red eyes. She still has a hangover from last night's stupor. Her once beautiful, shiny hair is now frazzled clumps. As usual, she wears no makeup. She is overweight, and she knows it. In all, this has become Mother's typical look.

Because I am so late, I have to report to the administrative office. The gray-haired secretary greets me with a smile. Moments later, the school nurse comes out and leads me into her office, where we go through the normal routine. First, she

'*A Child Called 'It'*' was so riveting, neither I nor my staff could put it down! Dave Pelzer's story does not focus on his life-threatening plight as much as his unyielding determination that inspires us all. Dave is a living example that all of us have the capability to better ourselves no matter what the odds. One's life is forever changed after living through the eyes of *A Child Called 'It'*."

—Jack Canfield
coauthor, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

A Child Called "It"

A Child Called "It" is the unforgettable account of one of the most severe child abuse cases in California history. It is the story of Dave Pelzer, who was brutally beaten and starved by his emotionally unstable, alcoholic mother: a mother who played torturous, unpredictable games—games that left him nearly dead. He had to learn how to play his mother's games in order to survive because she no longer considered him a son, but a slave; and no longer a boy, but an "it."

Dave's bed was an old army cot in the basement, and his clothes were torn and raunchy. When his mother allowed him the luxury of food, it was nothing more than spoiled scraps that even the dogs refused to eat. The outside world knew nothing of his living nightmare. He had nothing and no one to turn to, but his dreams kept him alive—dreams of someone taking care of him, loving him and calling him their son.

Through each struggle you'll find yourself enduring his pain, comforting his loneliness and fighting for his will to survive. This compelling story will awaken you to the truth about child abuse—and the ability we all have to make a difference.

DAVE PELZER is recognized as one of the nation's most effective and respected communicators addressing corporate groups, conventions and human-service professionals. Dave's unique accomplishments have garnered personal commendations from former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush. In 1993 Dave was honored as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans and in 1994 was the only American to be honored as one of The Outstanding Young Persons of the World. Dave was also selected as a Torchbearer for the 1996 Olympic Torch Relay. Dave has dedicated his life to helping others help themselves.



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