

Chapter 2

Growing up, my mom was very strict. It was her way or the highway. My whole life we butt heads over the right path for me to live. If I didn't do things the way she wanted, it was wrong or a problem. My mom and I have had a love/hate relationship for most of my life due to us both being stubborn.

I also saw how my mom would belittle my dad when I was younger. Now I know he wasn't a saint and had his flaws and wrongdoings but the way she talked to him was very cold. As a young child I feared my mom more than my dad because she was the verbal enforcer.

I listened to everything she said and did everything she told me to do. She used to tell me all the time, not to be like my dad when I grew up but never said specifically why.

My mom did everything she could to keep me out of harm's way. She didn't want me to end up like her brothers (my uncles). She never wanted to see me in trouble or jail. This caused her to be overprotective to her only child who happened to be an African American boy in America.

My mom monitored my friends, she paid attention to who I was hanging out with, she knew where I was going, she was an all seeing eye. Nothing happened without her knowing. It's crazy, she was such a detective.

I never fully understood why my mom was the way she was until now. It's now that I realize why she did everything she did. My mom has witnessed and experienced a ton of trauma in her life. Trauma that has been ignored and unspoken for years. In fact, my whole family has suffered for years while keeping a Huxtable smile.

My mom and I used to fight over and over for the same cause which was to see me happy and healthy. One thing we never communicated about was our mental health. There weren't any detailed conversations on how our minds worked.

My mom suffered from a lot of family traumas that were completely swept under the rug for years. I'm talking about 30+ years of holding on to secrets and pain. I endured all of her pain. My whole life I was the therapist and the punching bag at the same time.

This is what drew us apart but ironically the same thing that brought us back together. My life is filled with a lot of dichotomies. The parallels in my life are where I learn my biggest lessons. So when I was called upon to be her caretaker I went in completely open to everything.

Alzheimer's is a disease that breaks down not only the person with the disease but the surrounding family as well. For the two years leading up to my mom's diagnosis, she was showing early signs.

My mom was a very punctual person. Her motto was if you aren't early you're late. She always wanted to prevent the worst from happening. Even if the worst was super irrational, she was prepared for it. So it was when we were getting shut off notices for the light bill and water bill.

My mom never missed payments. She had excellent credit. So to get these notices back to back month after month, I knew something was drastically wrong.

When talking to her about it, arguments always came next. Then after the arguments I had to ask my dad for help or hustle my ass off to get the money. My mom made the money to pay for the bills and always had my dad if she was in need of help. We didn't know how the bills weren't being paid.

On top of the bills not being paid on time, my mom's quality of work was deteriorating. She abruptly quit her nursing job, a job that she's had with the same employer for over 20 years. After months of confusion on my end, I found out through a pile of paper that she was making mistakes at work. Mistakes pertaining to her memory.

This was proof that I needed to get her help. My mom and I used to argue all the time over something being wrong with her. She was very aggressive and defiant. It wasn't until we were getting lights and water turned off until she budged.

My mom finally caved in after years of reluctance in the beginning of the summer in 2019. Her neurologist at the time, diagnosed her with depression. I knew there was more wrong with her because I witnessed Alzheimer's for over 8 years straight with my grandma's.

I pleaded with the doctor that more tests needed to be done because her actions mirrored my grandmas. It wasn't until I mentioned how my mom was getting lost at home, not paying bills on time, being super aggressive and defiant, for the doctor to reconsider the diagnosis.

After reviewing her tests the doctor concluded that she had early onset of Alzheimer's. This diagnosis is what was needed for my mom to really get help. After struggling to focus at work and being fired from her school nursing job, my mom's income declined to zero dollars.

Her Alzheimer's diagnosis qualified her to retire early and receive social security benefits. Little did we know it would take over a year to get everything settled...