

We as people sometimes complain about the small stuff, and don't even appreciate what we have. We are very fortunate people whether we believe so or not. There are people in the world that do not have a family. Can you imagine not having your mother or father? I know I can't. My mother taught me how to tie my shoes, how to love with all my heart. My dad taught me how to ride a bike, how to be strong and carry on. Life without them, there is no life. Though some people live like this. They didn't ask for it, but sometimes bad things happen to good people. The things we should cherish most, we take for granted. We just don't know how good we have it, until it slips away from us.

There was this beautiful African- American teenage girl named Angel Gray. She was a short skinny girl that always kept a smile on her face. Her pretty hazel eyes were brighter than the sun. The long hair flowed from side to side of Angel's face. Angel's self- confidence was rooted into her from day one. Though, she was never cocky. Angel was never the one to rub something in your face. She felt that if she could do it, anyone could. There was no difference in race, nationality, religion, where you are from; everybody was all the same in Angel's mind. Angel showed everyone respect, whether young or old. She got that from her mother. Angel also carried a strong loving heart, never doubted herself or anyone even when they were faced against all odds; that was instilled to her by her father.

Angel was going to a wonderful high school with such tranquility. One tragic afternoon, the office called for Angel Gray. Angel had been notified that her parents had just died in a horrendous car crash. She looked at her principle in dismay. How could her parents be gone, and she had just spoke to them in the morning before school? Angel found herself asking this question a lot. No one had an answer to her question though. She thought it was the end of the world; that life wasn't even worth living anymore. But little did she know, it was only the beginning.

After the accident Angel's school tried to locate some of her family members, but found none. They turned her over to the state. The state decided to put Angel in a foster home since they couldn't find any of her family either. The new home Angel was living in was awful. Her foster father was drunk every night, and very abusive. When Angel got the chance, she ran away from her foster family. Nobody had even noticed that she left. Angel's whole demeanor had changed; she went from being this sweet little girl to being a grumpy old lady in a teenager's body. Now, she always had a frown on her face, carried her shoulders as if boulders were on them, and had a snappy little attitude. Her pretty eyes didn't even sparkle anymore. Angel became lonely and homeless. She had no friends, family, food to eat, or a place to live.

One day, a breath taking, drop dead gorgeous lady came to Angel with open hands. The lady had found Angel at an amusement park Angel had been going to.

"Hi little girl, are you ok?" the lady said. Angel held her head down as she said, "I'm ok."

“My name is Lynette Jackson. I work with girls like you. I would love to help you out.”

“But you don’t know what I’ve been through. You wouldn’t be able to understand.”  
Angel hesitantly said.

“Oh my dear, I would understand. Just talk to me.”

“Well my name is Angel Gray. I lost my parents a few months; things have been going downhill from there. I went from being the happiest person in the world to being the most depressed. I have nothing to look forward to. I’m only 14, when is my life going to start? What did I do to deserve this? My parents gave life to me, how can I possibly live without them? It’s just not fair!”

“Angel, it’s going to be okay. You have a whole lot of living to do. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. It’s to teach those good people, how to be even better people. We as people have to persevere; but in order to get out you must go through. Everything is going to be alright, sooner or later.” Lynette said with a hopeful smile.

By this time Angel had begun to tear up.

“Look at me, I have nothing!” Angel said as she shook her head, “Do you know how it feels to have no one to turn to, no one to hug when you’re sad? I don’t think you do.”

“But I do, oh to well. I lost my mother when I was only eight years old. I was younger than you. And I didn’t know my father. It was just me, my older sister, and my two older brothers on our own. The state put us into foster care, but we were all separated except me and my older brother Joseph. Lamont and my sister Shirley were placed in another foster home. Shirley had let drugs take over her life. She was deep in the streets. Lamont often ran away from his foster home. One day when he ran away he didn’t come back. I went over to go visit him, and they told me that he died the day before. He was shot in the head due to trying to have his foster brother back. I lost my brother, my mother and basically my sister. My oldest brother Joseph stayed with me. He looked after me as if he was my father. He never let anything happen to me. We were all each other had. So I know a few things about feeling like you have nothing. That you’re closed in walls that just keep closing together. I know the feeling.” Lynette confessed, “Even though I didn’t have the best mother, I thank her for everything she has done for me. She always told me, with God, anything is possible. And that is what I am telling you. With God, anything, I mean anything is possible.”

Angel held her head down and sighed. Then a tear rolled down her rosy cheeks. Lynette wiped the tear from her face. Lynette extended her hand towards Angel.

“Please, take my hand so I can help you. I promise you, I will do everything within my power to give you the help you need.”

“No.” Angel shook her head, “You’re just going to leave me or die. Everyone that I really loved has either left me or died.”

“I won’t leave you” Lynette smiled and said, “And my health is in pretty good condition. I know you don’t really know me, but get to know me. I promise you, I won’t disappoint you. It’s a new day Angel. You have bigger and better things that you can move on to.”

Angel shook her head and agreed to get to know Lynette. Lynette took Angel back to her Girls’ Home. The Girls’ Home was titled ‘Girls Becoming Women’. When Angel first got there everyone was so nice to her. Even while people were being very courteous, Angel still carried back-breaking burdens on her shoulders. She thought that everything in her life that went wrong had been her fault. The workers there, including Lynette tried to comfort her for so long, reassuring her.

“Baby listen”, Monique Holmes, one of the co-workers said, “The only way you’re going to get out is if you go through. You have to fall in order to get up, right? That’s the amazing thing about life. It teaches you how to persevere even when you don’t want too. You learn from your mistakes. And some things are just simply not in your hands. But everything happens for a reason. You can come and talk to me, about anything, if you ever need too.”

“Ok, thank you Mrs. Holmes. Life is a mystery, you know.”

Finally Angel had a place where she felt she was welcomed. She didn’t have a snappy attitude like she had before she came to the Girls’ Home. Angel was almost becoming the person she once was back when her parents were alive. She now regained the glow that was taken away by her letting her depression get the best of her. But the counselors at ‘Girls Becoming Women’ gave Angel something to smile about. They showed her loved she had not felt in a long, long time. When Angel needed someone to talk to, or even just needed a simple pat on the back, all of the counselors were there. Angel even interacted with the troubled teen girls there. The ones that were still in school and needed help, Angel tutored them whenever they needed it. She was their peer counselor. Angel had come a long way.

Months passed by and Angel had pretty much gotten used to the Girls’ Home, it was all she had. That was her life, it was her family. Her old ways were almost all gone. Then some new comers came. These girls were rude, obnoxious, and frightening young ladies; but Lynette never denied a teenager in need of help. Lynette knew she was going to have her hands full, but thought that Angel could be some guidance to the rough looking teens. But the teens obviously thought different. They wanted help, but when you’re raised around drugs, alcohol, and people who don’t respect anybody, you grow up to be just like that.

The tatted up girls began to pick on Angel. They pushed her around, talked about her everyday; they made Angel sick. Angel just dealt with it, for a long time without telling

anybody. Do you know how it feels to have bottled up anger inside one's self? Angel didn't feel good. She regained that snappy attitude she had before. Angel started to carry her shoulders low as if she was just so tired of living life. Lynette noticed that Angel didn't have that same glow that she had a few months ago. She knew something was wrong with Angel, but what? Every time Lynette talked to Angel, Angel also responded in a somewhat happy tune. Angel never said that she was feeling down, but her actions and her body language told it all.

"Are you ok Angel?" Lynette asked, "You haven't been showing us that beautiful smile lately. Is something wrong at school? Don't think just because you're almost 16 that you can't talk to me anymore."

Angel gave Lynette a half smile, "I'm ok. Just ..." Angel shook her head, "... Just... nothing, everything is alright."

"How long have you known me Angel Gray?"

"I've known you almost a year now. Why?"

"You've known almost a year a now, and still feel as if you can't talk to me? Do you even trust me? Is it because we're at the Girls' Home? What's up, because this is not the Angel I know? The Angel I know talked to me and the staff, about anything. You don't look like everything is alright."

"Can you please just leave me alone? You just don't know how my life works. I knew it was too good to be true."

"Angel, what are you talking about?"

Angel stormed off in tears into a corner.

"Angel I want you to come with me." Lynette said

"Go where?" Angel asked

"You'll see."

Lynette took Angel to Lynette's old neighborhood. They walked around and looked at all the abandoned houses and the thugs that were going no place soon.

"Now tell me about this life of yours that is so hard, so you say." Lynette said

Angel sighed, "You just wouldn't understand!" Angel walked off in tears.

"Angel, get back here! What you mean I won't understand? Just talk to me. Baby, you have to learn how to trust people, you can trust me." Lynette shouted

“Do you know how it feels to get talked about day in and day out? I used to love going to the Girls’ Home. You guys were my family; you all were all I had. But then those thug girls came and ruined everything. When you guys are not around, they harass me till I am sick. They push me around; tell me that my parents’ death was my fault; that my parents hated me so much, they wanted to kill themselves. I’m just so tired of living life. I thought I had finally found a place that I could call home.”

“Don’t talk like that! You have a whole lot more living to do. It’s not over yet, trust me. People are going to talk about you till the day you die; and probably then they’ll still talk about you. But like my mother always said, talk is cheap.”

Angel cut Lynette off, “Yeah. But they’re right. I mean after my parents died, I basically became homeless with nothing to eat and no place to turn to. I woke up everyday wishing to see my mother; wishing to hear her voice, or just too even see her smile! You can’t even begin to imagine the pain, the rage that was racing through my heart. And my father... my father was always there for me, no matter what. I could have done the stupidest thing in the world, and he still wouldn’t turn his back on me. My father was me and my mother’s rock. When anything was falling apart, he was always there, fixing it. Right now, I need my father to fix my broken heart, but he can’t. He just can’t.”

The tears came streaming down Angel’s face.

“Baby I do know how it feels to lose a parent. You already know that I never knew my father, and lost my mother at... I believe I was about 24 years-old. And when I lost my brother, it took a long time for me to recover from it. I mean that was my brother, he looked out for me and I looked out for him. Knowing that I couldn’t see him, knowing that I couldn’t feel his warming hug, it left me in pain for years. But through those years, I learned that you have to let the pain go. If you don’t let it go, then you will live with that pain and anger for the rest of your life. Look, I don’t care where you came from, how you were raised, or where you are now. As long as you’re trying you’re best to improve yourself and go where you want, that’s all that counts. I once heard a quote, “Your circumstances don’t determine your outcome your choices do”. Darling I know you miss your parents, but they’re still alive; their spirits live inside you.”

“I just wish they were here to hold me, because I need to be held. But I’ve learned that it’s just me, myself and I. I’ve learned that at the end of the day, the only person you can count on is yourself.”

Lynette held Angel, “I know I’m not your mother, but let me hold you. Let me be there to wipe your tears. I know I can’t possibly fill your parents’ shoes, but let me be there for you. I can help you get through these burdensome times.”

“Ms. Jackson, I don’t know. I lost my parents already; I don’t want to lose you too.”

“Angel, I’m not going anywhere honey, you have to trust me.”

Lynette hugged Angel so tight that Angel felt as if she was about to burst. Angel knew that Lynette was a person that she could trust. She treated Angel as if she were her own.

Being so humble Lynette asked, “Angel would you like a real home; not just a Girls’ Home to turn to, but a real home with a family? I think my daughter and husband would be more than glad to have you as a member of the family.

“Are you serious? Ms. Jackson you’ve been such a breath of fresh air in my life. You were there for me when no one else was. When I felt like I had nothing to live for, you reassured me, every time. There have been times when I just wanted to throw in the towel, but you wouldn’t let me. You wouldn’t let me give up on myself, and I thank you for that. Of course I would love to join your family, if you will have me.” Angel said as her face glowed.

“Of course we will have you.” Lynette smiled

“Thank you so much. Wow... I am really blessed.” Angel blissfully said, “When no one, not even myself, believed in me, you still had faith that I was going to see through it and make it. And look where I am now. If it wasn’t for you, I’d probably still be homeless on the streets; but you have changed my life. I don’t dwell on the past anymore. I miss my parents very much, but they’re still alive; their spirits live in me. If I believe in myself then no obstacle is too hard for me to oversee.”

A year had passed by and Angel was really enjoying her life with Lynette and her family. Angel had now reached the age of 16 years-old. She now realized that no one could take the smile off her face. Angel now knew that she did have people to turn to, that at the end of the day, she could count on Lynette to be there for her.

Angel started out to be a benevolent child who lost her parents. Everything went downhill from there. She became homeless, didn’t have any family, and she was just lost in the days. Lynette was a dynamic lady who came into Angel’s life and changed it tremendously. Angel was on the verge of thinking that she couldn’t live life again. But life gave her a second chance to have a family.

Lynette is an inspiration to everybody. Though she did not know Angel, she still wanted to help her out because she saw her in need of help. When you help someone expecting nothing in return, you’re just doing it to do it, that’s powerful.

A little advice, cherish the little things. Enjoy hugs and give kisses, for you may not know when it is someone’s last. Live life to the fullest, you never know what’s going to happen next. Take nothing for granted. Angel never thought she would lose her parents at the age she

Granted

9-10

p. 7

did, but things happen. Lynette was there for her though. Tell your loved ones everyday that you love them; hug them tight, and don't ever let go.