

Dear Maurice,

My name is Junior Garcia. I live in Tillamook, Oregon. It's a small town close to the Oregon coast. I'm 17 going on 18. My class started reading your story. When I moved here from California, they were already ahead. Once I heard it, I didn't want to read it myself, but something changed my point of view, and before I knew it, I couldn't stop reading until I found out the whole story.

Your story really spoke to me. I had no idea it could have had such an impact on me. I felt like I was there with you both knowing what Laura did for you. Laura changed your life from going to a path of destruction towards a path of happiness, which gives me hope that our cruel world we live in today has wonderful caring people like Laura- the people who make a huge difference in our world. Maurice, bro, you have had the biggest impact on me for the fact that you have been through so much and survived it all. You're a true survivor. I, as well as you, have been on a path to a better life.

I wasn't here when my teacher started reading the story. I was back in Modesto, California. I was in the process of helping my family move into this new life here in Tillamook. Growing up for me was tough because my father was very abusive towards me and my mother, but more towards my mother. God knew I couldn't survive without her by my side. So he got rid of the cause of all our pain- the devil himself. Once my father was out of our lives, we pushed forward. I was confused and scared and I wanted to feel undefeatable. I wanted to beat up everybody for no reason. All that anger got to me and made me look for love in the streets. At the time, I didn't care what happened to me. I was a thug roaming the streets, and I knew the streets inside out. I knew, like you as well, how to hustle people for their money. Carrying a 357 on my waist made me shiver. It made me feel cold in the inside every time I did harm to the community. All those people I've hurt come back to haunt my dreams. Looking back at that point in my life as I read your story, I've thought about it a lot. I wanted to feel better for what I did in the past because that's what made me today- a better person. I want to tell people my story like you did, and hopefully I can change someone's life.

All along, while I was looking for love in the streets, I had it with my family, and especially with my mother. My mother has been the biggest inspiration in my life. She's the one who has been there for me even though I almost became the one person who I hated the most. She taught me a valuable lesson in life. She's my guardian angel. She changed my life just like Laura changed yours. She has been my inspiration to keep wanting to live, keep wanting a better life for myself. Without her, I wouldn't be writing this to you. We all appreciate your story.

Thank you,

Junior