

## DEDICATION

To my father who unintentionally gave me the courage to write this book through his validation and unconditional love. I miss you every day. Thank you for making me whole.

To my children who taught me how to love and gave me the gift of self-forgiveness. I love you all to the moon, beyond and back.

To Donna B., You and your family fed my heart and gifted me with the ability to bond. I love you with all of my heart.

- Your little sweetheart
- 

## Forward

The book you are holding in your hands, the story your fingers have begun to unravel before you is the story of my mother. Like you, each page I lifted was the first time I was exposed to this beautiful woman's tragic struggle to survive; this little girl's disrupted coming of age. Yet, it's this book that is both an end and a beginning of a journey. The end of my mother's running, yet the beginning of something far scarier; looking back. The end of her suffering but the beginning of her healing. The end of our family's denial and the beginning of our reconciliation. The end of our, the readers naivety and the digestion of Adam and Eve's apple of truth. The end of all our son's and daughter's running away and the beginning of their journeys home, maybe not to an address but definitely to a heart, to love.

I understood at a young age that I was going to be the man of my mother's life and I have been the most consistent man in her life, 29 years and counting. I always knew bits and pieces of the causes of her running. But before I opened this book, like you, I never knew where she ran to. As an athletic runner myself, I know the freedom each step away gives to a powerless child. As a young adult I know the vulnerable liberation it feels to face the horrors which cause us to run. The best embrace I can give my mother, and to you who will inevitably absorb or trigger long forgotten pain, comes from the words of a beautiful poet "our hearts break as many times as it takes for it to open." - Rumi

My mother didn't write this book for sympathy, or vengeance, she wrote this book for love. She wrote her story so that when we open this book, we may open our hearts in the process. That we may open our hearts and our doors to all the abandoned children like her, like ourselves.

This is not a book, but a cry from the child inside you, to open your heart to yourself.  
- James A. Hernandez

I held my babies almost nonstop until they were almost a year and a half old. At 7 and 9 years old I still sing songs to them before bed and I cannot fathom the idea of anything less than a face full of kisses and two rounds of hugs before I tuck them in and turn out the lights. They're my children, I know no other way of existing than to love them wholeheartedly, than to express that love with all of my being.

I learned this in large part from my mother. Growing up, I never once - not for a day in my life - doubted that my mother loved me. And yet, it is a miracle that she even knew how.

I read her story as more than just her daughter; I read it as a woman who was once a child, a teenager, a young adult, and then a mother herself. A child who went to ballet lessons and had great big birthday parties with delicious home-made theme cakes; a child who went trick-or-treating in ornate, handmade Halloween costumes, and who loved when her mom came with her on school field trips. A teenager who was happy when her mom chaperoned her senior homecoming dance and saw her crowned queen, and who had her pick of the best colleges after graduating high school with honours. A young adult who went off to the University of Miami on scholarship, who had normal dates with nice boys, enjoying the innocence of holding hands and first kisses by the beautiful Miami Oceanside. The very place where her mom used to take her swimming as a little girl; the very place where her mom went missing as a little girl.

Her childhood was stolen from her, first at the hands of the people who were supposed to love her most, take care of her, protect her, and then by the monsters that go bump in the night, the ones most of us never have to know about firsthand.

She never even had a chance.  
And yet... she survived. More than that, she surthrived.

Join my mother as she takes you on a journey from missing to healing, from struggle to empowerment, as she rises up against all odds to become... Whole. Fearless. Happy.

My mother, above all else, is a shining light. For me, her daughter. For you, reading this book, with your own history and demons to heal from. She is courage, fortitude, and grace. She is living proof that no matter what life hands you, you have within you the spirit to rise, to rewrite the outcome of your story, to create a life of love, of happiness.

I am proud to introduce you to Marnie Grundman, my mother, who was once a missing child.

-Jade Alexandra

## **Preface**

On June 20th, 1980 at the age of thirteen, I became a missing child. In the blink of an eye I went from living in an upper middle class home with a soft bed and all the food I could eat, to being a child of the streets.

No more middle school. No possibility of high school. There would never be a homecoming dance. No big prom date. No cap and gown fitting for graduation. No walking down the halls with my schoolmates giggling while gripping a love note from my boyfriend. No homework or big exams to cram for. No field trips. No family vacations. No birthday celebrations. No trying out for the cheerleading squad or basketball team. No ordinary rites of passage. It was all gone, lost forever.

This is my story of survival and eventual surthrival.