

TRUSTED HIM

THE TRUE STORY OF
ANNA LYNN HURD

JENNIFER SMITH & CHERRY TIGRIS

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JENNIFER SMITH

Jennifer Smith is more than just the mother of murdered 16 year-old, Anna Lynn Hurd. She is a crusader for anyone who has suffered at the hands of a parent or intimate partner. Having come from a childhood of abuse herself, Jennifer Smith strived to be the parent she never had growing up. Leaving her hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota for Texas, Jennifer Smith was a single mother with the world on her shoulders. Committed to breaking the cycle of domestic violence that had played out in her own childhood and young adult years, she set out to make a new future for herself and for her children. The unfortunate events that led to her daughter's death would serve as the foundation for what she calls her true purpose in life. Helping other parents and teens with awareness about domestic violence as it relates to teen dating is her sole mission in writing the book and in continuing her own journey toward peace and understanding.

CHERRY TIGRIS

Cherry Tigris was born on the West Coast and adopted into the East Coast elite during a time when fluorescent leggings were the norm and Tower Records was the only place you could buy music, Cherry Tigris is not one to mince words. She has taken it upon herself to be an advocate for child abuse survivors and a sounding board for social change as it relates to the statute of limitations surrounding child abuse cases. Currently invited to co-author, "I Trusted Him: The True Story of Anna Lynn Hurd," Cherry Tigris has expanded her advocacy efforts to the warning signs of Teen Dating Violence. Readers will find themselves caught in the perfect storm of circumstances brought on by young teenage love gone wrong and a society that refuses to hold anyone accountable for anything anymore. You don't want to miss this thought-provoking book about character and the potential for true crime that resides in any toxic relationship, no matter how common they are becoming these days.

She is also the author of the snarky memoir, "Toilet Paper People." Her edgy and thought-provoking autobiographical account of triumph in the face of child abuse is capturing the hearts and spines of humans everywhere because of her unwavering attitude and true grit. Cherry Tigris builds armies of dolls out of toilet paper in order to distract herself from beatings and neglect at the hands of her mentally ill adoptive mother. What could have been a sad story about child abuse becomes a miraculous story about survival that is wowing every life it touches.

FOREWORD

Paradise Publishers is delighted to have been part of the process in bringing Anna's story to digital print. We believe if she were here today, Anna would be proud to see the support and awareness her story is bringing to facts surrounding dating and domestic violence.

As an independent publisher we are blessed and fortunate to have been able to work with authors Jennifer Smith and Cherry Tigris to tell Anna's story. During the process there were hundreds of discussions, debates, and interviews which were at times shocking, revealing, heart-rending, yet enlightening.

As a team we've worked hard to make sure that the story you are about to read is presented with dignity, forcing us to stop and think about the people in and around our lives today. Are you missing something so simple that it could change someone's life? Even save someone's life?

The sad reality is that no one really wants to get involved. As the saying goes, hindsight is perfect vision; we only see the truth after the fact. There is always that one person who says that they saw it coming. What we would like to say is:

"If you can say you saw it coming, then the important question is: why didn't you do something about it?"

Diane Carter

Digital Director
Paradise Publishers

ANNA LYNN HURD

April 30, 1996 - February 23, 2013



*“What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”*

— Helen Keller

ANNA'S JOURNEY

PART 1

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VIOLET

It was Monday morning and the garbage trucks had already made their way up and down the narrow streets and avenues of St. Paul, Minnesota. I ran my fingers through the now bristly hair of a vintage style, “My Little Pony.” My mom had told me that no matter how far away she was, I’d always be her little girl. She would remind me of the Christmas when she took an extra job so that she could afford the purple pony with the rainbow hair. She laughed at how insistent I was that she bring home the pony with stars emblazoned on its cheeks. I named the pony, “Violet” and convinced my mom that the stars gave her magical powers that could heal people. She called me her little dreamer with a heart of gold who would do anything to make anyone feel better.

I wondered if she still felt that way about me this morning. Touching and pulling at the corners of a blanket I had built my childhood on protecting. I wondered if my decision to stay in Minnesota with Dad was the right one. The pink polka-dot Minnie Mouse blanket that once protected me now barely covered Violet and brought back other memories I’d rather forget. Its worn-out legacy recalled a time when my parents, frustrated with my need to take the blanket everywhere with me, would yell, “Well, you can’t take it everywhere with you FOREVER Anna!”

In protest, I stubbornly tore off a little piece of the softest edge and tucked it into one of my pockets just in time to make it to the bus stop one morning before elementary school. Now, at sixteen-years-old, I knew I would have to leave my childhood behind at some point, but not all of it; not now. Nestled in the zippered pocket of my purse behind a tube of lip-gloss Ashley let me borrow the other day after gym class, I refused to let the remaining piece of my childhood go. I knew that no matter how difficult things were getting these days, I'd always have something to remind me of how much I was loved.

Lately though, it seemed I couldn't make anyone happy. Conversations that used to go so well with mom were now tense while she worried about things I couldn't make her feel better about. Mom and Dad were divorced; and with Mom now living in Texas, she felt even more out of the loop as she struggled to be the mom she used to be before she moved a million miles away. History had taught my mom that no one could be trusted. Having come from a child abuse story of which I knew only bits and pieces, her overprotective nature fueled arguments I could never hope of winning.

My parents' divorce made me feel like I had to make impossible decisions about which parent I wanted to live with. I was beginning to realize that it wasn't really a question of what I wanted anymore. "Want" was just a word adults used to make kids feel like one choice was better than the other when in reality both choices had their downfalls. For now though, I decided to look at the bright side. Maybe there was a way to make Mom and Dad both happy.

'All I can do is try!' I thought, as I pretended to give Violet a pinky promise. Unfortunately, all the pony had to offer was her hoof. 'Oh well!' I scrambled for my backpack and phone, in a hurry to make it to school early. My boyfriend, Mark, would be furious if I was late. He was sure that I had the hots for some other guy in my 4th period Science class. I never understood how he came up with this information but apparently he had his "sources."

Supposedly Brian, one of Mark's friends had seen this "other guy" walking to school with me one morning. It was really just a group of us from the same bus stop but it was enough to send Mark into a tirade I would never hear the end of. In order to make sure there was no chance of my talking to him, Mark insisted I meet him thirty minutes before school every morning.

While I missed seeing my friends in the mornings before school, they chalked my absence up to just another jealous boyfriend protecting his territory. Besides, I felt it was kind of a tribute to how much he loved me. As I rushed down the sidewalk toward my school, I started thinking that it would be easier to not have any other plans with anyone, ever. Mark seemed mixed up and confused and needed me more than ever. He told me things that he had never told anyone else and made me promise to keep his secrets. He thought it was cute when I lifted my pinky up to pinky swear, a swear he knew I would never go back on.

With my mom so far away, and my dad now spending so much time with a new girlfriend, it felt good to be needed. Making people feel better was a role everyone said I was good at. For a while, it felt like it was Mark and me against the world but lately, it seemed like he was always upset at me about something. No matter what I did these days, it was never enough to prove my loyalty.

He was in JROTC and loyalty was a big deal to him. Everything boiled down to whether people were respecting him. Mark would always have a way of testing people to make sure they weren't lying. He told and re-told stories of all the guys who were guilty of backstabbing him and how he'd never let THAT kind of thing happen to him again. I felt badly for him and did whatever I could to not be one of those people.

This morning, I would make it to school early with the hopes of beating Mark there. Skipping breakfast could be a bragging point. Not knowing exactly what would please him anymore, I thought, 'Perhaps if he sees me trying to get to school in time to greet him, maybe THEN he would know how much I really love him.'

Pumping up the volume on my iPod, I hummed along to my favorite song "If I Die Young" by The Band Perry, "And life ain't always what you think it ought to be, no," just in time to see Mark rounding the corner with a glare I was beginning to know all too well.

JOY-RIDE

One of the fastest growing high schools in Minnesota, North Saint Paul High School was one of those schools where it was hard to make a name for yourself. Mark was one of the taller guys though and at 5'11", with dark hair and deep-set pondering eyes, there was a seriousness about him that wasn't like other guys his age. Everyone told us what a cute couple we were and how glued to the hip we seemed to be. We were both tall and, at first, it seemed as though I was the answer to all of his questions. Or, perhaps he thought I HAD all the answers to his questions because he texted me whenever he would have even the smallest problem.

At first it was funny to get a text from Mark about how long it should take him to cook a Hot Pocket, or how to program his DVR for this week's episode of "Vampire Diaries." It wasn't at all strange to get a text from Mark at 1am on a school night asking me if I knew where some random part to his JROTC uniform was.

I started wondering if he really needed to know these things, or if that was just his way of checking up on me. In the beginning, his constant questions were innocent enough as long as I knew the answers or pretended to care. And I felt badly that I didn't always care. I had other things to care about like calls from my mom or my dad that if left unanswered, would get me into more serious trouble. It wasn't easy to ignore the emotional tug of war that was becoming my life. People, not just Mark, were counting on me to make them happy and while I did my best, that wasn't always possible. Much like this morning.

I pulled my fluorescent pink and green ear-buds out of my ears because I knew that leaving them in would infuriate him even more. Mark hated it when I wasn't paying complete attention to him, especially when he was angry. The oversized trucker-hat that I once thought was edgy and mysterious, now barely hid his clenching jaw as Mark made his way past our classmates. Not completely understanding why he would be mad at me this time, I braced myself for whatever accusation he might have in mind. Apparently, this morning, he was angry at me for being early.

"So, wassup?" Mark managed to keep his composure long enough to continue, "Wanna tell me why you're here early? Whatcha tryin' to hide from me Annabana?"

He always tried to decorate his intentions with stolen pet-names that now sounded like fingernails down a chalkboard. Annabana was a nickname that was coined by my family. Mark had just happened to hear my sister call me the name over the phone a few times and thought it was okay to manipulate me with it during times like this. He was insistent on listening in on all of my phone calls because he claimed it would help him get to know me better. Not having the heart to tell Mark how weird it felt for him to call me Annabana, I didn't dare say anything, especially now in the heat of the moment as he reached for my phone before I had a chance to bury it in my backpack.

"I thought I'd surprise you!" I responded in the most cheerful voice I could muster.

"Really?" Mark asked, in a half-believing but hopeful way that sounded almost sad. I thought that somewhere deep down inside, he wanted to believe me, but too much had happened for him to believe the truth. He simply couldn't believe that he alone, my BOYFRIEND, was worthy of my early arrival. While the hopeful sound of his "really" tempted me into thinking this could be reconciled, his palpable anger proved what his words couldn't. No matter how hopeful he sounded, Mark frustratingly scrolled down the list of text messages on my phone, frantically searching for the name of that "other guy" from my Science class.

"What's his name again Annabana?"

“Uhhh, who?” I answered. I was confused because I couldn’t keep up with who Mark was worried about from minute to minute.

“Homeboy, the one who likes to carry your nonexistent books cause’ they’re SO HEAVY!” Mark laughed snidely, convinced that this “other guy” was the REAL reason I was early that morning.

“Um, I don’t even remember his name and I don’t even have his number!” I tried uselessly to explain the unexplainable but the more I tried, the more suspicious Mark became. If I knew the guy’s name, I’d be in even worse trouble for knowing it, so I waited for the next question I would fail at answering for him.

“You must have deleted him. Oh, well, now we’ll never really know, will we?”

The expression on my face must have said it all as Mark did what he always did when he knew I’d reached my limit because he added, “Aw! C’mon Annabana, you know I’m kiddin’”

My now hi-jacked phone started vibrating in his hand, distracting him from what could have been a real moment of empathy. Mark was tortured and there wasn’t a damn thing I could do about it. He was just looking for the next thing to obsess about while my girlfriend Veronica delivered what would be one of a series of invitations I couldn’t turn down.

These new escapades promised to provide some real fun for a change but in Mark’s hands, plans would be held hostage to all sorts of excuses as to why he needed me that afternoon or the afternoon after that, or the one after that.

Luckily, the first bell of the morning allowed me to quickly grab my phone out of his hands. Pecking him on the cheek, I reassured him that I’d be there waiting for him after school in the parking lot.

Embarrassed by the scene in front of my school, I tried to ignore the worried glances from some of my classmates and made a mental note not to be that early again for school. Mark would probably forget about all of this by the time they would get home later, so I tried to push the incident to the back of

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