

ONE VICTIMS' VOICE

## When Family Friends Become Foes

By Caryn M. Suarez

*A very good friend of mine shared a story of crime that has plagued her now for over ten years. Since she and her daughter still live in Jacksonville, and the people this story involves do also, she wishes their identity to remain anonymous. Yet, she wishes to share this with you in hopes you will learn from her painful lesson. The story*

*you are about to read is true.*

I didn't plan on being a single mom after being married for over nine years. Being transplanted to Jacksonville after living in the Midwest all my life, hadn't been the plan either. I hadn't anticipated on working 10 - 12 hours a day to make ends meet for me and my then four-year-old little girl, but I did and we made it. When I got divorced, I thought about

moving back North where all of my family lived, but we liked it here and my baby was born here, so we decided to stay.

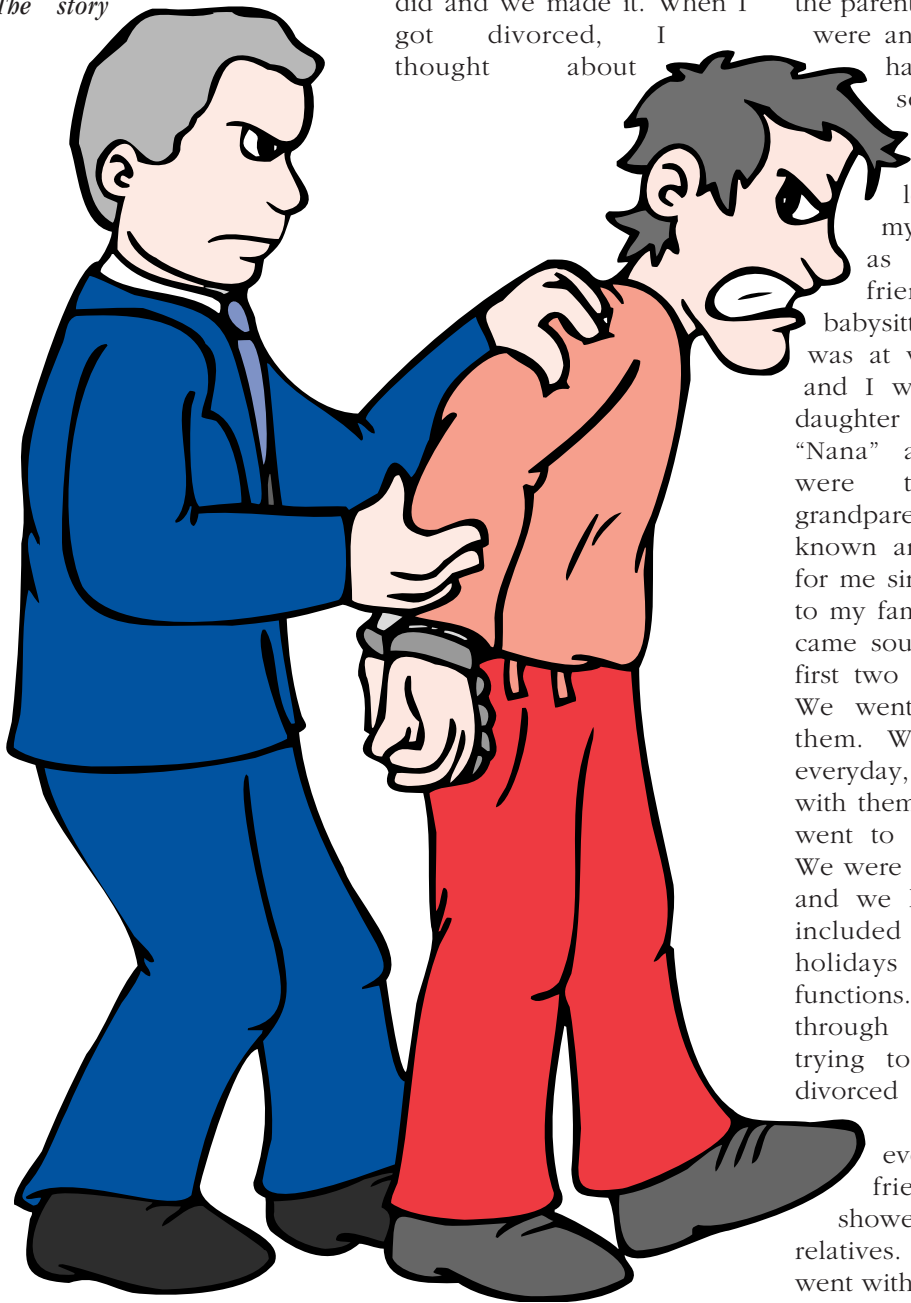
I made friends here. One girl I met actually became my best friend. She was also a young mother. Her parents lived near Orange Park, and I became fast friends with them as well. They were like the parents I never had. They were an older couple, and had just retired. We soon became very attached to them and they more or less "adopted" both my daughter and me as family. I let my friend's mom start babysitting for me while I was at work. My daughter and I were so happy. My daughter even called them "Nana" and "Papa". They were the closest to grandparents she had ever known and parents as well for me since I was not close to my family and they rarely came south to visit. For the first two years it was great. We went everywhere with them. We ate with them everyday, and even went out with them on weekends. We went to church with them. We were part of their family; and we loved it. We were included in all of their holidays and family functions. They helped me through a very hard time trying to deal with being divorced

Then, one spring evening, I helped my friend give a bridal shower for one of her relatives. Her mom and I went with her and we left my

then six-year-old to stay with "Papa" for the evening. When we left she was sitting next to him cuddled in the rocker like she had been for the past few years, smiling and waving as they rocked watching TV. I went to the bridal shower and had a wonderful time helping my friends and their family. We got home around 9:00 pm and everything at first seemed to be fine, yet my happy, sunny six-year-old now sat quietly by the TV on the floor. I asked her if she was ready to go and she tiredly nodded "yes", but she was very quiet. I hugged my friends goodbye, thanked "Papa" for babysitting and

told him I hoped they had a good time. My daughter hugged her "Nana" and her "aunt" goodbye. She turned slowly to "Papa", I noticed she did not look him in the face. He bent down to her, hugged her and kissed her on the forehead. I heard him whisper to her, "Remember our secret." She nodded her head yes and just stood there. "What secret?" I remember asking them thinking maybe they had come up with some surprise or plan for another day. "Just our secret," he said to me smiling, patting her on the head. Then I looked into my child's eyes and what I saw

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### Sex offender arrests

1999-2000			
Arrest	1999	2000	% Change
Forcible Sex Offenses	4222	4095	-3.0
Non-Forcible Sex Offenses	4116	4725	14.8
2000-2001			
Arrest	2000	2001	% Change
Forcible Sex Offenses	4095	4303	5.1
Non-Forcible Sex Offenses	4725	4158	-12.0

\*Source: FDLE Uniform Crime Report, State of Florida

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