

The Hug They Should Have Gave You

De'Ashia Wallace
performing as A.J.PR

My Pen Still Has Ink, LLC
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by De'Ashia Wallace · performing as A.J.PR

When she tells you, listen and believe her.
Demolish the stereotypes of society.
I don't care what you were wearing.
Remember that only 35% of these situations get
reported,
and the other 65% die with the victim's sense of
security.
Build a safe space for her to vent.
Put a steel door—actually, wood.
Because I know just hearing steel
might make her flinch.
Nothing else will be taken from her.
None of the details matter.
She never said yes.
Let her talk—because what if you are the only
person she tells?
Watch her go numb
as she says, “I’m working through it.”
Whisper under your breath,
“We will get through it.”
Feel the keys jingle at a door
locked in your memory
You’re not ready to open yet.
Call her and sit in silence together,
knowing the darkness might swallow her alone.
Ask her questions about anything you can think of,
because that’s the last thing her mind needs to focus
on.
Show up, even if you suspect she’s not all there.
Know that some days it’s a good day,

and the others—she just needs to get through the day.
When she tells you what support looks like for her,
feel your eyes widen
and grow calm, realizing she's trying to heal.
But remind yourself: she will never get over it.
When she starts talking about what she likes,
figure out how you can make it happen—
because she's one step closer to living.
When the next day comes and she reverts after
being triggered,
watch the movie she likes,
because you don't want her to picture anything else.
Listen to her open up hours later.
Remember that she grew up having to be ok,
so a space where she is not—and it's welcomed—
will make her suspicious.
On the day she accuses you of anything,
tell her you're also suspicious.
Hear her laugh
as the pain loosens its grip on her mind.
After she cheats in a card game,
listen as she admits that her boundaries
are a foreign language in so-called friendships.
Remind yourself to never be her friend—
because they have a terrible track record.
When you hang out a few more times,
watch as she brings her personality,
because she no longer has to keep her eyes on you
at all times.
Realize the lock turned on the door in your mind.
Remember being too little to help
when it happened to your sister, you were barely 7.
watching her become suspicious.
Reflect on missing the old her,

acknowledge that it was stolen from her, too.
It's too late for your sister,
but you told yourself when you got bigger
that you would not allow women to suffer alone.
Snap back into reality.
Watch her personality unfold.
Admire but don't acknowledge—she's still
suspicious.
Hear her say she wishes she were further,
and smile because she doesn't see
how much she overcame.
How she talks,
and then thinks she is talking too much—
not realizing how you two once sat in silence.
So to hear the highlights of her day
is the least you can do.
Then smile harder,
because it sounds like she's living.
Hear yourself say:
"She is someone's sister, too."
That you're hugging her through support,
or comfort, like grandma and aunties—
making sure it's warm and sincere.
But nonetheless,
appreciate when she feels safe.