



# Letticia and Her Daughter, Emilianna: “I Don’t Want to Lose Her . . .”

## *A Woman’s Struggle to Regain Self, Body, and Child*

IT’S 4 p.m. I’m waiting for my boyfriend. He was supposed to show up almost an hour ago, but that’s Alirio for you—always late. I’m sitting here, looking at the other customers streaming in and out, with their drinks and burgers, wondering why I didn’t just go to his house. We never hang out in places like this. My counselor and I decided I shouldn’t be alone with him, though, since this is my first time back since I started treatment.

### Starting the Sexual Recovery Process

When I got to intake two months ago, they told me what it would be like. I had expected everything to be about drugs, but it turns out they talk a lot about sexuality. It seemed strange to me at first, and I had a hard time opening up about everything. They asked me questions like how many partners I’d been with or how often I had unprotected sex. I wanted to talk with my counselor, but thinking about everything I’ve done to get money makes me so guilty, and I got scared of how she’d react. But I tried, since I have to do this to get my daughter back.

Now that I’m about to see Alirio, I realize I’ve been growing a lot, learning things about myself I never really knew before except in the back of my head. How scared it made me every time the johns came, even though I did it so often it shouldn’t have mattered. How much I hated it when Alirio wanted to have sex after a long night. I never felt like I had the right to say no. Maybe that’s why I drank so much, and why I used the drugs, so I wouldn’t have to feel all this. It’s hard to feel, hard to admit that I lived like that. Hardest of all to realize that because of that, I let go of my daughter, Emilianna.

### Planning: My Sexual Recovery

When I got my first 48-hour pass, my counselor and I made a plan for my meeting up with Alirio. Being in a public place was the first part, but she told me to carry a picture of Emilianna with me when I talked with him, to remind me of why I wasn’t just going back to using

again. I’m scared of what Alirio will do, scared he won’t want me anymore if I try to change things. Especially if I tell him I won’t have sex.

I’m holding the picture when Alirio walks in, but I slip it under the table.

He comes over, holds me for a long time. “Man, I’ve missed you Baby. Life just isn’t the same without you. You almost done with all that treatment so you can come back home?” He slips in onto the cold, hard bench next to me. “Why’d we have to come here again? We could be on the nice, soft couch now, in the living room. I got us a couch, Baby, did I tell you?”

I don’t say anything, but just hold him close. I’m so scared of losing him sometimes. He didn’t ever want me to do the treatment, accused me of leaving him. I had hoped so hard that he hadn’t gotten with another girl while I was gone. He leans over and starts kissing me. I’ve missed him. I’ve missed this. Being the world to him. It’s easy, like old times, except the cold bench digging into my back.

### Declaring: “I Don’t Want to Go Back. Not to How It Used to Be.”

And I remember. No, not like old times. I don’t want to go back. Not to how it used to be. Not for me, and especially not for my daughter. I remember her picture, feel for it on the bench where I dropped it when he came. I hold it, think of her, look at him. Can I have both? He looks at me strange.

“Alirio,” I say. “I gotta tell you some things. I’ve changed. I don’t want us to just go back to how things were before.” I try to get the words out, tell him how I’ve learned I have value, how I’m learning to listen to my needs. He stops me. “Baby you know I love you. Let’s go back to my place and just be together, without all these people, you know? We can talk in the morning.” He pulls me closer, and I don’t resist.



## Reclaiming My Body, My Life, and My Soul

The picture of Emilianna is still in my hand. Somewhere in the back of my head I know that I'm making the choice right now between him and her. I see her adorable face like she was the last time I saw her, and I pull away. I can hardly get the words out. "We're not having sex." He looks like I just slapped him. Then he starts yelling, "Put a." There's so much disgust on his face. "After all I did for you? I love you, I get you jobs, and this is how you treat me?"

He reaches for my arm. I can tell he's about to get violent. "I . . . I have to go," I say. I grab my purse, hold onto the picture of my daughter. His threats follow me to the door. I know, as I walk out of that building, he'll have another girl tonight. The thought almost kills me. But I know I need to do this. I know that it's worth it. For myself, for my daughter.

## Views From A TreeHouse, Inc.

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