

Sonia's Story — A Survivor Composite Story  
Written by Sabra Boyd  
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Sonia, age 13

Sonia's mother kicked her out for being gay when she found a love letter her daughter had written. Sonia tried sleeping in a 24-hour diner but the manager kicked her out when she didn't buy anything. Sitting on the curb outside the restaurant, a woman asked Sonia if she'd like to stay at her house. Sonia was so tired and hungry that she immediately said yes. The woman was very nice to Sonia on the first and second night. On the third night, a man entered Sonia's room and sexually assaulted her. This continued for several months until Sonia managed to break the window in the bathroom and escaped with just a few cuts and bruises from the glass.

Sonia slept in a park where a man found her in the morning. He asked her if she was ok. She told him she was hungry. The man asked if she would like a job. Sonia told him yes because she wanted to be a responsible adult. The man gave Sonia a very heavy backpack and told her to follow crowds of commuters in the morning and afternoon. Sonia asked the man why. He told her that the backpack had a WiFi signal. The backpack hurt Sonia's back and shoulders, cutting deep red lines into her skin. At the end of the day, she returned the backpack to an address the man provided her. The man gave her food in exchange for her day of work and said that she could sleep on his couch if she agreed to work again tomorrow.

Sonia continues working until she gets very sick and passes out in the street. When she wakes, she is in the hospital and is unable to speak because she has been intubated. The nurses contact Sonia's mother. Sonia tries to tell them not to let her mother come because her mom is abusive and kicked her out for being gay, but she is unable to speak. A hospital social worker hears the way Sonia's mother talks about her during their interview and is concerned. He makes a note to follow up once Sonia is able to speak again.