

John
Ann Herndon

In the first season finale of the reinvisioned series of Battlestar Galactica, Tricia Helfer's character, Six, is seen in a phantasmagoric state by her lover, Gaius Baltar. The religious Six tells Baltar, "Life has a melody, Gaius, a rhythm of notes which become your existence once played in harmony with God's plan." As much as I might not want to admit it, I believe Six was right. God does have a plan for us. Events in our lives, the notes if you will, are put together by God creating our existence, our lives, and a beautiful composition. If only we were all so lucky. You see, when God wrote the music that would harmonize with the notes of my life, something different happened. Something beautiful was not written. Something violent, sad, angry, and terrifying emerged. Starting as far back as I could remember, the events that would be compiled into my memory, saved, and ultimately become my story. While my childhood was not blessed with the most dazzling notes or the most beautiful harmonies, it will forever be more beautiful than what became of me when I was seventeen. God wrote the music to my life and decorated it melodies from John, my boyfriend.

I was no stranger to abuse. When I was sixteen, I learned how to hide a broken nose. A year before I started dating John, I fixed my dislocated shoulder on my own with a glass door. But nothing could prepare me for the abusive onslaught that would soon define my existence. There were days when I would pray he would only slap me once or twice -- those were the best days. No matter how bad it became, somehow I always felt that being with him was better than being without him. John and I dated for nine months. In that short amount of time, I was slapped, choked, thrown, dropped, pulled, threatened, hit with a stun gun, burned, held off a balcony, and raped.

Abuse defined John and I from the beginning of our relationship to the end. The first memory I have of John's abuse came one day into our relationship. He dropped a burning cigarette onto my arm. A few weeks later, I jokingly tapped him on the face, pretending to slap him. He apparently did not enjoy these playful games, because he grabbed me by the hair, and slapped me with as much force as he could. Before long, it was prom night, and he pushed me into the smoldering ashes of a bonfire. From then onward, he brought something new and different into our relationship: rape. This gave him enough power to satiate him for about six months. Every time was a culmination of his four favorite pastimes: hitting me, calling me a slut, making me bleed, and getting off.

This was enough entertainment for him until winter came; it was then that he needed a bigger and better power rush. That's when he started threatening to kill me. He started small, holding stun guns to my neck. While that would not have killed me, it was his way of telling me I had lost control of my sex life and soon I would lose control of my life in general. It did not take him long to hold a rifle loaded with a 30-06 Springfield at my head. Within a month, he progressed from stun gun, to rifle, and then trying to hit me with his Ram 1500 Dodge pick-up truck. From banging on my bedroom window, demanding to be let into my house, to leaving voicemails, suggesting he was coming to my house armed and prepared to use force against me, my family, and the police. Our relationship ended in a courtroom three days before Valentine's Day, when he was given orders to have zero contact with me. He, of course, broke that, was arrested, held for twelve hours, and released.

People say that everything happens for a reason; Six tells that everything that happens is part of God's plan for us. In response to that, I ask, "Why did God's plan for me involve John? What was the reason behind that?" I would have happily lived the prosaic life that did not include the bruises, the blood, and the court dates. I would have thoroughly enjoyed a life was not filled with painful memories -- dragging my freshly painted nails along the berber carpet, hoping to escape the grasp of a monster, the years of therapy that followed. My past begs an answer to the question "Why me?" Why was I predestined to have the dark, violent melody of life, when plenty of other people have beautiful, carefree harmonies of butterflies and rainbows painting their lives? Eventually, some of us have to come to terms with a black and blue past, stained with tears and blood. It does not make our songs less lovely, less important, and it certainly does not make them less audible.