

# A Phoenix Rising: Defining the Moments

by Bryan Nash

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## About the Book

While other children played with toys, watched TV and spent memorable time with friends and family, a little boy struggled to survive. This unforgettable memoir chronicles how one child's spirit refused to die—even at the hands of relentless abuse.

Bryan "Eddie" Nash was abandoned as an infant, and forced to spend the first few years of his life on a farm in Cedartown, Georgia. At the age of 3, he was taken by relatives to live in California where, for the next several years, he suffered oppression, neglect, and severe mental & physical abuse at the hands of a family of strangers.

Told with the essence of a child's mindset, this is a compelling story of pain in every way imaginable, heartache and sorrow; but also one of love and understanding. Most importantly, it's a story of his triumph and survival, and the value of one's strength of spirit. *This is a book for everyone.*

## Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the meaning of the spiritual and metaphorical events that happened while Eddie and Cindy lived on the farm in Cedartown, GA. Have you had a similar experience?
2. In the beginning of the story, Hank was sympathetic towards Cindy and Eddie and seemed more hesitant to harm the children. Why do you think Hank's demeanor changed making him just as abusive towards the children as Elaine?
3. Aunt Elaine and Uncle Hank had their own two children that they never mistreated, yet found that it was ok to physically and emotionally abuse Eddie and Cindy. Why do you feel they were this way? This often happens in other households. Why do you feel abusers seek out specific children to mistreat?

4. In the chapter "Compassion for the Coward," Eddie said he learned compassion for his Uncle Hank. Please explain what Eddie means by this. After the events of that chapter do you feel Hank is worthy of compassion?
5. At completion of the custody battle Cindy was granted the right to stay with her grandparents and escape the abuse she endured at home; yet she chose to give up this freedom and stay behind with Eddie. Do you think she made the right decision? Would you have done the same? Explain.
6. Why do you think that unlike many children in similar situations, Eddie was able to sense that the way he was treated by his foster family was wrong?
7. In the "Moral of My Stories" author Bryan Nash talks about the love, toleration, and patience he learned from his experience as an abused child. Bryan has even recently started a foundation to help other children at risk of abuse and neglect. What are the more unfortunate effects of child abuse on its victims as they grow to be adults in today's society? What steps can victims of abuse take to overcome these effects as Bryan did?
8. How has the United States Child Protection Services and foster care system changed over the past 40-50 years? What improvements do you feel can still be made?
9. What efforts are going on in your community to help children that are victims of abuse and neglect? How can you help?

## Author Bio

Bryan Nash is a successful entrepreneur, publisher, and writer who has used his multifaceted business expertise to venture into various industries, including real estate development, writing, and the creation of publications for educational disciplines.

As a survivor of abuse, Bryan has spent a majority of his adult life sharing his experience with others, and mentoring those who have undergone similar trauma. Writing this book compelled him to start a foundation in which the proceeds could be given back to those in need. The *Eddie Nash Foundation* is an organization he founded to realize this ambition, and to create awareness and support for other victims of violence. He hopes that his efforts will enlighten others and entice them to also give back to those in need.

## Critical Praise

"A raw look at a childhood defined by abandonment and abuse, based on a true story. When siblings Cindy and Eddie are left by their alcoholic-stripper mother at an orphanage in northern Georgia, the children made a pact to stay together and care for one another no matter what external forces might come between them. Soon after, however, the barely preschool-age pair was shuttled off to California to live with their aunt and uncle, Elaine and Hank Whitsett. The Whitsetts physically and verbally tormented the children until they were shells of their former selves. As a result, Cindy and Eddie developed coping mechanisms and turned to God to overcome feelings of abandonment and loneliness.

"Eddie, who emerges as the main protagonist, was left alone all day with abusive Elaine while Cindy attended school. Fortunately, next-door neighbor Nellie entered his life like an angel. Through her kindness and love, Eddie realized that his living circumstances were abnormal and unacceptable. He turned to nature for peace and solitude and his community for love and justice. Nash offers a heartwarming story about keeping faith and hope alive, even when feelings of pain and loneliness seem unbearable, and the characters are rich and textured. Despite a distracting change in narrative point of view in the second half from omniscient narrator to Eddie, Eddie's defining moments and strong character are consistently engaging. A tearjerker that will inspire those familiar with abuse."

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