

I don't have a home now; It can't be home to me. It just doesn't feel like it anymore.

rhythm.

She smiled.

Music and dance have been a part of Jones' life since she was three years old. It is something that has had a dramatic impact on who she is, something she has dedicated her life to, something she desperately wants to commit her future to.

Now it has become her only salvation.

The scars of her experience heal when she dances. The stage has become a place where Jones can forget about the things that have happened to her.

On stage, she said, is the only place where she doesn't have to cope with the realities of life.

"There, I'm the dancer," she said. "I'm not the victim. I'm not the bad child. I'm not the one who didn't do what she was supposed to."

The top of the TV in Jones' apartment is decorated with trophies and ribbons; evidence of a life spent in pursuit of an activity she absolutely loves.

It is a shrine erected by her mother, a collection of plastic and metal that proves Jones' life has been well-spent.

And for helping her achieve those things, Jones loves both her parents dearly.

Jones said her mother and father had always been supportive of her dream. No matter how much time and energy was involved, she said, her parents were there for her.

If there were only two people in the world she could count on, she said, it would be her mother and father.

Now, she's not so sure.

Jones said her mother's initial reaction to the incident was less than what she had hoped for.

"She knew something was wrong," Jones said. "She asked for a while and I'd say, 'Oh, nothing,' but she knew I was lying."

Jones finally told her mother a day later, saying simply that she had been attacked. She described her mother looking pale and saying nothing, finally asking her after a few moments if she had been raped.

"I told her yes," Jones said, "and she totally lost it, saying it was my fault, asking me why I was in his apartment, blaming me for not using my head."

"I guess that's why I didn't tell her right away; I knew she wouldn't be able to handle it."

Jones' father wasn't any more accepting.

She didn't tell him at first, but like her mother, he eventually learned the truth. His reaction was almost a bigger blow to Jones than the actual rape itself.

"He said he was sorry for raising me the wrong way," she said. "He apologized for not teaching me how to take care of myself."

She paused and breathed deeply.

"He said if I didn't want to be his daughter anymore, that was OK with him."

Jones did not report the rape to the police.

For her, the reasons were simple — why would they

care? And how would she prove it?

"What would they say?" she asked. "I was in his apartment willingly; I didn't scream or fight or try to run out."

Jones bit her lip; she pretended to take the hand of a victim and hold it tenderly.

"They'd say, 'Honey, I believe that something really bad happened to you, but there's nothing we can do. We don't have any evidence, he's a friend of yours, there were no witnesses...he'll walk no matter what. Then where will you be?'"

She curled her lip in a slight sneer and pretended to drop the imaginary hand.

"Or they'd say, 'Honey, I think you had a bad experience. You made a mistake and you want to get revenge for it. We're not going to do anything, because it wasn't his fault — it was yours.'"

Such public images and myths about rape worry Jones. She was afraid if people knew her secret, that is all they would associate with her. That she was a victim, a weak person or worse, a liar.

It is not an idea she savors.

"I don't want to hear the whispers and the talking behind my back," she said. "But I know it'll happen. There's nothing I can do about it — it's people's ignorance, not mine."

Jones decided soon after the attack occurred that she must dedicate her life to educating people, to dispel the ignorance and fear that will hurt her once her secret is known.

She has made it her mission to let people know what happened to her, simply so no one else will be as hurt and confused as she has been.

"My case isn't clear-cut," she said. "Even I don't know if it really happened. Even I have my doubts."

"That doesn't mean someone else has to go through the same thing."

Jones thought about her own schooling, constantly hearing about the right thing to do in a situation like hers. She smirked grimly at the thought.

"You know, we have all these programs in schools that talk about good-touch/bad-touch, but nothing that teaches us what to do when someone says, 'Someone touched me in a bad way.'"

"I hope I can change that."

His tears finally came. Not a deluge, but a trickle. It was a start.

Sitting quietly and listening to music two months after the attack, she heard his name. It was a simple four-letter word, a very common name.

But for Jones it was a curse, a monosyllabic fist that punched a hole into her world and left a scar that will last a lifetime.

She immediately withdrew into the confines of her body, rubbing the sides of her head with the heels of her hands. She rocked back and forth, as if trying to shake the memories from her head.

Then the huge, sobbing gasps erupted from within her frame. Giant pulls of air mixed with tears to form a staccato explosion of hurt and fear

and anger.

"It hurt so bad," she cried. "I wanted to leave, to run, to go anywhere...but I didn't."

She looked up, streams forming where the tears had washed away her mascara and dusting of powder.

"Does that make me a bad person?" she asked aloud. "What did I do to deserve this?"

Her eyes, usually bright and attentive, disappeared behind her slitted lids. Her lips bunched and pouted as she tried to hold the cries in.

She could not.

She wrapped her arms around herself, a symbolic gesture showing that, in the end, she is the only one who can help herself. And she knows it.

Fifteen minutes later, though, she was all smiles and laughter, the Jennifer Jones her friends and family know. The Jennifer Jones they all think still exists.

But she knows better.

The doubt lingers in Jones' mind constantly. The fear that she didn't do what was right, that she wasn't even a victim of rape stay firmly wedged into a prominent corner of her brain.

It still exists, and was present even as she tried to pull herself together after her brief, but embarrassing, loss of control.

"Someday I'll meet God," she said matter-of-factly. "He'll probably tell me I did the right thing. He'll tell me it wasn't my fault."

Jones' face visibly fell momentarily.

"But He might not; He might say, 'Hey, Jennie. Remember what happened to you? What you thought was rape? It wasn't. It was all your fault.'"

She shuddered and turned the volume on the radio up.

Jones sat in the front pew at St. Mary's Church, near the state Capitol building. It was well after 9 p.m., with no one in sight.

Silently she bowed her head and began to pray.

Like dance, religion has always been an integral part of Jones' life. She attended Catholic schools, and saw her relationship with God as stable and loving.

God would provide for her, she thought. God would give her what she needed, she thought.

Now she hopes more than ever that she was right.

"I think that God never gives you anything you can't handle," she said, "so I know I can get through this."

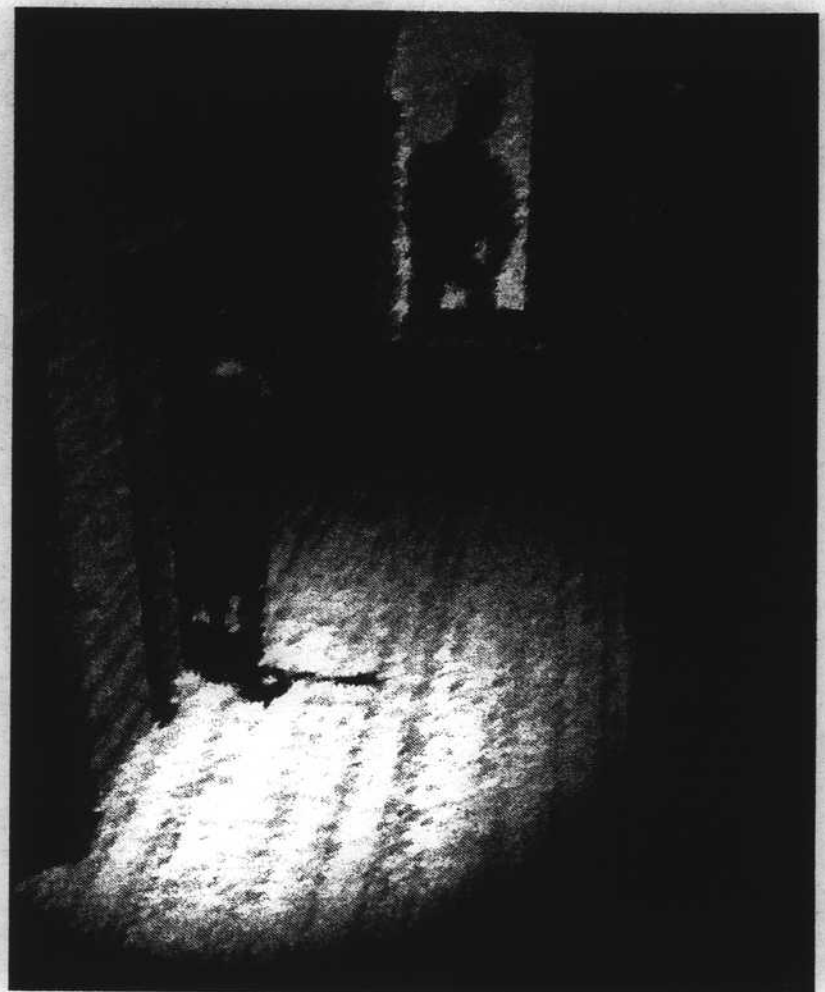
She didn't always feel that way. At first, she felt what she described as rage, anger against God for doing such a horrible thing to her.

For weeks afterward, she refused to go to church, refused to pray, refused to believe in all the things she was raised to believe.

Now, months after the attack, she felt differently.

"It was easy to blame God," she said. "I blamed God for doing this to me, when I was really angry because I thought He allowed it to happen to me."

The anger is not apparent in the



church, though. She sat quietly, sliding silently into the smoking interiors of her own mind. The rage is still present, but she no longer directs it at her God.

"I know He didn't do this to me," she said quietly. "Things happen for a reason, and I'll figure out why this happened to me one day."

Jones stood up, walked to the end of the pew and genuflected in the direction of the tabernacle. She then walked to the door, dipped her fingers in a font of holy water, crossed herself and left.

Outside, a cool north wind blew down 14th Street, ruffling her hair and making her pause.

She began to talk about her confirmation, how she chose a saint named Maria Goretti, a 13-year-old honored for her virtuous sacrifices.

Jones tells the tale of why she chose Goretti, stressing the fact that she admired her saint's refusal to give in to a man who wished to have sexual relations with her.

Goretti refused, and was killed for it.

"I wonder about that sometimes," Jones said. "She kept herself pure at any cost; she gave up her life for what she believed in."

She peered across the street at the Capitol, looking up at the building bathed in floodlights.

"Would he have killed me?" she asked. "I really don't know."

A woman is standing in a dark room.

She is no longer crying, no longer tearing at her skin in an effort to wash away the filth she feels on it.

She is facing her fear.

The room is dark, save for a crack of light seeping in under the door. There is an eerie half-glow in the room, distinguishing shapes but not detail.

There is the shape of the woman in the room. There is the shape of a bed in the room. There is also a shape only the woman can see.

Him.

"I see him in front of me, right now," she says. "This dark outline in the doorway."

"I can smell him."

She tells a story — an evil little tale — about jumping up from the bed when he goes into the living room to find a condom.

About pulling her clothes back onto her body.

About hiding in the closet in the dark room, watching him as he rummaged through his things.

About thinking she does not want this, never wanted this.

About escaping.

She stands in another dark room now, saying these things. She realizes that she is afraid of the dark now. She opens the door.

Now she does not always blame him for what he did to her. She does not ignore him or stare him down when she sees him.

She holds the door for him. Helps him with his groceries. Waves hello.

"As far as I'm concerned, he hasn't done anything wrong," she says. "It's something I have to deal with. There's got to be a reason why he did what he had to do."

She is confused and scared. She denies what has happened to her, but it will pass. It has before, and it will again.

Her feelings will turn into anger. Or sadness. Or fear again, though much worse than before.

Later, she is curled on the edge of a couch, thinking about him. The thought of him sickens her. She does not want revenge, though; she wants to go on with her life.

"He has a BMW, a Probe and a motorcycle," she says with a dull gleam in her eye. She has thought about this.

"If I wanted some kind of revenge, I could break something on them anytime I wanted. I could get friends to hurt him. But it wouldn't change things; it wouldn't make everything all right."

"I've got to be better than him," she says. "I can't give him the satisfaction of knowing he's hurt me like this. He