

SAWERRAA

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“He made a boo-boo”

Munnu’s father said to the detective” Six months earlier, 17 year-old Munnu raped and impregnated his 12 year-old sister. This family tragedy made national and international news in 1998, when a Michigan judge prevented the girl’s parents from taking her out of state for a late-term abortion. Pro-life and pro-choice groups politicized the case, severely compounding the family’s trauma. Even the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) got involved, representing the parents in the case.

One year earlier, the family had migrated to the US from India. Like many other immigrant families, the parents worked hard to improve their economic situation. They ran a convenience store while living in a small, two bedroom apartment. Their son and daughter shared a bedroom, sleeping in twin beds that had been pushed together.

How much this 12 year-old child went through! Guddi¹ was raped by her brother, then sent to live with relatives when her pregnancy was discovered. Despite presenting typical symptoms (stomach pains and vomiting), she was misdiagnosed four times before a doctor realized she was pregnant. Prosecutors won temporary custody over her and she went through court-ordered psychological testing.

An anti-abortion lawyer petitioned (unsuccessfully) for guardianship of the unborn child. After much legal battle, and in her 7th month of pregnancy, Guddi underwent a controversial partial-birth abortion. Her parents were vilified, her brother arrested. All this, before the age of 13.

A remorseful Munnu pled guilty to rape and incest. At Guddi’s request, and to spare her further distress, he was sentenced to a mere six months in prison, six months on a tether, and three years’ probation, before being deported to India. He was allowed to finish his senior year of high school before serving his sentence.

Munnu and Guddi’s parents were in an impossible bind. To support one child would be at the expense of the other. On top of that, their identity had been revealed, their apartment vandalized, and their car spray-painted. Ultimately, they decided that the whole family would return to India with Munnu when he was deported.

The Michigan prosecutor, who initially planned to charge the brother with first degree criminal sexual conduct, changed his position after the abortion saying, “This looks like a case of youthful sexual experimentation that was wrongful and certainly criminal.” To this statement an advocate and counselor of sexual victims responded, “To classify this as sexual experimentation minimizes what happened. There was a pregnancy because of it, a conception of a child, and an abortion. This is not what could be classified as children experimenting with their sexuality

1. Names are fictional, though the story is true

- *Abortion is illegal in Michigan beyond 24 weeks, unless the mother's life is endangered.*
- *First-degree criminal sexual conduct is punishable by up to life in prison.*

Some discussion points:

What can parents learn from this case?

What steps can our community take to prevent similar tragedies from happening?

How will this experience shape Guddi's future life?

What impact this have on Munnu?

What is the VAWA Act?

Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) passed by Congress in 1994, some spouses and children of United States citizens or lawful permanent residents may **self-petition** to obtain lawful permanent residency. The immigration provisions of VAWA allow certain battered immigrants to file for immigration relief without the abuser's assistance or knowledge, in order to seek safety and independence from the abuser.

Do you want to know more? Please e-mail us at saweraa@saweraa.org

Abuse can happen anywhere:

Own home	School	Theaters
Friend's Home	Dorms	Parties
Relative's Home	Office	Cars
Social events –weddings, family gatherings		

No one deserves to be abused

Domestic violence destroys families