have to say.

MS. [redacted]: Thank you.

THE COURT: Go ahead, ma'am.

MS. [redacted]: Your Honor, first of all, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity. I have known for years that being here today was a possibility, but I never thought it would be a reality. The little girl I was wouldn't have had the courage to do this, but little girls grow up.

When I started getting close to Mr. Toews in early 2010, I was in a very good place in my life. I was on the verge of becoming an adult and had great hope for the future. I was so happy to have someone who it felt like was listening to me and helping me navigate my teenage years. It didn't occur to me that Mr. Toews might have ulterior motives for being so close to me. At this time a family member expressed concern that we were becoming so close, but made me feel responsible for it. I was naive as to why they were so worried, and this created chaos and confusion for me.

Mr. Toews also made me feel comfortable and I trusted him. Slowly, but surely, Mr. Toews started to introduce inappropriate jokes and concepts to see how I would react. I had complete faith that he wouldn't do anything to hurt me. He used that to his advantage when

March -- in March of 2011 he first tried to put his hand down the front of my dress. I wasn't very happy about it, but I didn't say anything because I didn't want to lose my special relationship with him. He never told me not to tell anybody. It was just an unspoken understanding.

Around this time, one of the first really dismaying incidents occurred. I was with Mr. Toews and his children. He attempted to put his hand down the front of my dress. His oldest child was watching, and I expressed concern that they would know what was going on. Mr. Toews told me the child was too young to understand what was happening. I, at 13, was not comfortable with this, so I turned away from this child. I am still haunted by the innocent, trusting eyes of that five-year old.

I remember being so excited and hopeful about graduating the eighth grade that spring. About a week after graduation, Mr. Toews put his hand up my skirt for the first time. I remember the feeling of shock and confusion. I didn't understand what was happening. I tried to stop him by squeezing my legs together, but he was stronger than me, so he always managed to get them apart. Several times while Mr. Toews was touching me he'd say, "You like that, don't you?" I hated it, but

was confused and disturbed by it. I couldn't understand why he thought I would like it.

Another particularly difficult memory that occurred that summer made me feel very disgusting. For several years I had done this thing where I would knock Mr. Toews' hat off in a very teasing, playful way. One day Mr. Toews said if I did this again he would unhook my bra. I didn't really think he would, but just in case, I made it so he couldn't. And I knocked his cap off. When he found that he couldn't unhook my bra, he pulled my underwear to my ankles. I felt so disgusted.

Something else that occurred that summer happened at a gathering one night. Mr. Toews once again put his hand up my skirt when everyone was around, but was sneaky enough not to get caught. Then in late fall, he suddenly stopped. That wasn't the last time he tried to touch me, though. About four months later he tried again. I knew that I didn't want to start -- want it to start again, so I told him no. He tried again a few minutes later when his wife was around. Once again, I told him no. It caused enough commotion that his wife noticed and asked what was happening. He replied "Nothing," which shocked me, because it wasn't nothing to me.

I also remember being in great turmoil around

this time. I felt like what happened to me was my fault. I couldn't handle it and shut it out, vowing to never tell anyone. At some point I even apologized to Mr. Toews for my supposed part in it all. I saw us as equals.

During this time I had many visits to doctors and specialists trying to deal with all of my medical problems. Unbeknownst to me, it was a result of all my repressed emotions. After several years of treatment with minimal results, I made an appointment with my primary doctor that would change my life. She asked me if I had ever been abused. At this time, I said no. I was in denial and didn't really understand what abuse was at that point. It shook me up so badly that I spent the next day in turmoil. Finally it was bothering me so much that I told my mom.

All of a sudden my whole world was turned upside down. I went into shock. I spent most of the next few days almost immobile. I didn't eat, spent most of my time sleeping, and couldn't get warm enough. As a result of that, I cannot stand being cold to this day.

My brain pretty much shut down, as well. At almost 18, I felt like I restarted my life. I had to learn the difference between what I thought was real and what actually was real. I learned that what happened to

me was not okay, and yet it was so ingrained in me to protect Mr. Toews even though what happened to me was horrible, I still thought I was the one.

As I started my journey toward healing, I began to experience more emotions than I thought existed. I had suppressed them for so long that when I started letting them out, they overwhelmed me. There was depression, anxiety, sadness, pain, grief, anger, fear, confusion, hopelessness, worthlessness, guilt, and the feeling that I was completely crazy. I also felt like some people thought I was to blame and that nobody loved me or I wasn't good enough.

I spent a lot of time in my room by myself because I felt safe there. Life often overwhelmed me. I didn't participate in many activities with my peers because of my anxiety. After a couple of years trying to cope, I was put on medication and saw a counselor for the first time. This helped me to see that staying in Wisconsin wasn't helping me to move forward. Around this time I visited an aunt and uncle in [redacted]. By the time I returned home, I decided to move.

In the spring of 2018 I moved to [redacted] and in with the uncle and aunt. I felt a sense of relief of being removed from the situation, but faced other problems. Because I had a hard time trusting people,

especially men, it was difficult to be in such close contact to [redacted], who was a brother to Mr. Toews. In my mind, [redacted] were all the same. But living there ended up helping me heal. [redacted] had plenty of opportunities to take advantage of me and never did. In fact, it felt like he went out of his way to make me feel comfortable.

Whilst in [redacted] I went back to therapy and made lots of progress, but I missed my family, so after a year and a half, I moved back to Wisconsin. I felt like therapy had equipped me to face the problems that had arised. I also wanted to give Mr. Toews a second chance to prove himself. What I experienced in the 11 months here would completely change the way I thought.

For the first couple of months everything was good, then Mr. Toews started the mind games that had always been part of the original offense, although he never physically touched me. The most frustrating part is that he seemed to enjoy doing it when other people were around and getting away with it. It left me feeling destroyed. I hit rock bottom. I tried seeing a counselor again, but it didn't really help. I then decided to move back to [redacted]. I thought that I would be able to bounce right back, but I couldn't. I felt helpless and I didn't feel safe. I felt like I

couldn't move forward.

When Detective Mary Dexter contacted me in February of 2021, I was relieved. For the first time in a long time I began to feel safe again. I felt like somebody finally truly believed me enough to help reach a resolution. There will never be enough words to describe the last 11 years of my life. I have been to rock bottom. There have been times I didn't want to live or die; I just didn't even want to exist. I have spent hours crying as if my heart would break. I have felt unlovable, dirty, used, objectified. I have watched my family suffer, as well, especially my parents. To see the look of utter helplessness on their faces is indescribable.

I've been diagnosed with depression and PTSD. I have suffered severe anxiety. At this time I have seen five different therapists. I've had terrible nightmares and many sleepless nights. There have been times that I have stayed awake until dawn because I couldn't relax enough to sleep in the dark.

I once heard a quote, "Every betrayal begins with trust." It has been especially true for me, because I didn't suffer at the hands of a stranger, but someone I have known all my life. Yet it has been my upbringing, my faith that has helped me through. It is what has made

me choose to forgive Mr. Toews so that I am able to move forward with my life. What I have been through is so horrible that I would not even wish it on Mr. Toews. I don't hate him, but sitting here today, he is a stranger to me. Your Honor, my only request is that you do everything in your power to keep this from happening to anyone else. That has worried me often, as I wonder who is next.

I determined from early on that I was not going to let what happened to me stop me. This has been a long, difficult journey, but I have grown so much as a person through this. I have good days and bad days. Sometimes something will trigger me and I will have to overcome it. Today starts the beginning of a new chapter and the ending of a long, arduous one.

I want to end with a quote that sums it all up. "One day you will tell your story about how you've overcome what you're going through now, and it will become part of someone else's survival guide." Unknown. Thank you.

THE COURT: Thank you very much. I appreciate you coming forward today with your family.

Anyone else that wishes to speak, Mr. O'Boyle, on behalf of the State?

MR. O'BOYLE: No.