

The Story of Her Life

“Way Out”

Shaking from the pain, she seeks something, *anything* to relieve the agony within, if only for a moment. An eternity would be preferable, but at this point she is desperate and will take what she can get.

This isn't the kind of pain that medicine or doctors or surgery can relieve but rather a deep emotional pain locked away in the abyss of her heart. The pain has become too much for her to handle any longer. She needs a way out.

She looks at the blade, the pill bottle, down the barrel of the gun, and at the car wreck in her mind all at once. Surely something will end her pain.

She envisions the blade making clean slices straight through her veins and sees the blood gushing from her wrists as the pain leaves her heart, which will soon stop beating.

She searches the depths of the medicine cabinet, hoping to find something to end the agony for good. Finding a bottle of pain killers, she envisions herself consuming every last pill and waiting for the end to come.

She sees the gun, loaded and ready to go. In her mind she slowly raises it to her temple, saying one last prayer, asking for forgiveness. She drops to the floor with the sound of the firing gun. In her mind she laughs at this, thinking of how "hard-headed" she has always been and momentarily envisions the bullet simply bouncing off of her head, but the picture quickly fades back to the bloody scene where her lifeless body lay sprawled on the floor.

She sees the car being demolished by a train or semi or driving full speed into a brick wall. The relief is instantaneous. She is no longer hurting. The pain and sadness are gone once and for all.

What will she choose? Slow or fast? Will she be recognizable in the end? To her it doesn't really matter so long as it rids her of the pain she has held in for far too long.

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Her friends say they would be devastated, but she knows they will move on. People tell her to think of her young cousin, reminding her of how much she admires her, but she knows she will be better off without her, knowing that no one should look up to her. As for her parents, she feels no remorse. They were much too busy for her anyway. Besides, she isn't the important one—the golden child idolized by the whole family. Rather she is the "black sheep," the broken one of whom they are all ashamed. They would all be fine without her. After all, they rarely acknowledge her mere existence unless they wanted something from her.

She can hold on no longer. The pain has overcome her, becoming far more than she can handle. She leaves a note, addressing those who truly cared about and loved her, apologizing for hurting them and telling them to mourn her not as she has escaped the pain that simply became far too great. She makes a few final requests, trying to make this "loss" have some sort of purpose. She asks for many of her worldly possessions to be given to those who are less fortunate than she, hoping to bring joy and comfort to others. She signs the note with a simple signature and nothing more. Then she leaves a few final "words of wisdom," quoting Sir Winston Churchill, "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

"Why!?"

Everyone seems to have the same question—"Why?" She hates this question. She knows no one will ever understand. How could they? The so-called logic to her self-injury is far from comprehensible. She doesn't always understand it; how could anyone else? She attempts to explain it in her mind.

One reason is the control factor. She has spent her entire life under anyone's control but her own—parents, teachers, coaches. But finally she has something *she* controls. No one else has any power over her cutting. They can't make her stop; only she has control over that. Or so she thought. In the beginning she did have control, but she quickly became addicted as if she were on a drug of some sort. She lost that control that had been so enticing in the first place.

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She also cut for the pain. She needed something to redirect or ease her internal hurt. Causing herself physical pain gave her the ability to pinpoint the invisible pain that has haunted her for as long as she can remember. It legitimized her feelings and suffering. She could *see* why she was hurting. She no longer had to search for answers as to why she hurt so much; it was quite obvious.

Releasing emotions was also a reason for her cutting. Afraid to appear unhappy or show any “negative” emotion, she hid her feelings and buried them deep within her. But eventually it became too much for her to handle. She had to find something to release those emotions and that pain. The solution she found was self-injury.

Yet another reason for her self-mutilation was the blood. While in the beginning that was not the case, before long she needed to see more and more blood escape her body. As she would cut and wash the blood away, she felt as if she were releasing all her problems and hurt and sweeping them away. It was all a metaphor: each drop of blood a problem or hurt; the clotting of blood, the mounting of her troubles and pain; the washing away of the blood, the purging of her worries.

She thinks about this alleged reasoning and isn't sure what to think or how she feels. While part of her is disgusted at the fact that she began cutting in the first place regardless of reasons, another part of her still understands the logic to her behaviors. She still feels the same pain and still seeks the same release of emotions.

“Dark Days”

She awakens to an empty house yet again. This is an extremely familiar occurrence for her, but loneliness isn't a feeling she will ever come to accept. She attempts to occupy her body and mind, but her thoughts race to disconsolate places she would rather leave in the past.

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As she examines the roadmap of her life that can be found in the scars covering her arms, she remembers the relief she felt as the razor blade pierced her skin and the blood seeped out of the fresh wound. She longs for that feeling of liberation from her present torment. Although she tells herself she doesn't *need* it, deep down she feels self-injury is the only way she can relieve the pain and continue fighting for another day.

Attempting to distract herself long enough for the feeling to subside, she turns to music, friends, movies, and the computer with no success. She still feels the need to injure her body to ease the agony within. Days short of going a full two weeks without harming herself, she fights to continue the count. She makes plans to see a movie that night with her friends Stacy and Jill and hopes she can hold on until then.

She continues to attempt to redirect her attention. She fights for hours, but it all becomes too much. Finding relief is quite simple in her house, which is filled with countless knives and razors of various sorts. Upon finding a razor blade she makes her way to the bathroom to seek relief. She sits down on the bathroom floor and rolls up her sleeve. Breathing heavily and shaking from head to toe, she punctures her skin and slides the blade across her arm. More liberation comes with each drop of blood that oozes from the open wound. She watches with a manic smile on her face as she feels the pain leaving her body just as the blood does.

After she has found sufficient relief in her bloody arm, she cleans up after herself and bandages her self-inflicted wounds. At this point she feels no regret; the freedom is still fresh in her heart as well as her arm.

Less than two hours later she meets her friends at the movies. She greets them with a hug and a smile, and it isn't until they take their seats that the guilt starts to sink in. She sits next to her best friend Stacy, who has become her accountability partner; she promised Stacy she would tell her any time she slipped up in her battle with self-injury. She can't find the words to admit her lapse to her. She came prepared to give Stacy the blade she had used to cut herself only hours before, so she tells her that she has something to give her after the film, but she can't contain herself, so she hands it over shortly thereafter.

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They enjoy the movie—*Horton Hears a Who*, and afterwards they stand in the lobby of the movie theatre, laughing at some young teenagers' stupidity. They talk about any number of various things, both serious and humorous. Stacy mentions the possibility of Amanda and Jill staying the night at her house. Nervousness and relief sweep through her body. She doesn't know Jill very well and is anxious at the possibility of her wounds being discovered, but she trusts Stacy when she says that Jill is a great friend. And she welcomes the chance to escape the loneliness of the night. After phone calls to parents, it is decided that they will spend the night and all go to church together in the morning.

Suffering from a terrible headache, Stacy decides to go to bed early. Amanda offers to rub her back to help her get to sleep. As she lay there, feelings of guilt rush through her heart, but she can't find the words to confess her mistake. Eventually she asks Stacy to turn over and says, "I have to tell you something..." Stacy replied, saying, "Okay...?" She can't say it; she can't verbalize her slip. Instead she simply says, "I think you know..." Stacy looks at her with a look of concern and compassion and says, "Today?" She nods her head and shamefully whispers, "Yes." Stacy hugs her, telling her it will be okay.

"Change of Heart"

With a heart full of pain and a mind full of memories of hatred, anger, and sadness, she arrives feeling paradoxically skeptical and hopeful. She is greeted with smiles, kind words, and firm handshakes as she enters the building. She quickly scans the room, simply giving her new surroundings a "once over" and looking for her friends, who are more like family than her own blood relatives, and upon spotting her friends, she instantly rushes to their side.

Recognizing a few familiar faces, she smiles, wondering if they can see the pain as they look into her eyes. She and her friends find their seats and chat as they wait for the service to start. She watches as the screen counts down the time 'til it begins.

Before long the music starts and everyone rises to their feet. They sing several songs of praise. At one point she stops to pray, asking God to give her the

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strength and courage she so desperately needs. She has been praying this prayer for quite some time, but things have yet to change.

The crowd sits as the music comes to an end. A woman steps up, and after a quick prayer, she begins to tell of a recent trying experience and how her faith in the Lord got her through it. Next the preacher steps up and begins his message, speaking of the need for change in our lives. He talks about how important each and every person is to God.

The oration continues, and as she bows her head and folds her hands, she turns to the Lord in prayer. The sermon carries on around her, but she is far too deep in thought and prayer to even notice. For the first time ever, she feels God's love and embrace. She is overcome with emotions. Stacy places her hand on her back and begins to pray for her. She feels the love of Christ and her closest friend.

She has held in so much pain and so many emotions for so long that she can't remember the last time she cried even a single tear, and as she continues to pray, a tear slides down her cheek. She no longer feels the need to hide or hold in her emotions. She no longer fights to hold back the tears, and before long she is bawling.

Stacy embraces her as she continues to pray for her, and Jill holds her hand to also show her support and love. She continues to cry for what seems like an eternity. Long after the service is over, she can still be found crying in the arms of her friends. As they pray for her together, she is finally beginning to realize how truly loved she is. They each give her a long, powerful hug, as her crying begins to fade.

They look at one another and laugh at what a mess they each are, but it doesn't matter. She is a completely transformed person. She now knows Jesus. She has been a believer all of her life, but she never really had a relationship with the Lord. In a matter of hours, her life has made a U-turn. She spent all of her life in pain, desiring nothing more than for the end to come so she can escape the chaos, but now, for the first time ever, she was truly alive! She was able to experience actual happiness and joy!

The feeling is so new and unusual that it is somewhat overwhelming for her in the beginning. She is unsure of how to act, but before long she realizes that

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it's ok for her to enjoy herself. She no longer needs to pretend to be happy—she truly is happy!

“New Meaning”

The joy she has come to feel is tremendously unfamiliar, but with each passing moment she further embraces her new-found comfort in the Lord. She thanks Him for the beauty around her and the love she has finally found and accepted. The love is not only His love but also that of her friends, but most of all, she thanks God for the joy and happiness He has placed in her heart. She knows her life will never be the same.

She no longer seeks a razor blade for comfort, no longer feels the need to physically damage herself to relieve the hurt she's held in for so long. That pain is gone now. The Lord has replaced the hurt with an overwhelming feeling of joy and peace.

As she talks to her friends, she struggles to find words that do justice to how amazing she feels. She talks of how she feels as if she is smiling inside, how she feels like a little school girl filled with joy and excitement when her secret crush acknowledges her existence. Jesus is her not-so-secret crush. His love excites her beyond all belief; it is unimaginable. The love of Christ is greater than that of any love she has ever experienced, but that is because His love is not an earthly love but rather an infinite, heavenly love, beyond the comprehension of any human mind.

She has a new understanding of the lyrics of the same songs she has listened to and even sang for years. She finally feels the love described in the songs, and for the first time ever she sings, understanding the emotions of the song rather than longing to find those feelings. Never before could she sing of God's love from her own experiences, but now she can. She has a testimony. She is proof of the magnitude of God's power and greatness. His love changed her completely. She is no longer a scared, depressed, suicidal child searching for love and acceptance in all the wrong places. She no longer looks to a razor blade for comfort and release. The acceptance of others is no longer essential for her

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happiness. Instead she is a joyful, loving child of God, living in happiness through Him.

Even the Bible verse that her friend deemed her very own has a whole new meaning. The final line of Judges 5:21 states, “March on, my soul; be strong!” That was the encouraging verse her friend and mentor Lacey gave to her. Originally, she saw it as a mountain to climb. Marching on and living from one day to the next was such a struggle in and of itself that she barely had the energy for anything more. But she now realizes there is no mountain to climb. Marching on is no longer a matter of staying alive but rather a calling, a duty. She is a servant of the Lord, called to walk the path He has set out for her, called to tell others of Christ’s love. Being strong is no longer a matter of fighting temptation by and for herself because she now lives with and for the Lord. She fights her temptations by turning to Him. Her friends are still a major support for her as she is still transitioning into trusting the Lord with all her heart. Rather than merely avoiding her problems, she calls upon God for strength and leaves her troubles at the foot of the cross.

“Fresh Start”

Stacy speaks of how Amanda is like a new butterfly as she has recently undergone a miraculous transformation. Since the beginning she has said that she wishes Amanda could see herself from another’s perspective. She says that she would see how truly beautiful and amazing she is. She still struggles to believe that this could be true. She is no beauty and is definitely far from amazing. Her body is tainted by countless scars from her self-inflicted wounds, but God no longer sees those. She has asked for His forgiveness, and although she struggles to believe it, He has completely forgotten her past indiscretions.

Now she must come to forgive herself. Although she no longer constantly degrades herself for her past mistakes, she still strains to forgive herself for her actions. She knows she has dishonored the Lord’s temple by purposefully cutting herself, and that knowledge makes it difficult for her to absolve herself of her past wrong-doings. Eventually, though, she will be able to move beyond her feelings of

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failure and shame. She has already made such great strides. She values the four days she has gone without physically harming herself rather than condemning herself for slipping up. This is a first for her. Upon this realization she smiles and again thanks the Lord for so drastically changing her heart.

She knows that her new relationship with Christ will not eliminate her problems. She has spent years with such distorted thinking that she knows it will not be easy to rewire her brain, but her tremendous change of spirit is an amazing start. If someone had told her a week ago that God was going to bring such joy to her life, she would have laughed and asked him if he were crazy. While she still had a slight bit of hope that the Lord would change her heart, she struggled to actually believe that it would ever happen. But she no longer has to wait or hope for the Lord to open the eyes of her heart. Her prayers have been answered.

She lays motionless, staring at the ceiling of Jill's bedroom. She cannot rid herself of this overwhelming desire to self-harm. She has even brought blades along in case they're needed. She has them taped to the waist band of her pants. It's a good hiding spot and reduces the possibility of accidentally stabbing herself or losing the blades. Jill tells her she *can't* cut, but in all reality she could do so very easily.

She wants to stay strong, but her willpower has slowly been fading. One by one, things have piled up to create a mountain of pain, sadness, worry, anger, and fear. She longs to release the emotions she has kept in thus far. People say there are better ways, but none seem to really help enough to even make it worth her while.

She is surrounded by people who love her, but she feels so alone. While she doesn't want to disappoint those who are cheering for her success, she cannot stand to feel this pain much longer. She looks at all the ways she could eliminate the pain. She would rather end it for good, but even momentarily will suffice for the time being. Anything will do.

She has been fighting for what seems like forever. In actuality it has been just under two months. While Amanda is proud of this accomplishment, her

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sense of pride is overshadowed by the knowledge of her great pain and struggles amounting to a mere two months.

Despite all of the hugs and encouraging words from Jill and her mom, who has come to be the emotionally supportive mother she has always needed, Amanda cannot shake the feelings of defeat. Night after night she battles with her mind as it makes its way to the darkest places in her head. She has tried to escape these thoughts for years, but, even in the best of times, they never fully go away. Thoughts of suicide and self-injury consume her mind, especially during idle times when her mind is free to run rampant.

In the comfort of darkness, satan tempts her and tells her enticing lies of relief and escape. She struggles to escape from the cords that bind her to these sinful thoughts and actions. While logically she knows that the thoughts in her head are far from the truth, her emotions tell her otherwise. She *feels* like a failure, a loser, a nobody, so she must be. She *feels* like cutting would soothe all of her pain, so it must be the solution to her problems. Over the years she has been told that feelings and reality often do not match, and she has gradually come to accept this as truth. *(to be continued...)*
