

Dedication

In the loving memory of:  
My daughter, November Dawn

My mother, Mary

My father, Jim

My sister, Kim

My sister, Voni

My stepfather, Richard

My first love

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In dedication to:  
My daughters, KayCee & Natasha

My sons, Mitch & Hayden

My Momma Sue

My Papa Vaughn

Thanks for your inspiration!

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Forward:

This book has been in the making for eight long years. I cannot count how many times I have started it, dished it, or deleted it from my laptops. But here it is, finished! And, now it's my time to shine, to be the brightest star in the night sky, to be the one that did something right in life by telling you this story.

I want to give you some added information before you begin to read. This book is based on true events, I only reveal first names and some dates. With these events I share here I do not include a lot of personal detail of the victim, just I, the author and how these events played out in my life in random order and how they affected me emotionally, mentally and physically. I explain each event with just enough detail for you to capture who was involved and what happened. Then I proceed to discuss the impact on my life. The way it created me, the person I am today.

However, with that being said, I want to introduce the ones that made this book possible. My daughter, and best friend, KayCee, without you, my dreams would never be more than a vivid picture in my mind. You give me all the inspiration I need to create each word I put down on paper. Without you, beside me, I would have no will to live. My sons, Mitch & Hayden thank you for giving me the want and the will to do this book, the empowerment, the strength that it took to share this story came from you two boys.

My mother, Mary, for giving me life and for being the one to believe in me. My father, Jim, for showing me leadership and what hard work was all about. My sisters, Kim & Voni for giving me honesty and your love through the shadows of life. My stepfather, Richard, for your perseverance in teaching me to never give up on my dreams and that I could do anything that I set my mind too.

My ex-husband, this book release date was specially chosen for you as a gift to prove you wrong and to show you that "I did IT" and I hope it will always be a reminder to never doubt someone who loved you, Happy Anniversary! I do say thank you to you, my dear ex-husband for every nasty lie, hurtful word, and discouragement you ever tossed onto my plate because it pushed me even harder to prove you and the world wrong. I also thank you for the five beautiful gifts you ever gave me, our children, especially our youngest who you are missing out, it's your loss, my gain.

There is one person that I didn't include inside of these pages. That's because she deserves to be mentioned here. Throughout my life, I have had only one person from my childhood that has stood beside me and never left me. This person was very dear to my mother and became very dear to me throughout the long periods of rough lows and good highs in my life. I want to say thanks to her for being there, for believing in me, for loving me and for putting this book into motion eight years ago during a phone conversation. She always told me I was sitting on a gold mine that the story of my life would be a best seller and the next biggest movie. I always laughed at her and I still

do. I would be amazed if this book ever turned that big! But through the years she continued to bug me about writing my story and sharing my experiences with the world, so here it is and a poem I wrote for her many years ago.

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Mama Sue, my best friend

I hear the birds chirp in the morning light  
I sit and stare out this window, watching the rain fall  
I sit and wonder if you're okay, I think back to yesterday  
When we last sat and chatted the day away  
I cannot help but miss you, it has seemed like an eternity  
Since the last time, we saw each other face to face.

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When you came into my world  
I was just a little girl  
My mom and you were the best of friends  
And I was the biggest pain, a kid could be  
I learned to share my mom with you, even though I did not want to  
But after getting to know you more and more each day  
I came to see that you were the angel my mom was waiting to meet  
Soon after friendship grew into motherly love  
And I was never so proud to have you as my second mom

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Years went by; you are still the only friend that never left my side  
The one that has been there for me through it all  
You have given me more than you ever know  
You gave me love when I had none  
You gave me laughter when all I wanted to do was cry  
You gave me your friendship when everybody else ran  
You stood by me through many hardships in my life  
You were my rock, my one, and anchor, that has kept me afloat  
When I was down on my luck, and I felt like there was no end  
I had you there cheering for me, my friend

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For, if I had only one friend left in this world

I would want it to be you

You and me together for an eternity

So we could smile, laugh and cry

For all the years to come

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Just hold on before you either rush to put this book down or flip the page. I want to explain the scene to you in a little more detail. Each page is a new entry, not actual chapters, each entry was written over a period of time. With each day a new voice became alive inside of me that I buried through the years of pain. I, the writer, speaking to you over coffee. Now, I was advised to create different scenes such as describing maybe where we were meeting for coffee, I took that advice to heart and decided not to, that I want you to picture us sitting either in your own kitchen, in your car, on the bus or at your local library or coffee shop. The choice is endless and it is in your hands. So as you read these entries, picture us. Second, this book is a one-sided conversation. It is also not written in chronological order. I wrote each entry to what laid on my heart the heaviest each day and how my body reacted. Lastly, I advise you to have Kleenexes and of course, coffee or your favorite drink with you. Please take notes of what entries or poems you enjoyed the most and locate me on social media and I will be more than happy to chat.

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Intro:

Hi, my name is Jen and I am a single mom with physical and emotional disabilities. Life was never a joyful ride but one that has taught me a lot about the miracles through the events. Each event I am about to tell you are tragic but in the end was a miracle because each one help creates me, the mom, the poet, the writer and friend I am today. So, I hope you enjoy reading these true events and I hope you also see the good in the bad and it inspires you to do well and fight for your dreams.

First, I want to share a little about myself. I am not an author, I am a poet of words. A poet who paints beautiful, sad, disturbing, heartfelt imagery with words. So this book may not be written the most current and professional manner but I don't want it too.

So I covered my writing, now I want to share with you, the person behind this book. I won't spill the beans and tell all. I was born May 12, 1972, in Whitefish, Montana. I joined three older siblings, at first my life was what I thought was perfect. But life is never perfect. I grew up in Eureka, Montana went to the same school with the same kids until my junior year. Yes, I am a high school drop out with a G.E.D. I was married and raising a family by the time I was 19, stayed married for 22 years and had five kids.

I did eventually go to college but not until 2009. I had a difficult time finding my call in college and changed my degree a hundred different times at least and went to three different ones online too. However, my grades never suffered and I easily adjusted to all the changes. I would like to explain why with a little advice out there to anyone who might be battling in this inside of them as well.

See, when I started college I knew what I really wanted to do but I allowed someone to tell me that I would be worthless and it would be a waste of time to proceed. And, I believed him. I wanted to be a writer, a poet, a journalist, something to do with what I am doing now. However, I listened and went for first education then IT degree and finally settled on Project Management and Finance. I spent three and a half years online working hard to finish. My GPA was 4.0 and I made both the President and Dean's List. If I had stuck it out, I would have graduated at the top of my class. But, I couldn't finish ... my health failed me.

In 2012 I had a rotator cuff surgery. My rotator cuff was gone, I had bone spurs and a bone impingement. After almost 3 hours of surgery, and 4 weeks later it exploded like a bomb during physical therapy. My surgeon nor my therapist would listen and continued therapy for three more months. When I actually broke down and went to another doctor because I had no feeling from my elbow down and my hand was swollen so badly then my surgeon realized something was wrong and did an MRI. I found out that my rotator cuff had exploded and it had caused nerve damage down my arm. Here I sit now, five years later, disabled.

Throughout this time, I filed divorce from my ex-husband of 22 years and continued with college online until I couldn't deal with the pain. But, my life became my life at 40. When I walked out that door and he signed the divorce papers, I had LIFE for the first time since I was 19. Here I am writing this book to tell you how I became happy at 40 and how my life became my life, and how once again I was in control.

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Welcome to My the First Day

Today was chaotic, it was the first of the month which meant I spent the day finishing up everything for last month and getting things ready for this month. The weather made it hard to do anything today, it was a rainy day and all I wanted to do was curl up with a good book, or sleep. Sleep is what I really needed and did, with a two-hour nap on the couch. When I woke up and stepped outside to have a smoke, a beautiful bird sang to me. I will have to admit the first thing that crossed my mind was that it was some sign from my mom or dad to me. Since I have been back home, I feel so much closer to them.

I just recently moved back to my hometown after being gone for 23 years. It took a lot of preparation to make the move. No, I am not talking financially. I am talking about it took me 23 years to come back. 23 years of preparing and rebuilding myself to come back and face this town. I grew up here but it was far from an easy life. Far from glorified heaven, it was hell! That is how my life was up until the time I divorced my husband of 22 years.

I will try to describe to you a little about the type of person I was then and how I am today. Back then, I was scared, depressed, shy, and unsure of what I would do with my life. Today, I am a strong-willed, independent woman who has the future in her hands for a change. Not saying my life is easy, far from it. I live in chronic pain from Fibromyalgia and other injuries, anxiety and panic attacks and I still battle depression daily. I suffer from OCD and PTSD. Because back then I didn't care about myself.

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The Nights Are the Longest

Well, it's that time of day that I do not look forward to. The night. When things start creeping in and my mind starts working overtime. I love the darkness, quietness but it is also an enemy of mine. Why? Because these are the loneliest hours and the hours I sit and think about my life. My past creeps in, the present slaps me in the face and the future scares me. My anxiety goes high, pain levels will rocket at times and my nerve pain brings on the feeling of ants crawling underneath my skin, so I itch like crazy. By this time, my hands are numb and swollen from everything else I have to do throughout my day. So nights are in some ways my favorite time of the day and in another way, they are the worst. This time of the night between 10:30 pm -3:00 am, I am usually tweeting on Twitter and or chatting with a new found friend of mine. But sometimes, I am sitting here writing poems or studying. Tonight though, I am off to do my retweets and relax. See you tomorrow morning over coffee. Sweet dreams world!

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Morning Coffee with Me

Well, it's mid-morning here and just getting my day started. Another chilly day out but that is good because I like it when it's cooler out. I hope you have a coffee or your favorite drink with you. Because I have a story to tell.

My depression I guess started years before I was diagnosed with it. I would say probably when my parents divorced when I was 13 and it slowly increased throughout the years. The day my dad moved out he came to me and looked me in the eyes and made a promise that he would be there for me always. Well, that was the first time someone I admired and looked up to with great respect lied to me. He walked out and that was that. I hardly saw him until I was 18. Besides, my dad breaking that promise to me, my school life was never easy either.

I was not "miss popular" in school, more-less the outcast, of my class. I never really fit in anywhere. And, I hate to say it, but I am still that way today, a loner. When a teen has depression they suffer in the social situations and they don't know how to tolerate others well. I find myself to be that type of person. The days when I would have the least amount of contact with people the happier I was then and still that way today. Oh, there are times when I enjoyed being social and hanging with friends and family, but that put me outside of my box and comfort zone.

My box that I lived in was small, it was shabby and flimsy. The walls were still being built. My heart was always on a solid chain with a huge lock on it. My world was a dark and lonely place inside but on the outside, I beamed with brightness because I never wanted my mom to know the pain and anguish I was suffering as a teen. I wanted to fit in so badly but I didn't know how to. Conversation starters and carrying a conversation was difficult. I didn't like sports or band. I wasn't into 4H or any other clubs. I did perform in the choir but I hated it. My world consisted of rock music, writing hidden poetry, and watching MTV.

Throughout the years, my box I lived in became a lot sturdier and harder to break through. Especially after I was married. I thought life outside of the home ended because I was needed there instead. So, I just grew accustomed to being there, shut off from the world and my depression grew as my kids grew. My kids never knew I hid it well. I again beamed on the outside and hurt on the inside. The hurt was caused by my marriage not from having my kids. My kids were what has kept me going, striving to welcome my depression and overcome all the pain inside. My marriage story will come up through this book off and on but, here is the beginning of it.

I was living in Banks, Idaho at home with my mom and stepdad at the tender sweet age of 18 when most kids were heading off to college and exploring the world. I was at home with my mom. I worked beside her in a small café at the time when I first laid eyes on this handsome young man. I slowly became interested and had a friend check him out for me. We went on our first date July 10, 1990, and that was that. I was

awestruck and in love. I stayed that way for years after we were wed in May of 1991. But, I soon learned he hadn't or if he did stay in love with me, he had a real bad way of showing it. Once we were married the good times ended. By the third year, I found myself fighting for his time and his attention. This continued throughout our marriage and I finally fell out of love but stayed for 22 years. 22 years of hell, is what I called it, the only gifts he gave me were five kids. So as the years progressed through the marriage, my depression became worse. And it still is lying there in the background of my life as a beautiful reminder for being such a wimp in my marriage and not fighting for myself. Oh, believe me, I fought every tooth and nail for my kids to have what they needed but never for myself. I finally left and filed for a divorce in 2012.

The year of my divorce, I broke down and admitted to myself and to my kid's everything I had endured and revealed my depression. They have been my rock, my life saver, and my coach. Because even though I am happier, more content, and on my path in life, my depression does get bad at times where I feel I am closed in and can't breathe. I struggle just to get off the couch. I just go to this dark, lonely place within and isolate myself. It is usually triggered by lack of sleep, exercise, and around certain events from my past. I have this tendency to wake up, feeling like a million bucks then bust through the day really fast by over working my entire body and mind. Then the next day, I am down feeling like crap and not wanting to even lift my finger to write. I have never been diagnosed with Bipolar or Manic Depression but I am sure I am. I also believe I suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder too, from all the tragic events I have been through in life.

So in another word, I am a screwed up poet who is trying to write her first short novel. Now that's funny. So kick back and enjoy a bit of craziness, chaotic writing and severe idiotic thoughts of a depressed poet.

Well, I am off to do more poems and work on other things. We will meet again for coffee this evening for another hair pulling, a story from my life.

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Evening

Today started out to be a good day and turned for the worse. I was doing okay until the afternoon hit and down I went with sickness. I hate it! So here I sit in the middle of the night doing all my work. Last time I touched a little on losing myself through my depression, my school life, and married life.

After my youngest son was born, our marriage really fell apart. Lack of trust on my half and lack of communication and honesty on his half destroyed it. But I also believe a good portion was that I was finally wanting to become my own person with my own dreams. I had been sharing my whole entire or actually giving my whole entire life to him and I was middle aged and never knew life. I wanted LIFE! I wanted to become someone besides a wife and a mother. I wanted to go to college and have an education. I especially wanted to write. He hated my writing, it took time away from him and he never liked anything I wrote. One day he came home from work and walked right pass me as if I wasn't even there. I did my usual greeting and waited for him to ask me how my day was. And of course, he didn't. I counted how days it would take him to acknowledge me. It was almost a month before he really said anything to me. That's when the battle for me started. When your marriage becomes that bad when you can't even stand to be in the same room or sleep in the same bed, then it's time to call it quits.

I wrote this poem "Just Me" during that month long of deep loneliness and dark time. It has been one of my favorites since.

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Just me

Today was a new beginning for me  
I made up my mind, I will be strong  
I will beat the odds of being alone  
I am a winner; I will live in happiness  
I have my dreams; I will no longer fight

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I will shine in the spotlight, without you beside me  
Pulling the ladder down, as you done so many times  
You made me live in fear  
Of not wanting me to be  
The girl you use to know

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You couldn't stand it when I had held life in my hands  
And all along, all I wanted was for you to see  
That I was a special person indeed  
Someone who deserved love, joy, and happiness  
Someone who had devotion and commitment

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But after the years of heartache and lies  
And many lonely nights of tears  
Not having you to hold  
My love for you has died  
My broken heart will be mended within time

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So when I left this morning  
You didn't feel my kiss on your cheek  
As you saw me walk out the door

For I have found something new  
I found my calling in life to live a dream  
So wild and true

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I am me  
And this is what I will stand to be.

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My Demons

So this morning I woke with a headache and some pain I usually experience more pain on the weekends than any other days. I think that's because my body is just so worn down from the week that when the weekend hits, I need to rejuvenate and rebuild my whole entire body by rest and relaxation. Again, I found myself on the couch resting by the afternoon. I guess this is where I even become more honest and spill my guts by admitting that I don't just suffer from depression and PTSD, I also suffer from many medical issues. Last time we met I discussed my depression about when I believe it sat in and how it from mild to worse to PTSD. I touched a little on my marriage but I think it's time for me to get down to the honest truth.

Besides depression, I suffer from anxiety. My anxiety has been either my worst enemy or my best friend. Some may ask why and how? I began to suffer from anxiety and panic attacks after my dad's passing.

In October of 1999, my cousin showed up at my house and informed me that they had found my dad up on his property dead, they assumed it was a heart attack. I gathered my kids and went to my uncle's house where I soon learned that he had actually committed suicide by a gunshot to the head. My world, my life, my body shut down and it would take years to recover.

I became afraid to leave my own home. If I had to leave my house it would put me in a panic attack where I felt like the entire world was closing in and I couldn't catch my breath. I constantly was watching over my shoulder afraid someone was going to hurt me or my kids. I became a nervous wreck.

I became afraid of people. Or more like I hated people. I didn't trust anyone. I didn't want to grieve or discuss the loss of my dad with my husband, or family. I shut down on the inside and appeared as good as I could on the outside. But I was broken, angry, hateful and scared of everyone around me. I even hated trees for the longest time, because my dad was found underneath a tree.

I became afraid of germs and became very over protective of my kids. Oh, I hated germs!! Germs to me were the next biggest cause of death beside the trigger of a gun. I know, what in the hell do germs have to do with a trigger of a gun? I was afraid to lose someone else, I had it embedded into my head that if my kids even caught a bad cold they would die. I became OCD with my environment. I had to keep my house spotless by scrubbing it down on a daily basis. That included every inch of our three bedrooms, two bath apartment three times a day after each meal. My kids suffered greatly for over this because I didn't allow much contact with kids their age unless I knew the parents well and if the child/children were not sick or had been sick. I still fight with this even today.

I became so bad after the tragedy of my dad's suicide, I became sick physically. I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia when I was 28. I had driven my body so hard mentally by

off the wall thoughts that everyone would be hurt if I wasn't on call 24 hours a day. During this time, the doctor I was seeing had me on so many harsh medications.

By the time I was 29, I had I was not able to care for my three kids and they went into foster care for a year. Within that year, I personally winged myself off from all the harsh medications and refused for many years to even take antibiotics even if I was sick. My immunity was weakened and I was afraid to become addicted to painkillers. While my kids were in foster care, I did all the requirements of counseling which was very difficult because I was afraid to grieve still or discuss anything personal with my counselor. I attended anger management classes for the anger I had built up inside of me. I attended more than one parenting class and by 2001 my three kids were back at home with me.

Life, I thought would be on the better side, but it never became better, my anger continued to grow inside and my marriage fell apart. I never raised a hand to anyone nor was I ever abusive to anyone around me. However, I was abusive to myself by not taking care of myself. I never did what the doctors told me to do if I suffered an injury or if my pain was escalated by stress. I just ignored all the signs and now I pay for this dearly each day with severe nerve pain and other medical issues.

Until next time we meet for coffee and you may want to get into your pajamas and bring a warm blanket because my story here gets even more complicated.

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# Top Ten Memories of My Dad

- 1.) The smell of wood when he came home
- 2.) His frown and lack of personality
- 3.) His beautiful hand work he did when he made knives and guns
- 3.) His temper and easy to snap
- 4.) His love for the outdoors, his buckskin outfits and his black powder shootouts
- 5.) Hunting with him
- 6.) How he couldn't sing worth crap (Neither can I)
- 7.) Dancing with him at the local bars
- 8.) His girlfriends and wives
- 9.) My half-sister
- 10.) His suicide, one of the worst days of my life. When my cousin showed up and told me that he had died of a heart attack, then later finding out he had gone up to Pinkham sat beneath a tree and shot himself in the head.

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My Dad: The Hurt, The Pain & The Anger

So welcome back, I am sitting here in my PJ's with my coffee and the kids just went off to bed. I feel so alone during this time of the day. Glad you all are here with me to read my rambling past, present, and future.

Earlier I discussed a very dark time in my life. This time I want to tell you more about that time. My dad was a good man. He was a hard worker that always provided for his family. But he also had his demons too. He was abusive to my mom throughout their entire marriage. She hid her bruises well and her tears. He was also an alcoholic by the time I was 13 and they divorced. My dad walked out of my life when my parents divorced. His drinking would cost him his logging business, his family and so much more before he became sober. He remarried twice after the divorce. His second wife gave birth to my half-sister when I was 16. From the time of her birth to my dad's passing I tried to have a relationship with him. I really did.

See, when it came to my dad, I always felt like I was a disappointment and I didn't belong in his life. My oldest sister overshadowed me and so did Jim. I always felt like I was never good enough for my dad. Even my kids suffered by this action because my sister's kids seemed to be more of an importance than they were. I had built so much anger towards my dad over the years. I hated him. He abandoned me at the age of 13, is how I felt.

I wrote this when I was still angry and hateful. I felt so abandoned by my father. He helped create me and bring me into this world. He had walked out and started a new life without me and then he left just as fast with a bullet to his head. Man, was I pissed off! After time had passed, I finally figured out why I was so angry and hateful. It was because I never got to tell him I how bad he had hurt me over the years and that I forgave him for it and that I loved him still. After I wrote this poem, I felt so much leave my shoulders, it was like being reborn all over again. Because even if I wasn't the child he hoped for, I knew he must have loved me. Even if he didn't that was okay too. I have forgiven my dad for the pain.

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## Abandonment in My Life

Walking in the rain, just about to go insane  
Since you left, my mind is out of control  
I can't sleep, I can't eat, and all I do is cry these days  
My heart is shattered and my dreams are gone  
Since the day you died, my world came crashing down  
How could you do this to me?  
Take your own life with a gun  
As the days passed, I keep asking myself  
Could I have saved you, Dad?  
I dream of you sitting under the tree  
With a gun in your hand  
I see you crying your last tears away  
Do I cross your mind, or does everyone else take my spot?  
Like so many years that went by  
I would sit and wait for you to call  
To come by and see your little girl  
But all I got was years of pain and disappointment  
Much heartache and no answers  
As the anger grew into many shades of red  
My love for you turned into a fountain of ice  
I learned not to care; I learned I was not a part of you  
For, I could feel the pain that life could bring  
I knew what real love was  
I grew to understand why you did not love me  
I wasn't my sister or my brother  
I was me, your youngest child  
I remember all the days that would pass

I would sit and think of you  
Wondering if I were you  
If my destiny was to follow in your footsteps  
But today, I fought the devil and won  
Now after the years have passed  
Since you have been gone, and I came to learn  
That even from the heavens above, you can't hurt me  
More than what you did on the day  
You decided to interrupt God's plan.

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Acceptance and Love

I have fought my inner demons  
Over your abandonment  
At a tender age, I was your little girl  
When you choose the bottle  
Instead of me  
I have let go of my anger  
For I have given up on finding the answers  
To why you must not have loved me, as much

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You walked out and never looked back  
Started a family, and as if I never existed  
You never called, never came to see me  
To you, as if I was not your own  
Maybe it was because I wasn't good enough  
Or smart or pretty  
I would have done anything  
For your acceptance and love, Dad

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## My Demons: Part 2

Good morning, glad to see that you are still here with me. I got myself up this morning, but I didn't want to. I wanted to spend the day in bed...sleeping. I am exhausted today. Last night we decided it was time for my youngest son to have his own room so we tore the house up changing rooms out. Well, I hurt today but I am here to write.

I want to touch on my addiction to pain killers and the drug Klonopin. I never obtained any illegal drugs, they were all prescribed to me from my doctor. At each visit, he would allow me to suggest or say what medication I wanted. Something I took advantage off. I was trying to cover my emotional pain from my dad's death but ended up doing more hurt than good. I faced my addiction for about a year but that was a year that my children suffered from the loss of their mother. I still cannot forgive myself for it nor do I think I ever will.

I don't recall much except I was afraid of death and afraid to let go. I didn't realize at the time that with me holding my kids back because of my own fears that I was hurting them socially. My oldest suffers from social anxiety and OCD still and my second daughter suffers from anxiety. Lucky, my oldest son who saw these years too does not suffer from any mental illness.

I still battle anxiety and panic attacks daily. I am on a new safe medication that works to curve the effects. I am stable and sound minded and able to make good judgment and have good decision-making skills. But I am still vulnerable to becoming an addict again. I will not take anything that could become addictive over time I do not take anything that alters my mind or gives me a high. I don't drink alcohol.

Instead, my days are combined with heat and aroma therapies, meditation and yoga, and my prescription medication I do need to help balance my anxiety, chronic pain, and depression. I am fully disabled and cannot work. Which I will discuss later.

But first I want to close with a poem I wrote. This poem is quirky and light-hearted but its rings in so much truth. Hope you enjoy it.

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Struggles

Struggles are known to me  
They come and go with  
Each passing day  
I struggle to write  
With two bad hands  
Pain screams out  
With each passing word  
But, I still write

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Struggles are known to me  
They come and go with  
Each passing day  
I struggle to do the simplest things for my kids  
Like cook a meal, wash a plate  
Vacuum the floor, and make ends meet  
But, I still do my part

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Struggles are known to me  
They come and go with  
Each passing day  
I struggle to be happy  
To be healthy  
Both mind and body  
But the pain still screams out  
But, I am still me

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So please do not judge

Them or me

Because of the

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Struggles that are known to me...

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