



Full Circle

The summer evening, touched by a cool breeze, was weaving its way through the crowd, carrying the distinctly sweet smell of marijuana burning. The party was in the backyard of a new friend. Her name was Kim, and she was turning fourteen.

There were kids everywhere — in the garage, the den, the backyard, and probably a few had already found their way into the bedrooms. There was already one poor girl so out of it that her friends were trying to revive her in a shower of cold water, clothes and all.

Raging hormones, drugs and hard liquor were circulating in colossal supply. I feel sorry now for the couples that were drawn to each other by the illusion created by a six-pack of cheap beer. But all I thought then was “this is my new family,” and I was elated to be a part of it. I dove in without testing the water, never thinking that I could drown in it.

My grandmother had instilled in me a great reverence for God. I was taught that God’s plan for my life should not include alcohol, drugs or sex before marriage. But she hadn’t mentioned smoking. Smoking opened the doorway to acceptance by

my peers at that party, and when you’re a teen, there is no prize more coveted. Peer acceptance is a double-edged sword. It’s a warm welcome into a new family that

has just boarded the Titanic. The Titanic came in the form of a small, black bottle called “Locker Room.” I had already had my share of beers when they started passing the Locker Room around and I tried it. Proper etiquette demands that what is offered be graciously accepted, and I complied. The contents are inhaled to get the desired effect. The smell is exactly what you would imagine a product called Locker

Room would possess. I made a compromise that night. I gave up my principles in order to gain approval, and this became the standard of my new life. The creature was only an embryo then, but it was very much alive and gaining strength.

The next few years were filled with variations on the same theme — new friends, different places, different drugs, but essentially, the same party. I had moved my way up the ladder of “success” in those years. I was quite the social butterfly, and I had built up a reputation of knowing where all the parties were. I had made friends with every social class in high school, from the jocks and the preppies to the stoners and the punk rockers. Yeah, I had the hook-up. I knew how to get my hands on whatever anyone needed, and I was popular. I had reached the summit of teenage fulfillment.

The problem was that it was not so fulfilling. Waking up feeling like something furry crawled into your mouth and died there while you slept is not exactly the glamorous life. Some mornings, I woke up convinced that I had been the percussion section at the party the night before. My stomach hated me; in fact, I was certain that my internal organs had organized a revolution and were engaged in guerrilla warfare inside me. Instead of perspiring water, I perspired vodka, but I didn’t stop because the monster had been born, and Addiction was a formidable monster.

When Cocaine came for a visit, Alcohol and I were already living together quite happily under the same roof. Unfortunately, it was my roof, but I had opened the door and it had accepted the invitation with gusto. I didn’t mind, at first, I’d gotten quite used to living with it even if I hated the mess it made. As long as we were together, we could forget about everything — which I often did. Alcohol had a way of lulling me into doing things I would never have done without it. The night I met Cocaine, Alcohol had convinced me that it would be all right to stay alone with a guy I had just met while my friends went to get more beer. Alcohol, true to its treacherous nature, had lied, and I ended up being date-raped. I was 19 years old and up until that night, I had been a virgin. I had dreamed of staying

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that way for the man I was waiting for, the one I hoped would be in love with me, and would walk down the aisle of a grand cathedral with me dressed in my white gown. It was a childhood dream, but at this point, it was the only one I had left, and that evening, it was shattered.

My friends returned with much more than beer that night; they brought Cocaine with them too. I had never experienced such euphoria in my life. As long as I had Cocaine, I could pick up any of my shattered dreams, and laugh in their faces. The problem was that as soon as Cocaine was gone, I was able to feel the shards of my broken dreams as they cut into me, stabbing me and torturing me. Alone, I was helpless to stop them. I had to ask Cocaine to move in with Alcohol. Cocaine said it would stay, as long as I paid all its expenses. I was no longer in charge of my actions. I submitted to each and every demand because I was a hostage in my own body.

Since I no longer had any say on what went on in my body, it didn't matter what anyone did with it. I was losing my mind. Cocaine would not let me sleep and Addiction made me go looking for Cocaine the moment it was gone. I hated the monster Addiction. Its foul appearance was becoming clearer to me every day, and I could smell the stench of death on its breath. Cocaine was still beautiful to me, but like drinking water in a dream, no matter how much I consumed, I was never satisfied.

I was twenty when I became pregnant. "Papa Don't Preach" by Madonna was the song of the moment, and she gave voice to my emotions. There wasn't room under my roof anymore for Alcohol, Cocaine, Addiction and a baby! My love for this baby was stronger than the three of them put together, but I still needed help to kick them out of my life. I knew I had to run away. I packed my bags and went back to Costa Rica.


Little miracles lit my path one step at a time and I was cleaning up without consciously knowing it was happening. Costa Rica was a safe haven. I was surrounded by family, and Cocaine and Alcohol knew no one would want them around. My grandmother was there providing her love, affec-

tion and prayers. Morning sickness made me wretch at just the mere smell of cigarettes and liquor.

Cocaine and Alcohol knew they were losing me and made their last desperate attempt to keep me by their side — withdrawals. With the help of Addiction, they tortured me night and day. They would shake me and frighten me until I was perspiring. I had run away as far as I could, and I could still feel their grip.

In my desperation, I cried out to God with all my heart, but instead of a loud wail it came out like a strangled whisper. Addiction was trying to drown out my voice, reminding me that I didn't make choices for myself anymore. I couldn't accept that. I wasn't going to believe those lies anymore. I remembered how I had once lived happily as a child of God, and the tears fell down my cheeks as I realized that Addiction had almost won, but God heard my plea. When I opened my eyes...Cocaine, Alcohol and Addiction were gone.

Those were the events that had converged and produced the most loathsome creature I had ever known — myself. But this devastating journey was actually a passageway to a wonderful future for me. I had come face to face with my own mortality, and I realized that life was more than just mere survival. I knew I wanted more for my child, and as winter turned to spring, desperation turned to hope. I flung the windows of my life wide open and allowed light to flood every corner of my being.

I had a new life and a new life growing in me. We were a fresh canvas just waiting to become a masterpiece. Joshua was my gift from God: A black-haired baby boy with skin as fair as baby powder, who turned my world right side up and made my life what it was meant to be. 

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