

By the grace of God will I remain sober for the next four years. The relentless pursuit of relief, escape and excitement through the use of chemicals has imprisoned me in a circular existence of fear, anxiety and discontentment, with brief moments of satiation. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

An act of obsessive compulsion, waking most mornings with a heavy sigh and a curse on my lips. The machinery of my drug addled body relying solely on the good grace of my heart; the last vestige of hope in a hopeless cause, pumping lukewarm blood into cold steel corridors of self-loathing and fear. The stubborn fury of my intellect too scared to face a lifetime of pent up emotion, but bold enough to venture places no sane man would ever go. I was ambivalent to life. Too afraid to live, but fearful of the unknown – the great beyond. I numbed myself into behaviors that could lead me into the perceived abyss. I almost succeeded.

I lay in a coma for a week. On this side, it was a son with tubes coming out of every orifice, a mother crying by his hospital bed clinging to any movement or sign of life. Said the nurses, "Mam, he's not coming back. Let him go." On my side, it was feverish nightmares, being wrapped in steaming hot towels in the dirty bathroom of a chinese restaurant. My dreams were frustrated entanglements. Trying to get somewhere I could not go. It was not yet my time.

My family was awe struck the morning I woke up, yanked out the ventilator and screamed FUCK! After the fog lifted, I began to pray again. Every fiber of my being pulsed with an energy I have never known. I learned to walk again. Nights of feverish sweating and hallucinations faded as my brain began to heal.

My life there after became a roller coaster of emotion, temptation, and discontent, interrupted by moments of clarity where I fell dumb struck in joyful tears. Feeling completely connected with everyone and everything, and knowing my life had purpose and knowing that purpose was love. I believe that love binds the very fabric of space and time. I tried to desperately hold on to these moments, but I found myself slipping back into old behaviors; self pity and discontentment. My mind is and always has been a battleground. But, it has become completely clear to me just who is pulling the threads that tempt. Just who is behind the tiny voice that eases the silken blindfold over my eyes, concealing the truth and commandeering my thoughts and actions into depravity. I have seen the dark specter in my dreams. Sickness is evil. The evil are sick. Evil has a throne in this world, and the disease of chemical dependency is one of its infective vehicles. It is not to say that those who die never reaching recovery are doomed; for they have sacrificed so that others may live and prosper.

Evil's greatest frustration and God's most mysterious weapon is taking the bad and turning it into something good. "It is said that the greatest sinners make the greatest lovers." Better put; the recovered sick become the most healthy. So, here I stand at the crossroads, and with the help and connection of love of a community of followers united under one common purpose, and millions strong, will be the key to my freedom from the obsession to alter or input external things in my life in order to make me feel internally content.

Four years from now, if I persistently do the next right thing, I believe the possibilities are limitless. I could be a writer, a teacher, a lawyer, a priest. All I know is I will have a serenity and peace of mind that will illuminate my life and allow me to help others. The feeling of love and connectedness I have felt will become perpetual so that I will out

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distance my wildest dreams; and look back one day and realize that the hardest times in my life were the most important.