



"Depressed Lonely and Suicidal"

by
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He sat alone at his kitchen table. Staring with blank unfocused eyes, out of his window at the cold November day. But his mind though was not so blank. Through it poured a torrent of memories. Of people, of places and and events that had shaped his brief forty years of life experience. And each image and memory was a complete story unto itself, with a beginning a middle and an end. He was searching for an answer. Why? Why was he back in this same old familiar place again in his mind. He felt like a train running on a thousand miles of travel worn track. But with only one hitch, the tracks ran in a big huge circle. And there was only one stop on the line, a broken down deserted old station whose signpost read; 'Welcome to Desolation Desperation Loneliness and Doom, population 1, you!

Although he knew this was really happening, he noticed that something in him hoped that Rod Serling would step out from the small cupboard beneath the sink and say, "there is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension that is as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition. And it lies in the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination, an area which we call the Twilight Zone".... Was that too much to hope for? Yeah! Maybe so. Or how about this? The oven door comes crashing down and Allen Funt comes bounding out and says, "smile, you're on Candid Camera" Just then he realized he was indulging in another of his favorite flights from reality. Humor. And humor had been at best only a 'temporary' solution. Therefore not a solution at all. I've got to stop this foolishness he thought. He knew the key that could and would cause his

prison door to swing open must lie somewhere in his past and not in the cold and deadly blue steel of the 'Colt' caliber 44 he clutched in his hands. But where was that key to freedom? The 'chink in the armor' so to speak. The simple little 'Roloids' that spelled relief. Where?

Once again his mind began to flood with memories. Of the words of the late rock singer poet Jim Morrison who died of drug overdose in 1970, " It's only life, and no one gets out alive". Of an excerpt from a speech made by Winston Churchill six years before this young man was even born, " An enigma, wrapped in a dilemma and shrouded in a mystery". These last words he painfully realized were ironic, almost prophetic! For if there were any way to paraphrase his entire forty years of life, then these last words were it.

The first snowfall in the rural mid western town had not yet melted. His plan of moving here from Southern Calif. had only begun two months earlier. He stared out the window at the cold stark blue sky. The snow on the neighbors' wooden barn like garage roof, was melted in spots. Exposing the old redwood shingles underneath. A picket fence stood next to the driveway to the old garage. The trees, dressed in their fall colors looked lifeless and seemed only to add to the lonely abandoned feelings he was having. Confused and desperate, his thoughts seemed to spin and stop as randomly as the cylinder of the Colt revolver he nervously toyed within his hands.

He thought of his own bout with alcohol and drugs, and of how it had cost him three marriages. Of how it had robbed him of countless jobs, friends, and his

dignity. And of how on a day in 1978 his alcoholism had quite literally reduced him to what our society considers the lowest form of human existence there is. That day he found himself waking up on a sidewalk. Although it's official name is 5th Street, this six block stretch of cheap run down hotels, sleazy bars, and human self destruction is known by it's local inhabitants as 'skid row'. A street that is a jungle. Where every morning a county truck makes a routine collection of the 'John Doe' and 'Jane Doe' corpses from the previous night's overdoses, street killings and suicides. And frequently there's the unfortunate drunk who just happens to pass out in the wrong place. Where an unsuspecting driver of a car or truck or even a street sweeper mistakes him for just another bundle of rags or street refuse that collects there daily by the tons. It's a place where the value of a human life is absolute zero. And yet this earthly hell of human suffering stands directly in the shadows of some of the world's most exclusive high rise hotels and corporations. Where countless millions of dollars change hands every day. Places where presidents, foreign dignitaries, and the rich and the famous congregate. And there on the 'nickel' as 5th Street is sometimes referred to, life is about survival. When on any given day someone is robbed and beaten or even murdered for as little as 57 cents, which is the price of a pint of cheap wine.

As the young man thought of this he remembered what it was like to stand on a street corner bumming quarters to buy a bottle of cheap port wine. He remembered the hell of what it was like to go through the sweaty, shaky, hallucinatory 'delirium tremens', or DT's as they are called. The many times he woke to find himself in jails

or hospitals, occasionally even a mental institution. He knew what it meant to be powerless over alcohol, and of the hopeless desperation that follows. He thought of the date October 31, 1982. The date of his last drink. That's when he found a fellowship of sober men and women whose simple 12 step program offered him his first hope of recovery. And of how it showed him alcoholism is a progressive disease, and that the alcohol was but a symptom of the real problem. That with the alcohol out of the way, one had a better chance of getting to 'cause' of their drinking. Or if you will, the 'ism'. Simply put, it's what remains when someone who suffers from alcoholism quits drinking.

The young man thought of his childhood. Of growing up in a small farming town in the San Joaquin Valley of California. He was born on July 6, 1950 in the town of Turlock, it had the nearest hospital to the small town of Winton where his family lived. Having had a weight problem as a child he remembered growing up and always being called fatso. The pain and humiliation he endured at the hands of his classmates, and even occasionally a teacher. Of how he dreaded going out at P.E. because that meant choosing teams and he would invariably be the last one standing to get chosen. At which time someone would always shout, "ha ha, you guys got Bruce" then everyone would start laughing.

(Author's note: Well the cat's out of the bag now. Unless you're none too sharp you know the young man in this story is myself. From here on I shall refer to him as 'me'.)

I was the middle child of five. My oldest brother was 8 years older than me. # 2 was 4 years older than me. My younger brother was 19 months younger than me.

And lastly the only girl, she was 4 years younger than myself. My dad owned the only dry cleaners in town, my mother owned a beauty shop. They were never at home except at night. My oldest brother terrorized my two brothers and I daily for years. He would beat on us and kick us if we didn't do what he said. Some days he would bring over his friends and have us fist fight each other for their enjoyment. He also occasionally liked to use us for target practice with his BB gun, trying to see if he could shoot our buttons off. And always under the threat of a more severe beating than ever before should we tell mom or dad. Sometimes he even threatened to kill us if we told. Well, that's a 'tip of the iceberg' account of my childhood. Fear, insecurity, humiliation and pain were just a normal part of everyday life. Oh, I almost forgot. As if there wasn't enough fear and terror to keep me occupied, the 50's and the 60's brought with them the ever constant threat of total nuclear annihilation!

Well, by now I had laid the revolver down on the table. I really did want to live. I just wanted release from the fear and pain I was feeling. I thought of how I had come here to Richfield Utah with my fiancé to look for a house to buy. Having been rather successful in business for the last three years, I bought a house and paid cash for it. No mortgage! Not too bad if I do say so myself. Especially for a man who only nine years before was bumming quarters to buy a bottle of wine. Well, within a week of returning to California after buying the home, the relationship with this woman came to a painful and devastating (for me) conclusion. That's why I was in this same old place again. Feeling worthless, unwanted, disillusioned and 'not good enough'. Those same feelings stretched all the way back through my childhood to my earliest

recollections. I knew I had to talk to someone in the fellowship who knew me well. I picked up the phone and dialed the number of someone I knew in California. Having only lived in Utah about a month I hardly knew anyone well enough for this conversation I was to have. I had learned that when you feel like taking a drink, don't do it. Instead, pick up the phone and call another recovering alcoholic. Well, maybe I wasn't thinking of taking a drink, but what I was thinking of was certainly as deadly. The phone began to ring. After ten rings I hung up and called another number, it began to ring. On the third ring Daryl picked up the phone. Daryl is also a recovering alcoholic. I began to tell him what was going on, how I was feeling, and of what I had been contemplating. Then I told him how depressed and lonely I was. All this time he just sat at the other end of the line and silently listened. He patiently waited until I had finally shut up, then he started to talk. At first I thought what he was saying had nothing to do with what I had just told him. But I kept my mouth shut and just listened. Here is what he said, "the other night I was at a meeting and some guy there stood up and started talking". He said; "you know, alcoholics are the biggest liars in the world. You just never know what to believe of what an alcoholic may be telling you. For instance, if one ever tells you he's depressed, what he really means is, he is not getting his way. And if one ever tells you he's lonely, what he really means is, he's not getting laid". Well, I nearly dropped right out of my chair, phone and all! For what he had just said was really true in my case. And to think of how close I had come to taking my own life over something as trivial as that. The words, "cunning, baffling and powerful. Without

help it is too much for us". have a whole new meaning to me today. Thanks to god and a sober alcoholic 500 miles away, I didn't take my life or a drink.

Summary:

Today is the 2nd of January 1991. By the grace of God and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous I am sober 8 years and 2 mos. And my friend Daryl is sober 3 years and 1 mo.

The conversation we had took place almost 2 months ago. I get emotional when I think of a day 3 years ago when my friend Daryl came over and said, "guess what man, I got 30 days sober".

My next older brother named Tom has had a continual problem with alcohol as have I. Four days ago I got a call from my youngest brother. After our customary, "hey how ya' doin' bro's". I knew he didn't call me all the way from Washington state for that. I said, "hey, what's really on your mind.?" The 'just' of the answer was simply this, our brother Tom had died on Christmas eve night of the disease of alcoholism, scared and all alone somewhere on 'skidrow' in Long Beach California. It took four days before someone discovered his body laying there amidst the empty bottles and cans. His only possessions a small box of tattered old clothes. As I look back on my story I know now why I felt it was somehow incomplete. I had put it away some three weeks ago, not knowing quite how to end it. I had no idea my own brother would deliver it's ending..... Posthumously! But at this very instant I can

see it so clearly and perfectly. Even as it sits here in my typewriter. It's this! That the very same and tragic end my brother met is also the only possible and logical end for me. And that is REALLY true!... That is, "But for the grace of God"

"Tommy, the gift you gave me this Christmas, I wish you could have given yourself." Good bye my dear brother, I'll always love you!

Bruce