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*The Diary of A Teen-Aged
Christian*

When it all begun

Dear God,

Today I woke up and felt so down. Imagine being in a glue-walled room and trying to get out, yeah, your guess is right, it's tough especially being in this warm-blooded tux called 'flesh'. "Alright, I'll stop nagging but it doesn't change the fact I feel down. Seriously, this life as a Christian is very tough. Ouch.....ok, apply the Word. 'He who endures to the end shall be saved.' Ok, that was good. I think this is what I need for the day, this verse. Oh, I forgot.... I have school to go to. Yep, another activity required from a human. Ok bye....."

My name is Janessa and this is my life. I guess if I'm telling you about me then I better start from the beginning, where it all begun, when I stepped out of a cozy room called my mother's womb.

18 years ago, exactly 12 midnight, I felt uncomfortable in my mother's womb, so I stepped out. I grew up enjoying every bit of my childhood, from enjoying every kind of making a fool out of everybody because they want me to stop crying. "Yeah I know, very hilarious." But at age 12, scales of excitement fell from my eyes. I began to see things from a different perspective. All was not well. My parents were not much of strong Christians. I guess to them, it was like a tag they just carried about. Things were not so bad until the path became quite rocky. My dad lost his job, and then did things become worse. My mum also surprised us by losing her job. Well, it wasn't her fault, really. My dad turned to smoking and drinking and the days when he became negatively excited, he will beat mum up because she tried to take his pack of cigarette and bottle of rum away from him. This went on for year. Then something worse, much worse, happened. Mum joined dad in his quest to ruin his life by taking in hard drugs and liquor. Oh and it was a very traumatizing experience, coming back home from a very irritating day at school to spending the rest of the day with two wasted parents, talk about jumping from frying pan into fire. Slow. Things got so out of hand. It was quite surprising that my parents actually once called themselves Christians. Once I had a very rough day at school, detention and all. I was very angry because whatever landed me in detention wasn't in any way my fault, but what can I do but suck it up. With anger, I came home and hungry as well, I opened the fridge..... I found no food but something more intriguing.....my dad's bottle of rum. With weather eyes, I stared at the bottle of rum, thinking out loud, I said, "what on God's green earth is in this that makes it totally irresistible?" Out of curiosity, I tasted God! What is this? It burns, shoot! But wait a minute, after a while, it doesn't taste that bad. Uh...oh, the curiosity was now turning into desire. Day after day, I took a sip of my dad's rum. The sip then became a gulp. My dad realized his rum was surprisingly decreasing in quantity. With the way things were before, he would have believed the rum had undergone sublimation if that was possible. But now things were not that smooth, therefore he questioned all of us, from my mum down to my little brother. "Dad's overreacting, he's questioning even Junior." I would say in my head. But every time he gets to me, I simply shake my head and say, "Yuck, dad, that thing is worse than bitter, why would I enjoy it". This went on for days, weeks and month. What I thought I knew was that I was enjoying my life. What I didn't know was I had offered the devil help on a silver platter to ruin my own life. Well, that's not all....there's more.....

The Painfully Sweet Journey

The Bumpy Ride

Dear God,

Recapping on previous events.....my life was at destruction's peak. Hmmm, quite interesting, but not as interesting as how worse things became. Now I had become an alcoholic and believe me, being always drunk is a whole new world altogether. I lost my dad and finances became worse and my mum upgraded the version of tools she used in ruining her life, she began smoking pot, which was quite contagious in terms of me. Now and then mum would throw a tantrum due to the flimsy reason that she's 'high'. This mostly caused an eerie atmosphere in the house because she would scream, sounding perfectly like a car tire screech, which made me think, "That only happens in movies when one is possessed." During times like these, Junior would fall into something I call a trance. Well that was sort of his habit. He rarely spoke. Though mum's mind was many a times on a different planet, she was quite clear-minded when she refused to let us quit school. Junior and I both went two different schools. His was quite closer to home and the kids there were lesser bullies than the ones at mine. So currently I was a drug addict slash alcoholic. And for my family, well, wretched was an understatement for the way we lived, and poor is nowhere near our financial statement. But fortunately I made it through high school and for the graduation ceremony....., not much of me was seen there. As for the university, mum totally agreed with me that we were that low on cash to include university expenses, so rather I got a job at the diner down the street. The pay wasn't that much but it helped in keeping us off the street.

One sunny afternoon, I had switched shift with my co-worker so I had my afternoon off, I was walking down the road to my house when I saw Adonis! His hair was dark and wavy. His skin was perfectly tanned and flawless and his eyes were sleek black. In short, the fellow was perfectly handsome. Carrying a box out of the trunk of a car, he turned and looked at me. Though he was standing a good distance away, his gaze was so deep I felt like an open book with the wind blowing my sheets. He smiled my way and in doing so revealed a set of perfectly shaped snow white teeth. Drawing closer, I figured he was our new neighbor because those boxes he was removing out of the car trunk were going into the house next to ours. Passing by him, I whispered a 'hi' and he replied with a 'hello'. Oh crap! If I'm not exaggerating, his breath smelt like steaming hot chocolate drink. I began to walk faster to my house because my knees were buckling, which was surprising because I couldn't figure out if it was his smile or the fact that he spoke to me that caused my knees to buckle. As I reached my doorstep, I heard the familiar car-screech scream of my mum and at that point it felt like opening that door leads me to a new world where this new world in particular was nothing but U-G-L-Y, but what can I do? So shrugging as best as I could, I went inside.....

The Darkest Encounter

It was exactly one week since Drake (new guy in the neighborhood) moved in and that one week was the most disturbing week of my life. Simply because I was totally into this guy and of course I am not so forward with people much more guys so there was no way I could tell him and even if I could, that will make me look pretty desperate. So after sulking throughout dinner on Sunday evening, I lay on my bed thinking, "Just one week with this guy around and I'm acting all so goofy? How are the rest of the days going to be like? Well I kind of got my answer the next day....."

I was running my busy morning shift, as well as day dreaming (don't ask how I combined the two, I don't even know how.) about Drake and me on a perfect island having a perfect fun. Suddenly I was jolted back into reality by Ann my co-worker. "Quit daydreaming my dear, because your prince charming just waltzed into town." she whispered nodding her head towards where he was seated. I turned and there he was seated so perfectly having an extremely calm expression. Oh geez, he's so cute! My brains exclaimed. I walked towards him (slowly though, because my knees were all wobbly) and I could hear Ann's irritating giggle, of course I was walking like I was auditioning for a beauty pageant which by the way am so bad at. I got to his table and in a strange shriek voice (I don't know where that came from), I asked him what he would like to have. And this is what he said, "why don't you sit for a while and I will tell you exactly what I really want to have." (Was I dreaming or did he just ask me to sit.) Well agreeing to that will make me look desperate. So I painfully declined, "With a boss like mine, sitting on these chairs even when we are closed will land you on the street." I said jokingly. "He wouldn't mind you sitting outside this diner, would he?" he calmly asked. "I guess not", I replied. "When does this never-sit-on-the-chairs boss of yours allow you to go home?" he asked. "Three", I replied. "Good, since we are neighbors, it wouldn't be hard finding you, I will see you at 3:30 then. Oh, and what I would like to have wasn't written on this menu." He said and with that he left. "Oh my God, is that a date?" I asked aloud. "Well you can figure that one out later, for now, you've got tables to wait." Ann said from behind me.

Five minutes to three, and I could have been diagnosed to be having a nervous breakdown. 1. Because I was going on a date (if I should call it that) with the total stranger next door that I had an immense crush on. And 2. How am I going to go out of the house if I get in when mum is in there? To answer that, I consoled myself saying, "I will cross that bridge when I get there." And I did cross that bridge, I just fell into the water a couple of times. I got home and mum was sitting on the couch. Strangely enough, she was watching me keenly or was I hallucinating? Ok I was too nervous for my own good. Mum was actually dozing off. I rushed to my room, had a good scrubbing and dressed up. Oh and when I say dressed up, I mean dressed up. The clock in my room read 3:30, so I flew downstairs, thinking by now mum would have fallen asleep. But that, was the greatest miscalculation I could ever have made. Because mum was sitting on the couch alright, only that she wasn't sleeping, not even dozing, and this time I wasn't hallucinating. She was staring right at me. "Mum, what?" I asked her, trying not to show my nervous state. "And

where are you going all so dressed up”, she answered. “Well, I’ve got some few errands to run.” I lied. “Really, and don’t you think you’re a little bit too dressed up to be running errands?” she asked. “If I don’t do something, mum will not let me go out.” I thought to myself. Mum was still speaking when feigning anger I said, “Nobody stops you when you sink deep into that bottle, or go off when you smoke pot, so your moral standards are quite too low to be used as checks, don’t you think?” And with that I stormed out. Standing outside, waiting for me was Adonis. He looked so perfect standing there. “You look smashing, how come I didn’t notice that before?” he asked smiling. I was too busy gazing at his perfect set of white teeth that I bother answering. “Shall we?” I heard him ask. “Yes, we shall.” I heard myself answer. (Talk about being the best in grammar).

I got back home feeling super excited. Nothing was more exciting than what I was expecting my first date to be. Weeks passed and Drake and I had become inseparable. Mum had stopped her “moral warnings”, she practically stopped after the first day I guess. I was running an afternoon shift because I had switched with Ann earlier. Well, to be honest, switching shifts was now common to me since Drake came into my life. Speaking of Drake, there was more to the guy than I thought I could imagine. I found out that aside from being perfectly handsome, he was perfectly gifted in music. Which reminds me, I am a pretty good singer and my fingers are quite great on the piano (Sorry for not telling you earlier). I also found out that my perfect Drake was a perfect junkie. ☹️! Of course, I confronted him and he convinced me that he would quit. But then something happened. We had dinner that night and after that he said he had to meet a friend so we went through an alley to meet this friend. Oh, we met the friend alright. As they were speaking, I noticed Drake hand something to his friend. I was sure it wasn’t bread. No one would wrap bread like that. Then I remembered Drake had asked me to keep something similar to that in my bag. So I quietly opened it and it was pot. I knew what it was because I did smoke a few when mum started smoking but I wasn’t that much into it. I walked up to Drake and his friend and tried to get their attention so I could tell them my piece of mind. They seemed not to be interested in what I was saying. I managed to get Drake’s attention and he got pissed about it. We were kind of arguing when I heard sirens. Well, none of us paid attention since we were all arguing until we heard “You kids look like you want to spend the night in a holding cell.” It was then that I realized what I was holding, in fact, what I was waving in the air. All I saw was I was being hurled into the back of the police car with Drake and his friend.....

It was so cold and hard and dark. I was in a prison cell. To make me feel better, a holding cell. I convinced myself that it just had to happen. My heart said, “It’s not Drake’s fault, plus an adventure is good, right?” “Not when it lands you in a holding cell” my brains retorted. All I could ask myself was how long?

Well, I got my answer the next morning. Mum bailed me out and she was furious. Very furious. “I used the last penny we have to bail you out, you little twerp!” she yelled. Still yelling she said, “And how am I going to pay up the bills and.....” “Mum!” I screamed. She lost her balance or something. Mum was on the floor holding her chest. She looked too pale. And she appeared not to be breathing.....

Without Mum

“Your mum suffered from a severe heart attack, I’m sorry we lost her”. These were the words I kept on hearing in my head since that morning. Junior and I were left alone. I couldn’t believe it. There were times I used to wish I was alone but I never knew I will live that wish, not this early. I realized there were a lot of things I didn’t know about mum in her last days. Like the fact that mum had become a Christian again. And that she had stopped smoking and drinking. I had never known she went to church on Sundays with Junior. I clearly remember the image of an inseparable mother and daughter relationship when I was younger. What had happened to us? The question I should have asked was, what will happen to us? Because what followed afterwards was too much to take in.....

One afternoon, I had back from my morning shift, and while Junior and I were having the fries I got from work as lunch, there was a knock on the door. I opened the door and there was this guy.... Suits and all. He looked pretty official and he handed me a couple of letters. They were from the bank. “Is there a problem?” I asked. “Yes, there is.” He answered. “These letters are mortgage bills that are way past due, and so I’m here to inform you that you have one week to evacuate this building.” He stated. “One week?” “What do I do in one week?” But there was nothing I could do. I couldn’t bring mum back, I couldn’t get the bills paid, not with what I earned, and worst of all, I couldn’t face Junior. Mum’s death took its toll on him. Of course, he had always been with her. I didn’t say this earlier because I found it weird at first but now I picture it and I can’t stop crying. Whenever mum used to get so high or crazy after smoking or drinking, and she would begin to scream, Junior would hold her from behind and start to rock her, singing his favorite lullaby. Sometimes mum would push him or hit without knowing but Junior never budged. And now how am I going to tell him that we only have a week more to spend in the house. The house where all his memories were created. How am I going to tell him we only one week to evacuate his favorite place in the world? This is so hard. Well I had to do it.

“Junior, there’s something I got to tell you.” I said. He stared at me but didn’t utter a word. I took a deep breath and said, “We have today leave this house, there are a lot of bills we can’t pay.” That was all I could bring myself to say. He didn’t say anything but he clearly understood what I said because his eyes were tearing up. But I had to tell him the rest. I choked on the next few words I said. “And We have aweek to do so.” This time he didn’t hold back the tears. But he still didn’t speak. I couldn’t look right into his eyes. He looked exactly how I felt..... Miserable.

Throughout the week, I searched for places. Places we could rent for a while. But I couldn’t get any. And there was one more enemy..... time. The week passed so quick, that I was too slow to blink. On the very last day, I found a place. A place I never imagined I would end up. A place I never dreamed of to spend the night there, much more for the rest of my life..... A trailer park.

Moving out was as difficult as moving in. Junior had stopped crying and that was a bit of relief. I still couldn't get over the fact that mum was gone. I turned back to drinking and smoking. And I quit my job at the diner. I couldn't stand the so many "I'm sorrys"

Days after we moved in, I was walking down the street when I bumped into Drake. I was surprised to see him there and so was he. He told me he heard what happened to mum. I was just staring at him without speaking. Then he pulled me into his arms. I then realized I was crying. He said he always comes around to visit some friends, and so he will come around. We walked and talked for hours. As we got nearer to the trailer park, he said "I missed you." "I did too." I responded. He promised to come and see me the next day. And I spent my night waiting.....

Drake did show up the next day and I was excited. I felt good to know someone in a totally strange and new world. "I don't think I'm going to make any friends here." I calmly said. "I'm certain you will" he replied. "Speaking of friends, there are a few I would like you to meet" he stated. "Ok, when?" I asked. "There shouldn't be anything wrong with now, right?" he shrugged. Well, Junior hardly came out of the room so there was no point in worrying about him. I walked towards the room. Opening the door, I peeked and said, "Junior, I'm going out for a while. I will be back, call me if you need anything, okay?" He simply turned to my direction and turned back to whatever he was staring at. "Oh God, I would give an arm and leg to hear him speak." I thought as I closed the door. Back in the kitchen/dining area/hall, Drake was waiting for me. Watching him from a distance, one could tell he had lost a few pounds and his eyes looked weary. We walked out of the house (If I should call it that) and walked past some houses until we got to the seventh house from mine. Drake knocked on the door and a guy opened up. He had piercings almost all over his face. I had an eerie feeling about this guy and the place in general. It smelled of alcohol and cigarette. The guy ushered us in when he recognized Drake. Something didn't feel right..... I thought as I entered.....

Deep in the Park

My intuition was right. I had entered a new and dark world. Drake and his friends were into drugs. They worked this big guy whom I didn't know personally but I heard them talk about him. Drake wanted me in the gang but I wasn't sure if I wanted in. So I asked for time. But time wasn't on my side. And Junior and I were running low on finances. Drake and his friends seemed to have it all figured out. I was an alcoholic and drug addict but I didn't want to be a convict. Weird, right? But something happened, something bad. Junior fell sick and the money I had left wasn't able to cover the drugs and the hospital bills. I had to look for money quickly or he will no longer receive treatment. I had a choice but I wasn't ready to face the consequence of losing my brother. So I went to Drake. I told myself that it was a one-time thing. Just to save Junior. That was just to make me feel less bad about my choice. Because I didn't stop after Junior got better. I was falling deeper and deeper and deeper. And the opening was closing. And I was so good at it. So good. Too good. I was recommended to the big guy. He liked me. I liked what I was doing.

It went on for months..... A year and more. One night I got home so wasted. Junior came out of the room. He came and stood before me. Though I was drunk I realized Junior was growing old. He had grown at least three inches taller or something. He stared right at me and said, "I don't like this. I don't like it when you drink and smoke. I don't like you like this." I realized two things instantly. For the first time in a long time, Junior had said more than a sentence and he was holding a book.....a book.....a Bible. "Where did you get that from?" I asked, but he had already left to the room. I woke up the next morning and Junior wasn't at home. But there was a cup of hot coffee, a glass of water and two aspirin tabs on the side table by the couch. And there was a note, "These are the last two tabs of aspirins in the house, if you are sure to get more hangovers then please buy more on your way back home." I couldn't help but smile.

I found out Junior was spending most of his days with our neighbor. An old lady who seemed to really enjoy Junior's company. And anytime he went there, he was carrying the Bible. But me, I was too deep in the dark. I couldn't get out. Drake and I were still in a relationship. Whenever he came around, Junior simply walked out with his Bible and went to the old lady's. It was a clear indication Junior didn't like him. But we both didn't care. Well, I cared a bit but I didn't want Drake to notice.

One night, Drake and I had an argument and that ended our relationship. Supposedly, he told his friends that he had already had his way with me. For them it was weird to be in a relationship and not have sex. Drake apparently was their best playboy, so to save face he lied. I found out that evening when the guys were talking about it. I confronted him before them and asked him to tell the truth.

"Drake, tell them the truth!" I yelled. "What truth?" he asked "Don't play smart with me, you and I both know we have never had sex." I retorted. "You dare embarrass me in front of my friends?" he questioned angrily. "Oh, really, well the next time I'm going to embarrass you, you'll start to squeak.....like a mouse!" I retorted angrily. With that I left.

Though I was no more talking to Drake, I wasn't out of business. I didn't let our problems get in the way of business. The deals were booming. The clients were increasing. Business was growing. We got a call from the big guy. We hardly get calls from him. It either meant something was wrong or a big deal was coming up. And this time it was the latter. An important client had requested for a huge amount of dope. This deal would have raised the whole business to another level. Yes, I said "would have". That's because something happened. Something bad. Something worse.

On that day I was on duty with two others. We were supposed to make the transaction. But someone must have alerted the police because we were right where they wanted us. We tried escaping. At least I tried. But I was holding the briefcase containing the drug. And I was the one who was shot. In the leg....

I fainted. I woke up. I fainted again. When I finally woke up, I was staring into the faces of Junior and the old lady. "Mrs. Peters will be taking care of me while you are in prison for two years" Junior said calmly. Mrs. Peters was apparently the old lady and the jail part I figured was for me. I was going to jail. Jail! Jail! Oh shoot! A policeman entered the room and mentioned my name. "It's time to go" he said. Ok, so I was already in prison, I just hadn't been put behind the bars yet. I then realized my hands were cuffed. I couldn't even wave Junior. He just stared as I was taken away. I was being taken away and there was nothing I could do. I was so helpless. I was taken to the registration department. It sounded like I was going to school rather than prison. There were flashes of lights. I was being registered. (I think that's the most sarcastic part of prison.) And then I was taken away. Into a dark, cold cell. Where the doors are bars of iron, cold hard iron. A cold dark cell.....

When It Really Began

The Voice in the Opposite Cell

It was exactly two weeks since I became a prisoner. And I was still not used to the environment. Why try getting used to, anyway? It was never one of my ambitions. In the cell opposite mine, there was no one there. But sometimes I was very certain I heard a voice. Sometimes singing. Sometimes reading. It freaked me out most times. But the guard assured me that there was no one there. This went on for many days. For weeks. Sometimes I could hear some the words he was saying. Jesus. Accept. Everlasting life. And some other words. But these three rung in my head most often. I told Junior about it when he came to see me with Mrs. Peters. Apparently I was the only one who could hear the voice.

So one night, I mustered courage. And I called out to the voice. "Who are you?" I was certain whoever it was chuckled lightly and said, "That doesn't really matter, but I was waiting for you to make a move." And that started our daily conversations. I was often sent to the hospital for checkup. The guards were convinced I had lost it. My sense of reasoning, that is. The results always came out negative indicating I was perfectly in my right mind. Nobody understood. Well, I didn't, myself so it wasn't that strange. But strangely enough, I found out I could really talk to Voice (By the way, that's how I named him). I could really open to him. Share with him things I never shared with anyone. This went on for months. The cell always felt warm whenever I talked to him. Every evening he would ask me, "Say, someone agreed to take your place in this cell and be a convict on your behalf, how would you feel towards the person?" Then I would say, "I would probably owe him my life." Then he would say, "Perfect answer." Then we would wish each other goodnight. But he doesn't sleep immediately or probably doesn't sleep at all. Because I always hear him read till I fall deeply asleep. Sometimes it felt as if what he read was putting me to sleep.

Once he told me a story. He told me it was in the book from which he read every day. The story really sounded familiar but I was so blank. I tried to remember. But I couldn't. Voice said to me, "Don't worry Janessa, in due time you will remember, in due time." He spoke like he really knew me.

Junior often visited me and I was happy about that. I was happy he didn't turn out to be me. Ignoring everyone. Not caring. And Mrs. Peters was a good person. I was very happy she was looking out for Junior.

On my first birthday in jail, Mrs. Peters baked for me an apple pie. We had a nice celebration though we were in prison. That night, Voice told me another story. He said that was my birthday present. Again, the story sounded very familiar. But I couldn't remember.

As the days went by, I became closer to Voice. It felt as though we go way back. One night I had a dream. In the dream I realized something about the stories Voice told me. They were all talking about one particular man. When I told him in the morning, he said, "It's good, you are starting to remember." Time flew so fast. In a few days then I would be an ex-con. In exactly

four days actually. My moments with Voice were coming to an end. Because of that we conversed for longer periods than we did before. I was really going to miss him. Even though I never saw his face. Two days to the day of my release, he said, "Janessa, please tell me all the stories I have told you. Tonight I want you to be the one to read but without looking into a book." I actually was able to remember all the stories he had told me. And as I began to tell him, I realized all that he had been doing all this while. He had been reading the Bible to me. And throughout my years in prison, he had read the whole Bible to me. I now got the picture. Tears began to flow from my eyes when I got to the story of the cross. I choked while I was saying it. Voice then said to me, "Are you ready to bring to pass your perfect answer?" "Yes" I responded. For the question he had been asking me every evening was a symbol of what Christ did on the cross for me. And my answer every night was the perfect answer. Voice then prayed with me. Then he began to sing the song he normally sung every night. The song had grown on me, for I began to sing too. I sang the whole night till the next morning. I didn't hear from Voice all day. I was seated at the same spot I was the night before. In the evening, I began to sing the song. Then I heard Voice say, "Pick up your birthday present in the morning, before you leave." And then I closed my eyes.....

New Life

The sun looked so happy to see me just as I was happy to see it, for it shined so bright. Mrs. Peters and Junior were waiting for me outside. I had picked my birthday present from Voice's cell. It was neatly wrapped. I waited till I got in the car before I tore it open. It was the book from which he read to me every night. It was a Bible. In the bible was a note. Neatly written, it read, "Today you are born as a child of God, never forsake My voice and I will never forsake you. I am glad I found you, my daughter." "I am glad You found me." I whispered.

Now I am a new creation. I am no more bound. Literally, spiritually. I have a new life. I am a new being. Junior turned to me when we reached home. He stared at me and smiling, he said, "I am glad you've come back home." Both of us were teary-eyed while we hugged. I didn't lose my brother. Rather, I found a friend. I found love. I found peace. I found joy. I found satisfaction. I found Jesus. I found His voice.

That night, while I sat on my bed I could still hear clearly Voice reading to me. I lay on my bed, then I heard Him say, "Goodnight child, I am always with you." Then He began to sing to song.....our song. And I smiled and began to sing too. I closed my eyes and smiled and sang.....

Dear God,

I had a wonderful day at school, and I thank You for it. Be with me for the rest of the day and grant me grace and mercy. See You.....