



A Realm of Hyperrealism

By Kelsi Gradisar

HYPERREALISM parallels escaping reality, but goes further to the subconscious inability to distinguish reality from simulation, and actually creating signifiers representing something that does not exist in the first place. Humanity clings onto this notion of escaping reality, whether it is through social media and movies or drugs. I chose drugs.

You sometimes never really understand the magnitude of emotional pain until you are forced to stare at it. My father was a drug addict and alcoholic, as well as sexually and verbally abusive. He walked out of my life when I was seven. My uncle was killed in a drive-by shooting. I was often bullied in school and home life was never okay. There was often a heap of manipulation. My step-dad and I never clicked and, coupled with my mother's manipulative and deteriorating words towards my older sister and me, home life was never okay. At the time, my outlet was education and reading. Until my sister introduced me to marijuana in eighth grade when she moved out, and I regularly smoked once a week post deep-talks of how we felt.

Escaping reality left the confines of home and branched to a party the end

of my freshman year. That was the first time I had gotten drunk. The second party I went to was that of my sophomore year. There was marijuana, liquor, and tobacco. I used all of them. When the cops were called, everyone left, including my friend. The party host and I ran off into the prairie a couple miles, tripping and stumbling, to escape the search dogs. Then he raped me.

Charges were in place to file, but my best friend told me I deserved it because I was such a "whore." I had never slept with anyone before. People at school said I was the liar and "asking for it because [I] was drunk." I believed them and dropped the charges. I left school, started doing online, and was failing all my classes. I started getting drunk three to four times per week, smoking weed twice a week, and smoking cigars daily. I let myself become an object to guys; I didn't respect myself nor ask them to respect me. I never said no to anything because I didn't feel I had the right to do so. My life was spiraling out of control. I used shrooms, then cocaine, which I was doing two to three times a day. I sold any and all drugs people would buy. And I would drive under whatever influence I was in, for I was encouraged to.

Emotionally, I thrived off the entertainment. I thrived on the rush you got the instant your brain altered from reality to hyperreality. I thrived on the people who did it alongside me. I thrived on the closeness and "ability" to escape danger and death. Being sober was the worst. You were bored. You were uncomfortable. But being alone was unspeakable.

We get our minds into this place where drugs and alcohol unite us, placing us into a state of vulnerability that draws us close. But what we don't discuss is the emotional side. We are forced into that vulnerability through the drugs we use. We have no control but are the controlled.

We forget how to live. We forget what it is like to live outside those drugs. We forget how it feels when we stub our toes; we forget the beauty of a new born child; we forget the pain when a loved one dies; we forget the cold that bites our noses in the winter and the sweat that forms in the sun; we forget the happiness we feel when a child smiles; we forget the joy we feel on Christmas morning; we forget the dread we feel when summer ends and school begins; we forget the goose bumps that travel to the bone when jumping in a cold lake. We lose our humanity and our morals. We lie and cheat and steal. We hurt others because we are hurting inside.

Having stopped drinking and partying due to finding our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, my life has been amazing. It definitely has its ups and downs, and I am often tempted to drink or smoke weed, but with the help of Jesus, I can fight those temptations. And having had Jesus save me, I am able to minister to those who struggle with those addictions.

Just because life is hard does not mean there aren't a community of people of Christ to help you. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Kelsi Gradisar is a high school senior from Colorado. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.