



After the Accident

By Emerald Thomas

BRRRRRNG... BRRRRRNG...
RRRRNG... "Hello?"

"Hi, is this Mrs. Thomas?"

"No. This is her daughter, Emmy.
May I ask who is speaking?"

"Hello, Emmy. I called to say that
Charles was in an accident at work."

"Oh. I can call her so she can go over
there and pick him up... Is it bad?"

"He will be fine. He just is a little beat
up. Tell your mom to call this num-
ber..."

That's when it started. That's when my dad became a new person. He would no longer be the father who would lie on his stomach and play board games with me, he would no longer be the father who could teach me new chess moves, he would no longer be the father who I grew up with all because of a fall from a fourteen-foot ladder. After the accident, my dad was recovering from his traumatic brain injury while the doctors were finding ways to fix his fractured neck without giving him surgery. He was in a lot of pain because of his injuries, so the doctors began to encourage him to take painkillers. He hesitated to take them because of his past.

When he was a teenager, my dad drank and did drugs. He continued for years until he decided to join Alcohol-

ics Anonymous and clean himself up. Before the accident, he was about 23 years sober of all drugs and alcohol, but he knew that he could easily become addicted. In all the surgeries prior to his accident in 2007, he would only take Advil for pain, but this time it was different because he took the pills.

My dad began to change as he became more addicted to the pills that were supposed to help him. He was not the same serious, stern man who cared. He was a smiling vegetable who only cared about his pills. He would take so many that he didn't know where he was. We didn't trust him to stay at home by himself after he left the stove on and almost burnt our house down. This lasted three years until he finally went too far. One day he took over 70 pills in two days and my mom thought he finally had a stroke. When she took him to the hospital, the doctors said he had overdosed, and he got his stomach pumped.

My mom was tired and refused to take care of him anymore. She didn't want him to become homeless, though, so she got him an apartment in the city. Once all his old AA friends came down to see him, he finally realized he had a problem and finally wanted to get better. He started to become very active

in AA again and is a sponsor for many guys. He does his best, but he occasionally will slip and go back to them.

Instead of helping my dad, painkillers ruined him. He already had a brain injury, and the effects of the pill-popping are ten times worse. He can't remember where he puts his keys, wallet, phone, he mixes up all his daughters' names, and he constantly thinks he is dying. And it didn't just affect him; it also affected the people around him. It was very hard for my sister to deal with and she attempted suicide. My mother was putting herself through school through all of this, while working full-time. She was able to provide for my sister and me while still dealing with my dad. I am so grateful for her because if it weren't for her, we would be on the streets. She also did a great job of giving us a childhood because she was able to cover up for my dad until we could understand.

My mother handled this so well, but the doctors didn't. These professionals were my father's drug dealers. Whenever he asked for Oxycontin, they would give it to him, even if he got a new prescription the day before. People need to be aware that prescription drugs can be seriously addictive and they can ruin people's lives. It's strange to me how illicit drugs like heroin and meth are taken so seriously, and there are tons of measures taken to get people to stop taking them, but drugs that can be just as addictive and harmful are readily available at the local pharmacy.

From this experience, I learned that drugs ruin lives and I will never do them, or anything else harmfully addictive. I also learned that people need to want to get better, you can't force to and you can't control their lives, which I tried to do many times. A lesson that everyone should take from this experience is that prescription drugs can be just as harmful as illegal ones so be careful. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Emerald Thomas 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.