



No Matter Your Vice, We All Pay the Price

By Nina Ann Reckinger

At one point in your life, God's going to hand you a box of crap sandwiches. On a silver platter. He's going to knock on your door and ask you to pick your poison. Some of us make a beeline for the alcohol. Others of us reach for the pills, or the cookies, or whatever else. We tell ourselves that with some options, we're better off, when really they're all just different variations of the same crap sandwich. The crap sandwich is merely an embodiment of our vices. We each pick our poison, but the story of how we learn to live with it is what makes up who we are.

Vicodin. My vice. My poison of choice. It started with a prescription bottle from post-surgery. I didn't need the pills to deal with the physical pain. But I continued to keep the bottle of pills on my bathroom shelf. "Just in case," I told myself. I should've known better. My body could handle the hits and blows, any day, no problem. But my emotions were fragilely guarded, and it only took one really bad day at school to knock me off my feet and

send me crawling, searching for the nearest vice. I needed an anchor, something to soothe the waves till the whole thing blew over. I spot the bottle of Vicodin. Two white pills, down my throat in one gulp. My breath dropped to a slower, steadier rate, and my emotions began to drift away...

It only took a few uses to become hooked. Two pills became three, then five, and I began to distance myself from my friends and my family. I lost touch with my passion for dancing and volunteering with kids—instead seeking solitude to quiet my mind and slip in and out of focus. It was only in my brief moments of sobriety that I would recognize how miserable I had become since I started using. I was fortunate enough to realize this before my addiction got too out of hand.

Sitting alone in the dark, I called the first contact I found on my phone. By the time Stephanie came over, my eyes were swollen from bawling, and I was nearly too choked up to explain to her what was go-

ing on. Down on my knees, I pled for her help. She nodded as she held out her hand. Releasing my grip on the bottle, serious doubts crept into my mind about whether I was truly ready to stop using. I knew I was utterly miserable, but a small part of me still wanted to take another pill. Just one more. In that moment of vulnerability, my friend vowed to support me no matter what, and for that I am forever grateful.

I believe I am a rare case, in that with the help of Stephanie, I was able to wean off the Vicodin on my own. For the first few nights, I would toss and turn for hours, unable to rock myself to asleep. I felt nauseous almost all the time, but time would soon prove that my friend was right—"this doesn't last forever". I used to be so afraid of talking about this huge moment of failure in my life, but I've come to realize that the beauty of making mistakes is what you can learn from them.

When life gets hard, it's only human nature to seek the quickest escape. In this generation of flashing TV screens and pinging cell phones, I think it's fair to say that Huxley did a good job of predicting our future. We drown our sorrows and diffuse our anger through various means of immediate gratification. The truth is, everybody has their vice. Everybody. For some people, it's eating that extra slice of pie that they know they shouldn't have. For others, exercise is the means to running away from their problems—even if it's only temporary. And then there are those that use drugs to avoid dealing with the pain. Or to escape the harsh doses of reality. Whatever the reason, we all have a vice to cover our eyes and ground us when God decides to poke his finger at our delicate little world. The only variable is what.

I propose we each make a pledge to delay gratification. No matter your vice, the next time you reach for that beer, that doughnut, that pill, whatever it is... STOP. Just for a minute. SIT with the pain and temptation. It doesn't last forever.

Don't close your eyes, don't stuff your mouth, don't numb your emotions. Don't settle for the false sense of security. You just might miss out on something truly beautiful. 🚫

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Nina Ann Reckinger is a recent high school graduate from Washington. *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.