

## **Scariest Place on Earth**

**By: Oneida G.**

My friends and I were sitting at a bar when one of them posed a question, “What is the scariest place you have been to?” Everyone had their own answers, an old castle visited on a European tour, an abandoned farmhouse, old cemeteries, even an alley behind a hospital. They were lost in conversation and as I pretended to text, I thank God no one forced an answer out of me or else I would have answered – “my room, my own bedroom.”

It all began when I was molested at the age of 14. I was too frightened to go to the police so I went home immediately. Trembling, I stood in front of my family who was having dinner and tried explaining why my face was wet with tears. “I was attacked,” I slowly blurted out. This was met with questions on why I failed to defend myself. Finally, I decided to tell them that a man attempted to rob me on my way home from school. My dad scolded me for not using my knowledge in karate, my mother jumped with this idea and my sister smacked me in the face when I told her I didn’t want to go to the carnival (we were scheduled to go that night) for fear of seeing the perpetrator. Fifteen minutes passed and my sister and I were making our way in the crowded street fair. My heart was beating so loud, the blaring music seemed so faint to me. It was a typical night for them, but not for the youngest member of the family. I retired to my room, though scared of being alone. No one asked how I was; even just to clarify what exactly happened. So I left it at that. I went on with my life. I buried the memory of that night.

I was in college when I met my first boyfriend. Despite my natural streak for independence, I gave my consent for him to fetch me in school, pay for everything during our dates, even to fix things inside the house. I loved him immensely and this grew even more when my dad passed away. He filled the void – and this was not easy to accept. For no apparent

reason, I tried so hard to deny that my attachment towards him was growing day by day. But it was the truth.

Our three-year relationship ended abruptly. It might also have been a slow death which I refused to see. Since it was the opposite of a decent break-up, I became hysterical – on the inside. I became the desperate ex-girlfriend. I begged in front of his family, sent him letters of regret and wrote love letters, which I never sent. When my sister found out that we were no longer together, she gave me a murderous look which left me crying for eight hours. I immersed myself in school, travels, working out and in civic-related activities. All the while, I thought I was moving on so I accepted more responsibilities. I soon found out that I was only sweeping my issues under the rug. A year after the relationship ended, I was still crying every single day. Though I wanted to destroy my room, all I could do was throw pillows on the walls so my mom would not be suspicious. My dreams were all about him. I had random breakdowns in restrooms, in our backyard, in movie houses and even inside school classrooms. My sunglasses, concealer and hanky were my new best friends.

It came as a shock when he started communicating with me. We would talk until the wee hours of the morning about how sorry he was and how my forgiveness would change his life. My friends frowned upon his being persistent, so I decided not to tell anybody about our relationship. I decided to go for it, though I was not happy. If I knew where he was, I would feel safe, if not, I felt like killing myself. To say that I was insecure would be an understatement. Nevertheless, I felt triumphant that he was still mine despite what transpired over the past year.

It did not take long for him to tell me that he wanted to be “free” again. I was beyond devastated. I merely watched as my grades turned from 1.5 to 5.0. Still, I refused to share

anything with my friends. I felt the need to shield him from their attacks. I questioned every single part of me. “Wasn’t I beautiful enough? Smart enough? Why didn’t I try to understand him more? Could I bargain? Will he love me if I change the things he hates?” These were my thoughts everyday.

I was eight years old when I first learned that my dad was cheating on my mom. I was also that young when I first saw her dismiss the situation. At the age of 12, I remember telling my sister, “Why doesn’t mom file for annulment?” It went on and on and it scared the wits out of me. I was afraid to be treated like that then responding to it the way my mom did. I was fearful of marriage even before I graduated from high school. My childhood memory mirrored what took place between me and my ex-boyfriend. I was clinging to him because I needed to prove to myself that he was not like my dad, and will never be.

I started overeating and throwing up on a minimum of two times a day and a maximum of five. I had wounds right under my right forefinger and I was throwing up blood. Yet, I refused to stop. When I purged, I forgot about him because I was fixated on how to get the food out of my system. It almost seemed euphoric that even for just a minute, this man did not occupy my thoughts.

I was hoarding all sorts of things inside my room while I kept clean other parts of our house. It felt like I deserved the chaos. I would fantasize about my death over and over again. I knew how to use a gun since I was 16 so it was my weapon of choice.

I started to calm down when I finally told a friend about my real state. It was her who encouraged me to seek the help of a psychiatrist. I told my doctor that I refuse to use the words “depressed”, “bulimic” and “hoarder” as I did not want to use such terms loosely. Soon, I

realized that I did fit those words. In addition, I also had borderline obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). My doctor begged me to take anti-depressants. Now, I religiously attend my therapy sessions and I regularly take medication.

It takes a great amount of effort to keep my condition a secret from my own family. However, this, for me, is non-negotiable. My closest friends are the only ones who know and I am at peace with that. I used to associate my bedroom as the scariest place on earth because it is the only place where I can let go of my control – and that is scary. Letting go meant not knowing exactly what to do with my fears and illusions.

My relationship with my family cannot be classified as tumultuous. I love them and I do miss my dad. We travel together and share our hopes and dreams. However, I made a conscious decision to filter what I say to them. The trauma I felt was not so much because of the sexual assault or the breakup but of the reaction I received when I *tried* to tell my family.

At the end of the day, you are your own support system. The world can lash out on you at any time, which is why you need a strong sense of self. People with depression do not necessarily appear miserable in public, which is why the mere act of inviting someone for coffee or dinner “just to talk” goes a long, long way.

Controversies have risen regarding the use of anti-depressants and seeking the help of a psychiatrist is sometimes considered a joke. Both have worked for me and I have a healthy amount of respect for people whose work is devoted to the study and treatment of mental and behavioral disorders.

Do not be afraid to seek help. You are not alone.