

# the way out

## *An Exotic Dancer's Story of Freedom*

by Patricia "Tess" Grace





# **The Way Out**

**An Exotic Dancer's Story of Freedom**



**Patricia “Tess” Grace**



**A  
LULU  
PRESS  
BOOK**

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**Editorial Note:** This is a true Christian testimony. Nevertheless, because of the sensitive and personal nature of the material contained in this book, names have been changed to protect the identities and privacy of innocent individuals. The names used in the text were picked at random from the 1,500 names on the passenger list of the *Titanic*.

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**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

# About Author Patricia “Tess” Grace



**P**atricia Grace, a former exotic dancer who danced under the stage name “Tess”, is now a pastor’s wife. She enjoys spending her time helping other women like herself.

She has started many Women’s groups and has been involved with the Youth Ministry at the church her husband pastors.

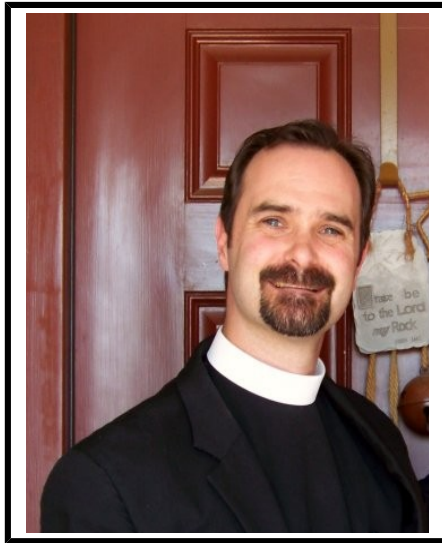
She feels strongly about impressing the love of Christ to women and teens to help them know they are worthy and God has big plans and a purpose for their lives, no matter their background.

She has been given opportunities to share her story of God’s amazing love and restoration.

Patricia also likes days spent at the beach with her family enjoying the beauty of Gods creation.

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**DEDICATED  
To  
MARK  
The Love Of My Life**



**Happiness  
Is Being Married  
To Your Best Friend.**

# ***Introduction***

***by Patricia "Tess" Grace***

## **The Way Out**

**An Exotic Dancer's Story of Freedom**



For years I have put off writing this book for two reasons: fear and timing.

But, I no longer live in fear for fear is not of God. I will not allow fear to stop me or hold me back from sharing my experience as an exotic dancer and my way out.

Mine is a story of God's redeeming power and love. He can restore all things, all people.

Today I am now married to a pastor, a wonderful man. And I'm mother to three precious children who are growing up in a way different from the way I did. I praise God they know they are loved and protected.

My story is a story of hope.

With Christ all things are possible. He turns our sorrows to joy so that we can help others along the way.

God never wastes a hurt.

May you be blessed and encouraged as you read the true story I'm sharing.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Grace".



**The Virgin Islands, a fairyland for a little girl growing up.**



## **Fairyland Ruined**

Mom and Dad thought our babysitter was a homosexual.

He wasn't.

They never dreamed he would be a threat to little girls.

He was.

They thought we were safe.

We weren't.

My older sister and I had been left in the care of this male family friend. We played outside in the front yard pushing one another on our tricycle.

When I went in the house to use the bathroom., the man was standing in the living room. He called me over.

His pants were down. He tried to put his penis in my mouth. I clinched my teeth shut. He jabbed himself at my mouth. Some of his hairs came through my lips. It was awful.

When he realized I wasn't going to open my mouth, he went outside after my sister. I followed and managed to fight him off in a tug of war.

We girls ran to the house, slammed and locked the door. We two little girls locked out this grown man! We heard him outside hollering for us to let him in.

Furious and yelling, he sprayed the water hose through the windows.

When my parents came home, they found him on the curb crying. "I'll never baby sit with them again!"

## Patricia “Tess” Grace



My sister and I felt so proud of ourselves. Our parents never understood why we locked him out, or why we were crying, or why the man swore he'd never babysit with us again.

I was five years old.

If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck..

—Mark 9:42

My sister remembers that day but not what happened to me. I'm grateful that she was not molested like I was. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I told Mom what had happened. She remembered the fuss, but didn't know the cause. It shocked her to learn.



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I was born on the U.S. Virgin Islands, a wonderful place to spend the first part of life. When you live on an island you don't realize how big the world is. I had two sisters and a baby brother. We were close and loved each other dearly.

My older sister and I were born only 11 months apart. We grew up doing everything together. Our best times were playing in the backyard. We spent hours imagining sailing the seas on the *Love Boat*—Remember that tv show? We played Wonder Woman too. Our swing set and sand box seemed magical places providing hours of escape. When I stood high enough on the swing set, I could see the blue waters of the Caribbean.

The sight of the sea filled me with awe.



Like all kids we enjoyed Christmas. The best thing I remember about Christmas was that we had this fake plastic fireplace. I remember asking Mom how Santa was going to get down a plastic fire place? She told me that he had keys to open up everyone’s door if they had a plastic fire place. That silly fire place still puts a smile on my face.

### **The Christmas Angel Said:**

**A**nd there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

—Luke 2: 8-11

I remember my aunt getting married at the Old Sugar Mill, a famous landmark in the Virgin Islands. My sister and I got to dress up like princesses. The Old



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Sugar Mill is a favorite place for couples to get married and have their photos taken on the stone steps.



My mother and father were young, only sixteen, when they married. Both came from dysfunctional homes and brought chaos into their own marriage. My father hit my mother all the time.

She took the abuse.

I hid at the top of the stairs at our house, a frightened little girl, watching my father hit and hurt my mother. In my mind, I still hear them screaming and yelling. I heard words like *bitch* and *bastard* and *slut* and *whore*. As a little girl, I never even thought those words were bad.

Such was my life.

I felt scared.

I was afraid to feel.

I was afraid to speak.

I protected myself by not feeling at all.

I shoved my pain deep inside until I felt numb. I never imagined I would encounter brokenness and pain throughout my life.

Even now, after much healing, I still sometimes feel numb.





It is a lonely feeling, a frustrating feeling, an empty feeling.

And to think, as a little girl I dreamt only of fairy tale endings.

It was no fairy tale on our school bus.

School bus rides were not safe.

I sat next to this same boy every day. I don't know why. He would set his book bag on my lap and shove his hands down my pants as we “played house”. He did this every day.

I hated the way it made me feel, but I didn't have the courage to stop him. Some days I came home in tears, upset about that boy. I don't know why I didn't tell Mom what happened on the bus, but I didn't.

I wish I could have told someone.

I remember a neighbor girl, much older than me coming over to *play house*. She was the husband; I was the wife.

What an awful game that turned out to be.

I hated it, but I would still “play House” with her. She walked into the room calling, “Honey, I'm home”.

Then she showed me what a married couple does.

To this day I can still see the bed, the closet—and her.

Such memories filled me with shame and disgust all the way into my adult life. Memories of this girl would just pop up in my mind and make me wince. I'd feel just plain sick. I remember the shame I felt playing those games.



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I didn't want to *play house*. I didn't want to lay in that bed. I didn't want her to touch me. I didn't know how to stop her—so it just kept going on day in and day out .The girl came over to *play house* upstairs while our mothers were downstairs making costumes for a parade.

Later, when I asked about this girl, Mom remembered who she was and even remembered her name—



I asked Mom why she didn't come upstairs to check on us. She said, "I didn't think kids really did that kind of thing".

Yes, Mom thought we were just upstairs playing.

I've had to forgive Mom for never coming up those stairs, to forgive her for never telling me to keep my privates to myself. I wish she had. I wish I had known that under no circumstances do I ever let anyone touch me or my privates—and if they did to tell.



I had another teenage boy show me his pubic hair. His reason for doing so was that he was now a big man. He wanted me to see what a real man looked like. The same boy showed me *Playboy* cards and told me that one day I too will look like that, and then he'd play *doctor* with me. Playing *doctor* was a lot like playing "house".

All this was before I was eight years old.



I did not realize that it was even wrong, or that I could have or should have said NO! Although it felt wrong, in my gut I felt the shame and guilt of what was happening to me and what I was doing myself. But I did not know how to stop it. I wanted to. I was so scared my parents would be angry and think that I was a nasty, dirty little girl.

I was scared to tell the people who were doing these things to me to stop. It was like I had no voice.

I felt I had no control over what was going on with me or my body.

As a child I didn't think I had any choice.



### **Rejected, Dirty And Dumb**

With all the sexual play, I failed second grade. That makes all of the sense in the world now. My mind was on other things—like dreading that bus ride home. The low self esteem that came from failing a grade in school, and being told by my father that he can't believe he had such a stupid kid, only added more sting to the pain I already carried in my life.

I felt rejected, dirty and dumb.





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Hope does not make us feel ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. Because when we were still without strength, at just the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

—Romans 5:5

I tried hard to get my father's affection. I just never seemed to please him. He was always sarcastic and belittled me. He had a way of making me feel like I didn't matter. He rarely loved on me.

I remember once he wrestled with me. We were having fun. But, me being me, I got hurt and had to go to the ER.

I felt he cared, that he worried about me. Maybe he had—until he realized I had dirty undies. He told me how embarrassed he was because I wore dirty underwear and the doctor saw them.

Again more shame.

Dad's words created huge gapping wounds in my soul. Remember the childhood saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me".?

That is a lie!

Words will not only hurt you then but stick with you for a life time if you don't deal with them.

I felt like, in my father's eyes, I was a failure. I grew up believing that I was a failure.

A failure at eight years old.

Dad once said that the day I was born, his mother told him to put me down and not hold me because I looked like my mother's side of the family—that I was a good for nothing Wiggan!



That’s how he saw me in his mind and he was unable to love me.

I understand now. He came from so much brokenness. In his eagerness to please his own mother, it became more important to receive her love and approval than to love his own child. I forgive him for that.

### **Life was getting ready to change—for the worse.**

Dad worked as a chemical engineer and his company transferred him mainland to the state of Louisiana. We thought it would be a good move since his parents moved stateside too. It was supposed to be a move for the better. My sisters and brother and I made up songs about the Mississippi river and big bridges. We had never seen those things so it was going to be an adventure.

Not so.

After six weeks of living in the states, something terrible happened to my family.

At school one day a teacher pulled my sister and me aside and told us a neighbor would be picking us up.

We never got picked up by a neighbor so I knew something was wrong. I remember some of the kids teasing that my mom had lost her mind and gone crazy.

I didn’t understand what was going on.

We girls waited and waited

I remember feeling scared. A neighbor who we did not know picked us up and took



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us back to her apartment. There we waited some more. It felt like a lifetime. We had no idea what was going on.

The night before, at school we went to a Halloween festival and that day at school they were selling left over toys. Dad had given my sister and me money to buy our brother toys. We were so proud of the gifts we bought him (army men and a Ragged Andy doll). We couldn't wait to give them to him. He was not only the apple to my parents' eye but ours as well. He was our baby brother. We loved him.

He was our little boy.

When my sister and I walked into the apartment, we found our mother and father crying. A priest and some other people we did not know sat around looking pale.

We didn't understand.

We just wanted to give our little brother his toys. I remember us asking, "Where is our little brother?"

Mom, Dad and the priest sat us down and told us that he had died. He was gone up to Heaven, they said.

Why?

My brother had drowned in the apartment complex's pool. Someone left the gate unlocked. He fell in.

We all grew up in the Virgin Islands, yet he was the only one in the family who didn't know how to swim.



We did not believe my parents.

We didn't believe our brother had died.



My sister and I started looking all over the apartment for him, calling out his name, looking under the beds.

He wasn't there.

He was gone.

That day everything good I had ever known was lost—my little brother, my family, everything good I knew—in a matter of hours, it was all gone, never again to be the same.

What an incredibly painful day!

A pain so deep words can't describe. After that, my father was hardly ever home. And when he was, my parents fought.

My mother chose to drink her pain away. Try to anyhow.

And we little girls were left to grieve on our own.

Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

—John 6:37

My father ended up moving out.

My mom never got out of bed.

Mom, who back on the Island would get in the sand box and play with us, who played dolls with us, and told us stories. She loved us and showed her love for us. Now, all she wanted was to be left alone in her bed. Now, we girls were alone in our grief

I know my parents were suffering and were unable to comfort us. They needed to be comforted themselves...



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I don't remember any loving words after everyone left to go home after my brother's funeral—not by family, neighbors, teachers or friends.

But I remember we were talked about, looked at, made fun of by other kids. And, sad to say, even by some adults.



Our dad was gone.

Our mother drank and spent her time in bed. She had no job and we were so poor.

We didn't have the proper cloths or shoes for the cold weather. I remember being teased because the guidance counselor at school gave me a pair of closed toe shoes. I hated walking back into class.

I knew everyone knew I was poor. They knew the school had to give me a pair of shoes.

We didn't bathe. Had no food in the house. Mom was just too sad.

Nobody around us seem to know what caused our being poor or so sad, or what kept our mom in bed, or why our dad to move out. It seemed that people chose to ignore the pain of three little girls. They didn't understand or, if they did, they did not know how to help. Nobody reached out to us.

Now in today's world, siblings would be put straight into grief counseling. That's good because loss is too much to bear on your own.

Our parents were grieving themselves with so much to carry. With such a heavy burden, I can't say I could have done any thing different.



Mom found herself a single mother with no education, no job, and living in a strange place with no family or friends. She was left to suffer on her own. She never wanted to get out of bed those first couple of months. I remember going into her room trying to talk to her. No use; she was so sad, so hurt, so disconnected.

So desperate and depressed she even paid this women to try to contact my brother through a make-shift spirit board.

This woman scared me the very moment she walked into our apartment. Something just didn't seem right about her. As the women was supposedly talking to my brother, I saw her fly off her feet to be slammed against the wall by something not of this world.

Even as a little kid, I knew at that time we were dealing with something that was not good! Whatever else it was, that it was a real spiritual force—and that thing was not my brother!

But Mom thought for sure that my brother's spirit was in our house, knocking pictures off the walls and slamming doors. She felt so desperate, she wanted answers so bad that she would just about do any thing I'm sure. Her pain hurt so much she couldn't function.

We kids were left to care for ourselves.

As my mother went through her own suffering, drinking her pain away, we were introduced to different baby sisters.

They were mean.

I remember this one teenage girl babysitter... I asked her what a French kiss was since some of the kids in the



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apartment complex were talking about it. She not only told me, but showed me by French kissing me, and also biting a hickey on the side of my neck.

I was 8 years old.



After about three months of this, my father came and picked me and my sisters up to drop us at our grandparent's in Florida. He told us he was going to take us to Florida to visit his parents and go to Disney World and would only be gone a month.

I knew deep down we weren't coming back. I knew it from the way my mother had been crying, the way they had been arguing.

Dad had not planned this trip. He came and took us. We didn't know we were leaving until he came and got us.

Heartbreaking—to sit in the back seat of that car and look out the window and watch our mom just break down in that parking lot.

Heartbreaking—to be taken away from the one person I knew who loved me.

Mom was so hurt when her baby died and her three other babies were taken away. Her tears. Our tears.

I guess my father felt he was doing best for us—or what his mom thought best for us. On that drive to Florida I felt as if he didn't care for me and I cringed at the knowledge that I was going to live with his mom who doesn't care for me either.

We ended up staying with my grandparents.

Dad left.



He left us there.

I just didn’t understand what was happening, he took us from our mom and now he left. And we barely knew our grandparents.

All I wanted was for things to be the way they were—the way they were before my brother died.

Grandmother made sure we knew my brother’s death was my mother’s fault.

She told us that plenty of times. She called our mother *slut* and *whore*. She never told us why our mother was a slut or whore; she would just always tell us that she was.

“Your mother is nothing but a whore”.

I must have heard that a million times.

I couldn’t stand it when she would talk about Mom that way.

Mom would try to call and talk to us; but my grandmother said we weren’t allowed to speak with her or with anyone from her family.

Once Mom came to Florida to see us. She had flown in unannounced and took a cab to the house, only to be turned away.

She knew if she called beforehand they wouldn’t let us see her, so she just showed up at the door one night. Oh how my heart leaped for joy seeing her there.

She took us roller skating and we camped outside in the backyard in a tent. Then she





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was told she had to leave. I remember crying. I wanted to go with her. I didn't want her to leave.

Why did she have to go?

I loved her so much and needed her. Having her there that one night was amazing. I felt loved. She played with us the way she used to. I just wanted her to stay. I wanted my family back.

That year there were more incidents that lead to shame and guilt, and unworthiness for me—play. Play I thought normal because it was all I knew. But deep down I knew it felt wrong. I didn't know how to stop it and I was too afraid to tell. More kids, more neighbors playing *games* with sexual undertones—sometimes pretty close to sex its self.

Touching was always apart of it.

More pain more numbness...

On top of all the sexual stuff going on there was also the rejection I felt from my dad's mother towards me. She claimed that since I looked like my mom and her family, I was unworthy of love.

Countless times I was told that I wasn't pretty. My older sister was always prettier, smarter, and everyone's favorite. I was told that she would always be better than me. My sister and I had been best friends until we moved in with my grandparents.

My grandmother's words stuck with me for years, tearing at my very soul, always in the back of my mind, letting me know I would never be good enough.

I now know that my grandmother was a bitter, hurting woman. she had suffered abuse in her life and she carried that pain into the lives of others.

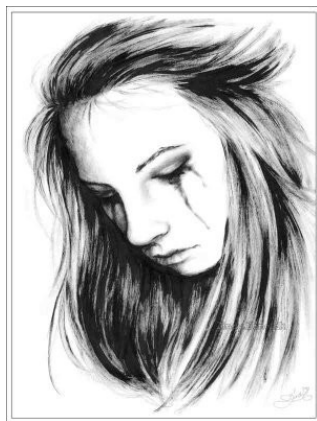


Unfortunately I was one of the others!

I’m sure she had no idea the damage her words and actions caused me; I doubt if she knew how the abuse against her soaked all through her own life and the choices she made. I can say today that I loved my grandmother and I was able to forgive her and express love to her before she passed away .

But under Grandmother’s care my self worth and esteem were pushed so low that my sister and I grew distant. She too began to let me know that she believed that she was the best, and that I would never be as good as she was—or as pretty. She would tell me, “Our lives are like a game I will always win”.

When we were younger we did everything together. We had spent so many happy hours on that swing set as little girls playing. Now, so many good memories were now gone; she no longer wanted any thing to do with me. I can honestly say my grandmother turned my best friend, my big sister against me. It was like my grandmother’s goal was to punish my mother by hurting me.



That darn lump in my throat and sting in my eyes always seemed to be there I couldn’t stop myself from wanting to cry.

When my father returned to Florida to pick my sisters and me up from our grandparent’s house—



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Surprise! He had a new wife, his second, and three new kids.

We had thought we were only visiting our grandparents and that when we returned home, it would be to our mom and dad, not to a new family! We never met this woman or her kids before. We had never even heard about them or their wedding!

They just showed up!

What happened? What about Mom? What did she think about this? What will happen to her? To us?

What happen to my little life?

It was all gone never to be the same.

### **Pain goes on and on**

My dad, his new wife and her kids moved to Gulf Coast Florida; my sisters and I moved in with them. I guess the plan was to be one big happy family. We lived in Florida for maybe a year, then we moved back to Louisiana.

Albina, my father's second wife, was ten years older than he was.

She was moody and mean.

I now had a teenage step-brother who took great pleasure in slapping me in the back of the head any time he got the chance. I had an older step-sister who took away what little relationship I had left with my older sister. And I now had a younger step-sister--SPOILED beyond all belief. They too were hurt, angry kids—six of us all living in the same house.



You should have seen the fights! It was insane. I believe Dad’s second marriage was worse than his first.

I’d never seen fighting the way they fought.

Furniture destroyed, a fur coat shredded, countless other things happening. My older sister used to sit in her room during those fights singing as loud as she could *Let There Be Peace On Earth*.



During those years we were able to visit Mom. She got into a twelve-step program for her drinking. She was pulling her life together. I enjoyed our visits.. She was dirt poor but she was still Mom. She valued us and spent time with us. We would make up and write stories together. We could be little girls when we were with her.

Back at my father’s house, fighting continued. It was getting rough. I hated coming home from school. When I’d see my step-mom’s car in the driveway, my heart would sink. Once, I tried to run away with my step-sister. We



packed two suit cases and walked miles in the dark to my mom’s apartment—only to find she wasn’t home.

We had to go back.

I couldn’t stand Albina, my father’s second wife. She was so angry and so unhappy that it was hard to have any joy around her. Dad stayed angry and drank a lot. His cruel words cut deep, always a sarcastic tone.



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I hated my life.

I dreaded my life.

As I said, during this time my mother was getting her life in order. She stopped drinking, got a job as a waitress, met a man who loved her and married him. She was beginning to heal. Mom and her new husband decided to move to Florida's east coast.

I couldn't believe it—the only good thing in my life was leaving, and my dad had custody of us. He wouldn't think of letting us go live with her even though he didn't know how to care for us and hardly ever spent any time with us.

How could my mother leave?

How could she leave us with this man and woman?

It seemed so hopeless. I loved Mom and I couldn't blame her for moving since there were better jobs in Florida. She could have a better life and we would be able to go visit I figured. But, I felt she was the only one who loved me, the only one who showed me love... and now she was moving.

My heart broke again.

The Comptons, an amazing family I babysat for in our neighborhood, were the only good thing in my life at this point. They knew of a lot about the hurt and rejection I felt from my family. They showed me kindness and they created opportunities for me to baby-sit, to get me out of my house.



After four years of unhappy marriage, Dad decided to leave wife and home. But, he moved out and left us there with her! She was already bitter, angry and didn't like us. What kind of man does that? Who'd leave his children behind like that? How could he do this to us?

If he couldn't stand to live with Albina, what made him think we could?



I was so angry with my dad.

What was he thinking!

At this woman's hands we endured years of verbal abuse; and my younger sister suffered some physical harm—yet, he left us there with her! I couldn't believe it. More pain, I was really starting to dislike

my father now.

Again, how and why would he do this to us?

This woman couldn't stand my father. He left her with no reason to be kind to us. Her verbal lashing only continued to get worse. She always called my older sister a tramp and whore—and at this time my older sister was only 14. The woman hit my little sister at



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times but for some reason she didn't lashed out at me as much as my sisters.

Maybe it was because she knew my father didn't care as much about me as he did my sisters. I can't say that I blame her for being angry. He left her saddled with his kids.. I'd be pretty darn angry too.

### **Out of the frying pan...**

At that point I decided that I had had enough.

I was 13 years old and I couldn't stand it any more.

I wanted to move in with my mother. I thought I had the right to move. My father wasn't living with Albina, why should I? I decided I couldn't live with that woman one day longer.

To our surprise, my father did allow for my older sister and me to move back to Florida with my mother—but with the understanding that he wouldn't send one red penny to support us. Because, after all, *he* had custody of us.

Money didn't matter. Living in a nice house or having a nice car wasn't a thought. In my mind the only thing that mattered was getting away from this house, this life—NOW!

We left the 'luxury' of Albina's nice house and car for love in Florida.

Unfortunately my younger sister had to stay behind. She eventually moved in with my grandparents who now lived near New Orleans. After that, she moved in with my dad and Kornelia, his third wife.

During this time the Comptons, that family I babysat for, invited me to come live with them. They



made me such a great offer. They would have provided me with an amazing life... but I said no.

I wanted my mom. Sometimes I wonder how my life would have turned out if had I lived with them. You know, I didn’t understand how or why they would want me to live with them.

I thought I wasn’t worthy. Or I felt they really didn’t mean it; they were only being nice. I wondered if they just felt sorry for me.

Later I found out that yes they truly wanted me there and they were hurt when I had said no. They worried about what my future would hold.

When I left, they gave me something of great value. But I didn’t know it at the time.

It was a Bible.



I didn’t realize that their love for me was God-given —no strings attached. Since I refused to live with them, they gave me the one thing they knew would later save me.

## **The Sorrows Of Seventh Grade**





## The Way Out



In Florida my mom and her husband lived a run-down house, but it was only two blocks from the beach. They drove a car that you had to use a screwdriver to start, but they had something my home in Louisiana lacked—LOVE.

By then I was half way through 7th grade. I was so happy to be away from all of the anger and fighting. My mom and step-father didn't drink which meant there wasn't fighting. Praise God!

But even being in a more loving home environment I still hurt. I still carried all that pain, all that rejection, all that numbness inside. I never dealt with those feelings inside me; I just kept pushing them back.

I would love to say that this is where life got better for me. But it wasn't. I now had parents who loved me, but it wasn't enough for me. I still longed for my father's love. And I turned that longing toward boys. Yes, I started to really like boys. And I mean REALLY liked boys!

I longed to have a boyfriend. I wanted boys to touch me. I wanted them to hold me. I wanted them to tell me they loved me.

Boy crazy, I was only 13 but longed for male affection.



I had already been French kissed by both a female babysitter and a neighbor boy in Louisiana. And there was some heavy petting... some very heavy petting with another boy in Louisiana.

I knew it felt good.

I wanted more of that feeling.

And there was this one boy on my bus.

He was a High School Senior.

He was a surfer.



See where this is going?

Here I was only a seventh grader, but this High School Senior flirted with me and told me how pretty I was.

One day after school he invited me over to his house. He introduced me to *real* making out. Needless to say, I went to his house or we would hang out at the beach inlet *a lot*.

Nothing more than lots of heavy petting and kissing ever happened... Then he graduated and I never saw him again.



## The Way Out



Then there was another boy in High School who asked me over to his house and he would teach me the ‘right’ way to kiss—along with other things boys like.

I was more than willing to do it.

*These were popular boys and they wanted me!*

That made me feel special.

In private the boys wanted me, but not in public.

I craved their affection so I didn’t care. Whatever they wanted me to do, I would do it. Then I would feel shame and guilt until they would invite me over again.

Again and again went that cycle of feeling what I thought of as love, and then feel shame bring back the numbing pain in my heart.

I would hate myself after I left their houses. I would walk home feeling awful about myself.

I would promise myself that I wouldn’t go over to their houses ever again. But I’d find myself unable to stop myself.

Saint Paul said, “I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do”.

—Romans 7:14

More pain and shame lurked right around the corner.



This time I was only trying to be a little girl. I wasn't looking for anything from a boy.

I was at my best friend's house.

Her parents were out of town.

Her uncle was there to watch her.

She invited me to spend the night.



I now know that the uncle planned that evening in advance.

We were playing with Barbie dolls. We drew the blinds because we were 13 years old and we didn't want anybody to see that we still played with Barbie dolls.

We were just being girls.

The uncle bought wine coolers and asked if we wanted one. “No one will ever find out,” he said.

Well, now we had a chance to be big girls.

We drank the wine coolers and got drunk. That's when I found her uncle on top of me.

I screamed for him to stop.

I was lying between the hall and bedroom floor, hanging onto the door frame.

I remember her beating his back yelling at him to get off.

My body went against my mind. While in my mind, I hated what was happening, at the same time, my body responded and felt good.



## The Way Out



That's where the numbness in my life really settled in.

That was the night.

That horrible night.

As he raped me, I got more numb, numb, numb. I can still see it, I can still feel it. It lingers with me until this day.

I hate that numb feeling.

I hate that I have to pray to God to let me feel again, but at the same time, I'm afraid to feel.

Feeling leads to shame and guilt.

That friend and I never hung out again.

We never spoke of that night.

It was done,

I moved on.

Moving on, of course, meant I began to be promiscuous.

After that, what did it matter?

I figured *Who cares*, although it was important for me to have a good reputation.

I didn't want to be known as a slut. I only went out with older boys from other towns or boys who were already out of High School.

There were a few times in High School where I really thought I was in love.

I was so needy I would beg boyfriends not to break up with me. I would plead with them not to. I just wanted to be LOVED.





I’m embarrassed to remember how needy I was. I know now that a teenage boy couldn’t give me the kind of love I desperately needed.

I would give guys my body just to feel wanted.

They didn’t want what I needed emotionally, which was to cling to them for dear life. And in so doing drain the life out of them.

One boyfriend I really liked, and in my mind loved. He was the first boy to tell me he loved me. I was 15, he was 18. I believe that he really did like me because he didn’t pressure me into having sex with him right away. He was my very first other than the rape.

He was the first one I wanted to give my heart, my soul and my body. I wanted him to love me so badly.

It hurt when my parents told me I could no longer see him. They didn’t like him because he was a freshman in college and I was still only in high school. He was sweet and didn’t make our relationship all about sex until later in our relationship. We were always off again/ on again. behind my parents’ backs of course, remember I LOVED him—

But not enough to not sleep with his cousin!

To be honest, I didn’t think there was any thing wrong with sleeping with his cousin. I thought my boyfriend would still like me. After all, it was only sex. *And* he and I were broke up anyway.

I always moved from one guy to the next.

But, after that incident he lost all respect for me. For years afterwards, anytime I saw him, I cried and begged for him to come back. I even threw my body at him. I wanted him to love me.



## The Way Out



But he no longer wanted me *or* my body. He felt no love for me. Whatever feelings he had ever had were gone.

For me that meant more numbness, more pain, more rejection.

Did I really think that everyone thought that sex was no big deal?

I never thought that sex was sacred or anything. I thought it was something you did if you thought someone was cute. Or if you liked them. I never thought of sex as something you did only with people you loved, And I certainly didn't think of sex as something only in the context of marriage.

Wow was I screwed up!

What I thought of as normal and okay wasn't.

It wasn't normal for people to go around sleeping with their ex-boyfriend's cousins. Or even sleeping around with anyone at 15 years of age. I just didn't know, so I behaved like this for years.

I remember times of being with guys, just laying there with my hands over my face, sometimes even crying. And I would think to myself, "Why didn't I say no?"

I should have said no.

But if I said no, the guy might have gotten angry with me. Maybe he would not ask me out again. He might not like me.

I felt I had to have sex with them just because they took me to dinner and a movie—I thought I owed it to them.



In reality though, they rarely asked me out again anyhow.

I remember one guy asking me to please take my hands away from my face. But I couldn't. It was as if I took my hands away and I could see what I was doing, then I would know what I was doing was real.

If I covered my eyes I was able to disconnect, become numb and not feel.

It wasn't real to me if I couldn't see myself doing it.

I turned my body off; shut it down in order to never feel the way I did that night I was raped.

To feel any shame.

My body would NEVER do that to me again.

My body was only to be used to please men, never myself!

## **I Fall In ..... Love?**

Finally, I met The Man Of My Dreams!

After so many years of pleading for love, I was sure of it.





## The Way Out



On my 18 birthday I went out to a night club with a friend, and there he was—tall, dark and handsome. He looked like he just stepped out of *Gentleman's Quarterly. Magazine*.

And he was interested in me!

He was so very handsome, and he loved me! He begged for my attention. He told me everything a girl could want to hear.

You must understand that I got my self-worth from men. In my mind, the better looking the guy was, the better I was.

Women envied me because the good looking guy or guys who were with *me*. Sounds kind of silly now, but it made sense to me then. I was shallow and looks meant everything. To be with a good looking man meant that I was someone of worth.



If a good looking man liked me, then I must be someone special.

Well, Hudson, this man in the club, had the good looks and all the right words. The smooth talker told me he was my birthday present. He told me that I had angel eyes. He gave me the charm off his necklace. And this was all on the first night we met!

Problem: he didn't live in Florida, but in a whole other country—Canada. So, for a time, we maintained a long distance relationship. We both lied long-distance about who we were, what our lives were like.

I graduated from high school. I continued to go out to clubs and meet other men. I continued to live at home with my parents.



I’m a grown-up now, but I was having a hard time with my parents. They never seemed to want to give me any freedom. They were strict, but they never clarified why they were strict. They’d say things like, “Don’t have sex until you are married”; but they never told me why I shouldn’t. Or why it was important to wait. And they’d say, “Don’t do drugs” (which I didn’t because I was scared to lose control) but they never told me why not..

My parents wouldn’t like my friends and would forbid me from hanging out with some of them, but they never explained why I shouldn’t hang out with them.

Here I was 18, and they gave me an 11:00 curfew. I thought that was crazy. Did they honestly believed that after 11:00 is when you would have sex and get into trouble?

Little did they know that what they thought couldn’t happen before 11:00, did. But if their curfew was too strict, sneaking out the window was always in my plan on the weekends.

My folk’s said, “You can’t trust teenagers”. And they didn’t trust me. They tightened control, only to lose it. They wouldn’t believe the truth even when I told it. I felt that it never seemed to matter when I did things right, that it always went unnoticed. And when I was accused of lying, I just went undercover about things and did things I wanted to in the time frame I was given.

My parents and I ended up getting into this huge fight. So I moved to Louisiana with my older sister. There I continued to go to clubs, meet men, and keep



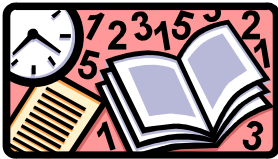
## The Way Out



up my long distance relationship with Hudson, the man I just knew I loved.



Needless to say, my time in Louisiana was cut short. I had no job and I didn't get along with my sister. So I put my tail between my legs and moved back home to Florida.



Once I moved back home I signed up to take some classes at the Junior. College.

I kept up with my long-distance relationship Hudson and I still had a rocky relationship with my parents. ...But during that year in Junior College something profound happened to me.

For one class I needed to write a paper on a play. Like everything else I ever did, I waited till the last minute.

I really didn't care much about my education or anything at all about that paper I was supposed to write. I never really thought I or would have any kind of career, that was for smart people. And I just knew I wasn't smart. My dad's words always played in my mind like that time he said, "I can't believe I have such a stupid child—what are you an f---ing idiot".

So because it was the last minute and there were no stage productions playing in or around my small town, I opted for a play at a local church.



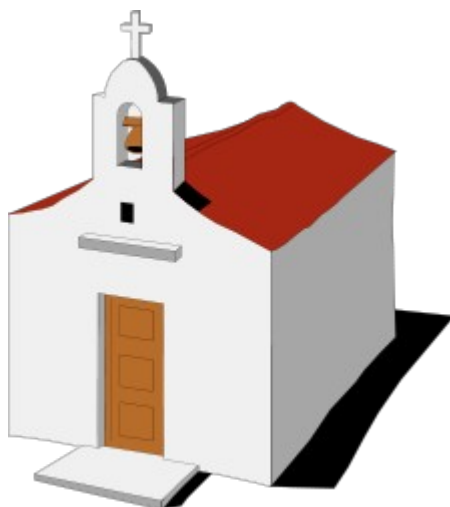
The play was called the *Toy Maker's Dream*. It never crossed my mind that it would



be a Christian play, or about God. I simply figured that churches had large spaces and a big stage. It made sense for them to have a play there. I didn't question it.

I didn't go seeking God.

He sought me.



I had been raised in a Church. I made my first communion and went through classes all while I lived with Dad and his second wife. There wasn't much talk of God, or Jesus, or the Bible, and there was definitely no love going around.

I remember we had this big white family Bible; it was for display only. We kids knew never to touch it. And I remember going to Church with my step mother--we would all dress up. Sometimes we were the family that got to bring the bread and wine up to the altar. To outsiders we looked like an all-together family,

But as soon as we got into the car headed home, it was a whole other story!



## The Way Out



The verbal abuse came slinging forward. It amazed me to watch. How someone so calm and perfect in front of the church people could then turn so nasty when she got behind closed doors.

When I moved in with my mom I only went to church on holidays, but I did believe, after a fashion, in God. I even had a picture of Jesus in my bedroom.

So, here I'm at this play in this church and it turns out that *The Toy Maker's Dream* is a play all about God and His love for us. It's about a relationship with Jesus Christ. I had never before learned about having a *relationship* with God.



The next thing you know, I'm up at the alter giving my life to Christ!

I felt a love I never felt before, a joy, sense of belonging. I was on fire for God immediately! I could feel this warmth go all through my body. I felt LOVE! Real Love. And I wanted to share this love.

I began going to Bible studies and to church. I made some Christian friends. I even told Hudson, the G.Q. guy in Canada, that I was having the long distance relationship with, about Jesus. I told him that I wanted to be with a Christian man.

I was so happy for the first time in my life. I couldn't get enough of Christ... UNTIL that tall dark and handsome G.Q. Canadian man came back to visit me in Florida.



This time it was my 19th birthday and he was there to see *me*. He had written me a letter previously saying he hoped he could respect my religion. He said it would be such a tragedy to lose a beautiful young lady to Christianity (literally, he wrote that!).

He wrote that he had already “lost” one of his best friends to Christianity. But he assured me that he still loved me even if I was a Christian. And he gave me a ring.

I had just turned 19. My parents restricted me to the unreasonable curfew of 1:00 a.m. ! They wouldn’t even let me stay with this wonderful man in his hotel!

How dare they tell me what I can and can’t do!

I’m an adult.

I’ll show them.

I didn’t come home for a few days.

I stayed at his hotel.



## The Way Out



When I did go home, they'd put all of my things in black plastic bags in the front yard. They said I needed to find another place to stay.

I'm sure if my mom and step-dad knew what would happen then, those bags would have never been placed outside.

What happened then is that this wonderfully handsome man had a great idea. He told me that he loved me and that he wasn't going to go back to Canada without me.

Off I went with him to Canada—all my black plastic bags in tow.



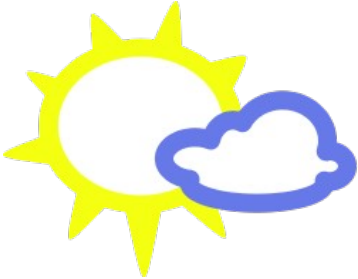
What was I thinking?

So here I go again wanting love so badly. Based on the fact that this beautiful man wants *me* and that I really believed that I could show him the love of Christ, I moved to Ontario, Canada, against the better judgment of my parents and my pastor.

My Pastor called me saying, "You can't do this, it is not of God". But I told him, "I can bring him to Christ. I know I can".



No matter what my pastor thought as I left, I was leaving for love, I'd found the man of my dreams. He loves me! I was on cloud nine.



I never once stopped to think how far Canada was, or where I would work or live or that it was a whole other country.

I was with him and that was all that mattered. I didn't even think twice about leaving my family, friends, or church behind.

We hadn't even left Florida when things got Bad.

## Storm Warnings

At first it was just silly stuff back and forth between us.

He was broke. I was broke. Neither one of us had any money. His car broke down in Tennessee. We had no money to fix it. We had no money for food or a hotel.

He called his uncle to wire him some money so we could stay in a hotel and have food to eat as we waited for his uncle to drive down from Canada to fix his car.



Red Flags, hurricane warnings, were everywhere, but I wasn't paying attention to them because he loved me and he was gorgeous.

Who cares if he's broke, I thought.



## The Way Out



I should have turned around right there and then and gone back home ASAP

But I didn't.

I didn't want to hurt him. He loved me. He told me that he couldn't live without me. Nobody ever needed me so much. Nobody ever loved me like he did—he said so.

We finally got to Canada only to discover everything he shared with me about his life was false.

From where he grew up, to his home life, to drinking and other stuff—it was all a lie.

I was shocked.

I was afraid.

Here I am in a strange country with someone I didn't really even know.

Now I was now living with him and his mother in her home. A home in not very good shape, in a bad part of town. I was shocked at my surroundings.

This isn't how he said he was living.

This isn't what he described to me on the phone...

But he needs me. He loves me. I'm not going to let my surroundings or the lack of money stop me from loving him. I can't and won't leave him—he needs me.

His mother was nice enough to me.



I felt a little strange living in her house while sleeping with her son.

But she was okay with that. (My own parents sure would never go for something like that).



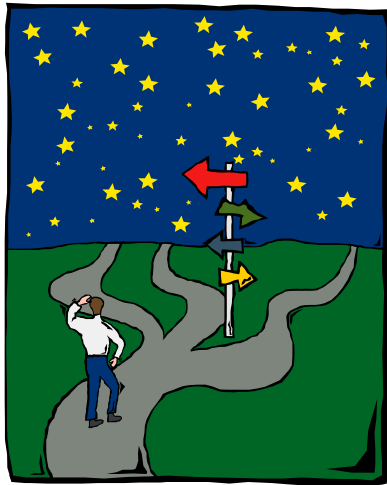
I soon found out she wasn't your everyday mom. She partied with her son and his friends. She worked at a strip club as the house mom. I was so confused! I didn't know anyone else with a mom like that.

What was I doing?

The heart is deceitful above all things.... Who can understand it?

—Jeremiah 17:9

Little did I know that at that time I was beginning to go down a road that wouldn't be easy to turn around from.



Even in that situation, I wanted to grow closer to God and to go to church.

A double-minded person is unstable in all he does.

—James 1:8

I still tried to read my Bible every day, and live as a Christian in this new life of mine. There was one sign of encouragement as far as my boyfriend and God went. Hudson told me about an experience he had on



## The Way Out



an airplane with a pastor who sat next to him. On a vacation he went on right before he came to Florida the second time for my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday—A vacation I later found out he went on with another woman!

Anyhow, he said the pastor led him to Christ and he found a Bible tract in the bathroom at the airport. I believed he had a very real religious experience, yet an experience short-lived enough to get me to his bed in Canada. But, he *said* all of the right things.

So what if he partied and we were living together, he was reading the Bible.



Yes, during my first weekend in Canada, Hudson and I went to a park and read the Bible together. My pastor would have been so proud see I was bringing him closer to Christ—or so I told myself.

Sadly, that never happened again.

We visited his aunt's church few times, but I don't think she really wanted us there. She was well-known in her church and here she is sitting with her nephew and his live-in girl friend...we never went back.

Church, God and the Bible weren't on the top of Hudson's list—or mine either when you come right down to it.

He and I soon started to fight all the time. In the middle of a fight I would run up to our room to read my Bible and calm down. He would yell, "Go! Run read your Bible!"

And that is what I would do... but eventually it was easier to put down the Bible and pick up a beer.





I got tired of trying, tired of fighting. I should have gone on home, but I couldn't leave him.

Besides, I would never give my parents the satisfaction of knowing I made such a big a mistake.

Not only did he quarrel with me, but he and his mother had awful rows. Don't get me wrong, my parents and I would fight but never anything like this! I'd heard awful things about myself from my father and grandmother—but the kinds of things she would say to him!

She screamed that she wished he had never been born, that it was a mistake for her to have had him. She said she gave birth to him when she was 14 and that having him ruined her life.

You can imagine the dysfunction in that house. Hudson never met his real father, who died from alcohol poisoning.

Of course, my heart broke for him. Since his mother could not love him, I would make sure that I would. I'd never leave him.

He needed me.

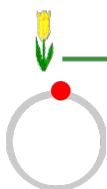
## **In The Ring**

Who cared if these other girls showed up at the house banging on the door, crying and whining and demanding to see him?

I came to find out he had a girlfriend that whole year he smooth talked me on the phone. She bought him all kinds of stuff, took him on vacations, and gave him money. She was one of the ones who banged on the door wanting answers.



## The Way Out



There was this other girl—remember that ring he gave me for my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday?

He claimed he saw it at the jeweler's and that it made him think of me and he bought it for my birthday—at least that's what he told me at the time.

Actually, he got my ring from that girl. They were playing a drinking game; the ring was at the bottom of the shot glass. He drank the shot, got the ring—and that girl.

Well, she made me strip the ring off my finger .... and she made me hand my birthday ring—*her ring*—back to her.

### **I don't understand why I stayed.**

I remember one night sitting on the kitchen floor with a knife to my wrist. I don't think I would of really done it, I was just so tired and confused. We'd been fighting about all those girls... then somehow it all turned back on me.

I was a slut who had slept with so many men. I was the one who betrayed him that whole year. I was the one who hurt him.

There were so many lies, so much fighting. I thought I loved him and that he needed me.

I also thought I was different from all of those other girls he had gone out with.

I had HIS love. He LOVED me—not them.

So there I stayed.

The longer I stayed, the more I learned about him and his lies, but I still stayed. I tried to give him all of myself. I tried to love him, but I couldn't seem to do it right.



I could never make him happy, no matter what I did. I wanted to make him happy I wanted him to know how much I loved him.

So many thing I did upset him. I didn't realize I was doing wrong.

Like one night we went to a night club with his friends. We had just gotten in the door, we weren't even there for 5 minutes, but we had to leave. He was upset with me and I didn't know why. I didn't know what I had done wrong.

At first he wouldn't even speak to me and by the time he did, he pouted and shouted that I was a whore because I had made eye contact with the bouncer! He yelled that I wanted the bouncer, that I wanted to sleep with the bouncer, and so on and on and on.

I couldn't believe this.

I didn't even realize that I had looked at the bouncer.

I couldn't believe that Hudson was so angry, and that he thought I would do that. ....Then he started to cry and tell me how much he loved me and that he could never lose me. I felt so sorry for him. I was sorry to have wronged him like that. And I knew right there and then I could never hurt him. I could never leave him. I would always stay and always love him.

So much happened those first few months in Canada. from living with his mom and all of the crazy incidents with the ex-girlfriends to us moving into our own apartment.

It wasn't much better, it was a basement apartment and awfully creepy.



## The Way Out



I hated that place. I hated staying there. Hudson would go out with his friends and I would be stuck alone in that awful hole in the ground.

That's what it felt like, a hole in the ground.

I wasn't allowed to go out with him when he went out with his friends, he would say they invited him not me.

Yet I still stayed there ... and was left alone.

I needed work so I got a job across the Detroit River, in the U.S. I worked as a waitress in the auto capital of the world. Because of work restrictions I couldn't work in Canada. I crossed the river everyday going to work. Back and forth from Canada "visiting" my boyfriend.

After working as a waitress, for a few months—they told me I was the world's worst waitress—a



woman from the management company that ran the building I worked in offered me a job as a receptionist.

It was a great job! It paid \$11 an hour. I couldn't believe it. They said they hired me because I was so friendly. When I started that new job as a receptionist, I so was happy. my job made me happy. I loved going there. Being there, My job took me away from the craziness I'd walked myself into since moving up there.

At home, We still weren't getting along and we were still dirt poor. He had a job as a waiter, I think, for a brief time but most of the time he wasn't working at all.

He would come to my office to pick up my paychecks. Why did I let that happen? I never got to be in charge of the money I earned.

I would be so embarrassed. It was a professional office. I knew they frowned on his being there.

Even with me making eleven U.S. dollars, we were never able to pay our bills or have money for food or my bus ride to and from work.

There were days I would be at work not knowing how I was going to be able to get the two dollars to catch the bus back across the border after work.

I was always asking people I worked with if they had two dollars I could borrow for the bus or for lunch,

That got old in a hurry.



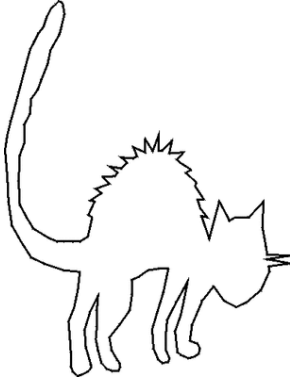




I lost my job.



## Cat Fight



About this time I got beat up  
It was a case of mistaken identity.  
Really, it was.

Hudson and I were walking from our apartment to his mother's house. We walked everywhere. Since we didn't have a car, I didn't carry my driver's license. We were arguing and he walked ahead of me a few blocks.

The assault happened in front of a church when this girl, Lucile, about 19, came up and asked if my name was Michele.

I told her my name and that I'd moved here from Florida. She didn't believe me and called her boyfriend over.

He said "yeah that's her; she was there when I was in the holding cell".

I saw what was going to happen and started to cry. I had never been in a fight before. I didn't know how to fight, God help me.



I tried to convince her that I wasn't this Michele who she thought I was. I begged her to please walk with me to my boyfriend's mom's house. They would tell her who I am.

I showed Lucile a ring I had with the face of Jesus on it and I swore to God that I'm not who she thought I was.

It didn't matter. Lucile wasn't listening.

She threw me to the ground and started kicking.

The only thing I knew to do was to cover my eyes. I was scared that she would kick my eyes so hard that I would go blind. (This happened in 1989 when they hadn't come out with those light tennis shoes yet).

I just laid there in a ball with my face covered until she stopped. They left and I laid there for I don't know how long, until a boy across the street called the police.



By this time, someone from the school across the street came out to help and called Hudson at his mother's house. He came back with a couple of



## The Way Out



buddies ready to fight. But, praise God, they couldn't find Lucile or her boyfriend.

The cops showed up and said that they'd been afraid something like this was going to happen to Michele, the girl the attackers thought I was.

This Michele had been raped by Lucile's boyfriend. So Lucile got mad and wanted to beat up Michele. Does that make any sense?

It still confuses me why Michele should get beat up because Lucile's boyfriend had raped her.

Lucile should be angry with her boyfriend, or so I thought.

Another sad thing about all of that is that Lucile's little baby was outside watching her mom beat someone (me)up.

I suffered 2 black eyes, along with the whites of my eyes being filled with blood. The doctor had to pull my earring's post out of my neck. Lucile had cracked my nose and to this day I still have a hard time breathing out of my right nostril. I have arthritis in my neck and shoulder on the right side of my body, but I'm alive!

All this, yet I still stayed with Hudson there in Canada. DUH!!!

But Hudson really wanted to live in the United States. Married to a U.S. citizen, he could. So we decided to get married.

Part of the plan would be for us to move to the Virgin Islands and file for his visa. We thought moving to the Islands would just be an amazing place to live, and lucky for us I still had family there we could live with. (of course). So we went ahead and got married.



Once again the better judgment of my mom and step-dad advised against it, but then what did they know? We loved each other, why was that so hard for them to understand?

I had found the church on New Year’s Eve. We had a party that night at our apartment, a different apartment, we were always moving, living with different people all the time. That night, we had gotten into another fight



I left the party and found myself sitting across from this little church called Mount Zion. I could hear singing from the inside. It sounded wonderful. It sounded peaceful.

I just sat there in the dark on the snow covered ground crying and listening to the singing. I never went inside ,but the memory stuck in my mind.

So when we decided to get married I called that church. It was one place I felt some sort of love, or peace, or warmth.

They had a retired minister; Rev. Francis Carrau, he was 92. We met with him and asked what it would take for him to marry us.

He told us that he had yet to marry a couple who ended in divorce and that we were the first white couple he had ever married. He was a sweet dear man, and I’m sorry we’d be the couple to break his record.



## The Way Out



We met with him several times, and said whatever we had to, jump through whatever hoops needed to be jumped through in order for him to marry us.

We got married at Hudson's mother's house. I wore a cheap white sundress, and our guests consisted of his family members and a few friends. He bought our rings at a indoor flea market. Our wedding cake was a sheet cake from A&P Grocery; one of the guests brought it. Our gifts were bottles of vodka, and small amounts of money.

Was this the day every little girl dreams of?



What was I doing?

What happen to the beautiful white dress? Dad walking me down the aisle? Bride's maids and groom's men all decked out? What happened to wedding showers and wedding gifts?

What was I thinking?

What was I doing?

I thought I was in love.

## Back To The Islands

We got married and the very next day moved to the Virgin Islands.

There we lived with my aunt, uncle and their children.

Soon, I found a job at a hotel working the front desk.

## Patricia “Tess” Grace



Things were okay at first. Hudson loved the Island and its laid back ways. I liked my job at the hotel and liked calling him “my husband”.

*I am LOVED for I now have a husband. Life, I thought, was surely getting better.* I simply loved the beach and the people. It was my childhood home. This island held my happiest memories of family.



# The Way Out



## Virgin Islands



My aunt and her family had to go the states for a month. So a couple of weeks after we arrived we had the house to ourselves.

It felt like paradise, being there on the most beautiful island on earth.



"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest"..

—Matthew 11:28

It was during that time that I met Sarah and Mussey, two girls from the States who were staying at the hotel.

They were very nice and very pretty.

I asked them what they were doing on the Island and they told me that they were exotic dancers. There was a strip club on the Island that would fly girls over from the states for two weeks at a time.





## The Way Out



As I talked with them, I felt curious. What would make a girl choose to dance for a living? They told me how much money they made!

I couldn't believe it! They were so beautiful—and they were exotic dancers?

I always had in my mind a picture of strippers looked like. I had met a few from the club my mother-in-law worked in and they sure didn't look like these girls. I was shocked. Why would someone so pretty do that for a living?

Well, I got talking to them some more and they told me I should try it and that I would make lots of money. I didn't believe I could make the money they did because they were so beautiful.

I had a choice to make.





After a few more conversations with them I decided I would go for the money. I talked to Hudson about it and he did not object to it. Actually, we both liked the idea because, making that kind of money we would be able to get our own place and a car. Was that the right choice to make?

Looking back on it “NO”!. But, at that point in my life the idea of men willing to pay to see ME dance was a huge temptation. For the first time I truly felt beautiful. Not only was I beautiful, but desirable too. And the money, wow the amount of money, was just flat out crazy,. I would never be able to make that kind of money doing anything else. I dreamt of the things I would own, I would be RICH and DESIRABLE! I thought I’d be somebody special. I thought of myself as this glamorous model, with a glamorous life.

I remember that first night I danced. I was so nervous. Part of me couldn’t believe what I was getting ready to do. I had to keep pushing my feelings aside and think of the money. It took a couple of drinks to loosen me up. I remember being up there not knowing what I was doing. I just moved to the music and zoned out.

But I did it and it wasn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be. The men there were nice enough and tried to make me feel comfortable.

I planed to make sure that I wasn’t going to be a ‘sleazy’ dancer. I was going to be ‘classy’ .

I would dance with taste and style because I did know that the Lord was watching me.

I thought, *If I was going to do this, I want God to know I’m not going to be sleazy. I’ll dance with taste*



## The Way Out



*and style. I'll make God proud by not getting dirty.—*  
That's what I thought.



God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. ...

Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

—John 3:17-19

I'm sure the Lord shook his head and wept and said something like this, *"My child, my child, what are you doing? You don't have to do this, I love you"*. But I wasn't listening to Him at the time. But I did justify it in my mind that He would understand.

How far I had come from being the girl who was so excited about the new relationship she had found with Christ and His Word. She was now buried deep away and her Bible put aside.

Everything her pastor said would happen, did happen.

I earned good money. We bought a little beat-up car we could get around the Island with. We rented a studio apartment. All things considered, things seemed to be good—or at least getting better.



I got to where I felt comfortable dancing. I didn't carry shame around as I did when I first started being a dancer.

Everyone in my family believed that I was working at the hotel. I'm surprised to this day that my family members on the island never knew I was dancing. Since the island was so small, I was sure the word would spread. That was my only fear at that time—that my family might find out.

We enjoyed the money I was making and life was a little easier, but we continued to fight All The Time.

I remember one fight where we tore up our marriage license and flushed it down the toilet.



Was that the end of the relationship?

No. like a fool, I stayed on.

Why?

Well, girls, we all know that not everything goes down on the first flush; sometimes it takes more than once.



## The Way Out



It would have been nice if it could have been that easy to get out of the situation.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

—John 14:27

In the meantime I met Mauritz, a man at the strip club, who told me that I could make a lot more money if I danced at the clubs in the states, and that he knew of a club in Florida.

He said it was a real nice upscale club, “a gentlemen’s club,” (whatever that means - they are all the same).

Mauritz said he would get me the phone number.

I talked it over with Hudson and we decided that the Island cost too much to live on and it was time to move. Besides, my husband was still no closer to getting his visa, he hadn’t even started to file papers.

So I was moving up in the world. I was going to move back to Florida and dance at one of the nicest clubs!

I must be really something now, so I thought.

My mom and step-dad were happy that I was living closer to home. Little did they know *why* I moved closer to home—nor did I ever want them to know.

I didn’t want anyone to know that I was a dancer.

I don’t even remember what I told them I was doing. Whatever it was they believed it.

I remember going into that “upscale” Gentlemen’s Club for the first time.



Jitters! Once again I felt so nervous. How pretty the girls were! Compared to them, I felt so small, so



## The Way Out



inadequate. They looked gorgeous and glamorous. Their beauty shocked me. So talented. These girls could have done anything, been anyone.

Little did I know at the time of the brokenness, the pain deep inside each of them. It turns out they were like me.

I once again with the help of alcohol was able to do my job.



Meanwhile Hudson and I moved into a motel close to the bar. I can't believe that I actually lived in a seedy, pay-week-by-week motel.



I took cabs to work and every once in a while one of the girls would drive me home. I remember one night one of the girls brought me home and she made sure she walked me to the door carrying a gun in her hand.

That freaked me out, I had never even seen a gun before. I asked why she carried a gun and she informed me that we weren't living in the best part of town. She also said that sometimes; men will follow dancers home. I, as



you can imagine, wanted to move out of that motel and into a better area as soon as possible.

I had become friends with one of the girls at the bar; she was looking for a roommate so my husband and I moved into this apartment with her. It was a great apartment on a nicer side of town, but I hated for us to be living there with her.

My husband still didn't work.

He couldn't work since he wasn't an American and he wasn't going to school. Therefore, all of the financial responsibility fell on me. And we continued to fight a lot. In fact, that was most of what we did.

We had no friends.

Every once in a while an old school friend of mine would come over from my home town. I couldn't hang out with them because I had to go to work at the club—but my husband did.

I realized that I really didn't like him all that much and I'd wonder from time to time, *What on earth am I doing?*

We again found ourselves without a car.. We relied on our roommate for rides, or, once again, resort to walking.

How did I end up as an adult walking every where?

This wasn't what my life was supposed to look like. Before I met Hudson, I was used to dating men with some money. I was used to being taken out to dinner and driven around in a nice car. I never thought I would have to be the sole support of a jobless man and walk every where I went.





## The Way Out



As the fighting grew more intense I did something I never thought I ever would do (because my dad did it so often to his wives).

I cheated on my husband.

I had met a man at the bar, Trevor. He was older than me--to be honest he was the same age as my parents. He paid lots of attention to me.

He even looked like the boyfriend from high school who had dumped me because I slept with his cousin. I think my attraction to him was to fill that void of rejection from that one boyfriend, because they looked so much alike.



Trevor showed me kindness and he even had a little bit of money. I was so miserable and he made me forget about what I was doing, and who I was married to, and what my life was like.

He took me to nice restaurants and drove a BMW.

I just wanted to run away from my life, and Trevor gave me that escape route.

I didn't cheat on my husband with out him knowing. I warned him it was coming. Needless to say he wasn't happy.

Life as I knew it soured worse than before. Yes I hurt my husband and what I did was wrong, but in my mind I felt justified with what I was doing. I wanted to feel loved, to have someone say kind things to me, to make me feel important, to make me feel I mattered.




Friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself...

—1 John 3:2

My husband claimed he loved me, but he also boasted that he could get any women he wanted. He said that the only thing I had going for me was my face. He was always saying such hurtful things to me. He said he loved me, but didn't act like it.

And I just wanted to be loved. So, at that time, I did whatever it took to get that love. Even though it was wrong, I continued to do it.

I wasn't thinking much at that time about the Lord or how I gave my life to Him in 1989. I was living my own life. I was “Lord” of my life.

Hudson felt the best way to hurt me back was to call Mom and my step-dad, and tell them that I was a dancer, a stripper. 

After he made that phone call and told my parents what their little girl was doing for a living, Hudson moved back to Canada.

As you can imagine the news devastated my parents. Shocked, they didn't understand how it could be true. They were angry and hurt.

It was awful to have disappointed them. I did feel bad for that. I hated hurting them, but still, they just didn't understand.

My step-dad decided to pay me a visit in Orlando.



## The Way Out



**Orlando skyline**

So, my step-dad came to see where I worked. I think he thought that I would be too ashamed to bring him to the club. But I was more than happy to show him where I worked and to have him meet Trevor, my new boyfriend, and to see how wonderful this “Gentlemen’s Club” was, and to find out how friendly the girls were.

I can honestly say I was out of my right mind!

I tried to convince my parents that dancing wasn’t that bad, that it was just a job. I thought they wouldn’t mind once I told them how much money I made.

When my step-dad came to the bar where I worked so I could show him how ‘classy’ it was and how classy the girls were, it turned out that he didn’t see it as classy at all—more like trashy.

What was I thinking?

Where was my head?

Who does a thing like I did?

Did I really think that all of this was okay?



Did I really believe that my folks would come to Orlando and be like saying, “Wow! you are right. It isn’t so bad. Congratulations? Job well done. We are so proud of what you became”.

Who was I kidding?

My parents lost all respect for me at that point.

Along with being hurt at the choices I had made up to that point, they didn’t like my husband at all.

But even more than their dislike for him, they sure didn’t like Trevor, a man who was the same age they were and who picked up women at a strip bar. They were unimpressed with my new boyfriend I cheated on my husband with and they were unimpressed with me.

I really thought everything was fine, that what I was doing wasn’t wrong. Why couldn’t anyone understand?

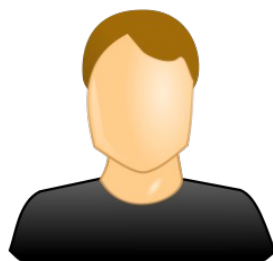
My parents went back home broken hearted.

I was relieved that my husband had gone back to Canada.

I hated all of that fighting and name calling,

I enjoyed my new found freedom... But...

But I soon missed Hudson like crazy. I was so co-dependent on him that I felt like I would die without him. All I wanted was to get back together with him in Canada. But, meanwhile I still dated this other guy, whose name I don’t even remember now.... Just another faceless guy.



## The Way Out



Hudson and I talked on the phone every day and stated our undying love for one another. I was starting to feel very lonely even with my new boyfriend.

Even with what I thought was a wonderful job. I was feeling empty. I decided that I could no longer live without my husband, that we were made for each other. I decided that we loved each other and that we had to get back together, that we were meant for each other. Our love could overcome anything.

I convinced myself that since we had been through so much together, I needed to get back to Canada as soon as possible.

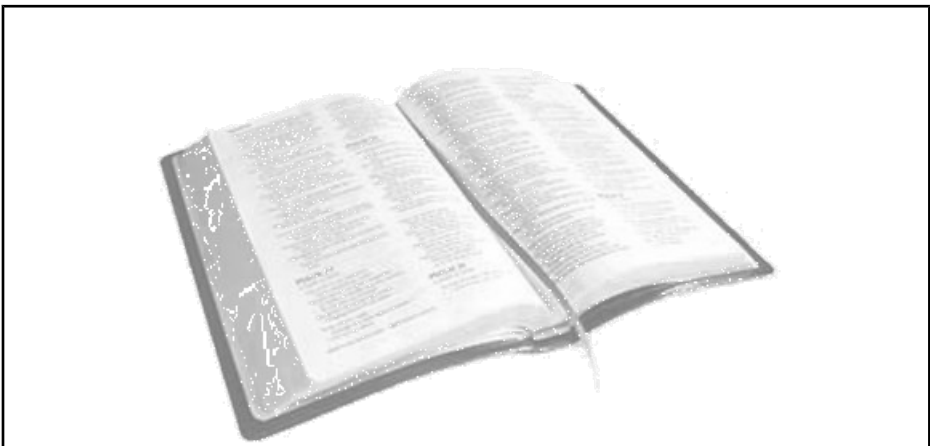
Can you believe it?

Somehow I was able to talk this man that I was dating into renting me a car so I could drive back to Canada to be with my husband.

To my amazement he did it.

Maybe he felt guilty about breaking up a marriage, or maybe he realized that I was too young. I'm not sure what it was, but he didn't mind paying for a rental car and giving me money to travel with. I was on my way back to love!

Still stripping.





**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

## **Dancing On Stage—Cracking Up At Home**

I was on my way back to Canada. I drove straight from Florida only stopping for gas and once at a Denny's restaurant to take a quick nap in the parking lot.

Once again who does that?

Stopping at a Denny's to take a nap in their parking lot, I was too afraid to rent a hotel by myself. So there I am sleeping in a rental car at a Denny's parking lot. I still can't believe I did that, traveling by myself across the country to another country, determined to be with the man I thought I loved.

The man I wanted to love and the man I wanted to love me.

Once I got back to Canada, I found myself again living in his mother's home. I can't believe that nobody told us we shouldn't be together, to live together or—maybe someone did and I didn't want to listen. At this point, my Mom and step-dad gave up on telling me to come home.

I lived such a life of insanity. I couldn't legally live in Canada but I knew that the bar where Hudson's





mom worked hired girls from other countries. Those girls were able to get work visas.

So that is what I did.

I was able to legally live in Canada with a work visa for dancing. I found the nicest strip bar or as we liked to call them "Gentlemen's clubs" and once again began to dance.

Now I didn't have to worry about leaving the country and coming back every so often to *visit* my boyfriend. A plus side at that point was that I also had medical coverage. Seemed like a good deal, I was on the road to happiness.

My husband decided to go back to school and get his nursing degree. There was a shortage of male nurses and we knew he would be able to get a great job in the states once he got his degree.

But while he attended nursing school, it meant that he was not working. Let me state for the record that he had a few jobs during our marriage never lasting more than a few months, and his total time of employment altogether had to be less than 6 months.

For the majority of our time together I was the only one working, dancing naked, and he lived off my income.



Once again the first night at work was nerve racking. I had to have those first few drinks in order to dance. Dancing in Canada is a lot different from in the states. I had to get really drunk to pull it off. I can't believe how much I used to



## The Way Out



drink. I had to in order to keep my mind off of what I was doing, to make it less real.

Drinking numbed me, helped me escape myself.

For the most part, the girls at the clubs were always really nice to me. I think they always knew I didn't belong there. I just didn't seem to fit in. The music disk jockeys, bartenders, and bouncers, acted kind of like big brothers, they were protective of me. They all were friendly and watched out for me.

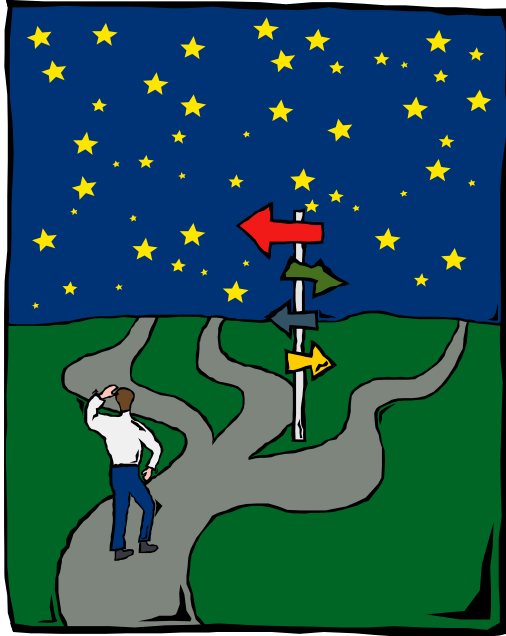
From time to time I'd wonder what drew all of these people into this kind of living. I wondered why other people would choose to dance or work at a strip club.

What would bring a person to a place like that? Out of everything in life they could choose to do, there they were...

Same as me, I guess.

They were where I was.

We all make choices.



I never really became friends with any of the girls outside of the bar. I didn't want my job to be my life. Even though I couldn't see reality in all areas of my life, it was important to me to keep the strip club strictly as a job. I wanted to keep separate the different parts of my life because I knew, for whatever reason, I didn't want to live the stripper lifestyle which normally consisted of drugs and sex, along with various other things.

I knew in the back of my heart and mind that what I was doing wasn't right. I knew I was hurting deep inside. Nevertheless, I made sure I showed up at the club with a smile on my face for the customers—looking happy with my miserable life.

I tried to convince myself that what I was doing was normal and fine. But in my mind a battle raged over about who I was and what I was doing.



## The Way Out



I don't know why I ever thought moving back to Canada would be a good idea, or that things between my husband and me would be any different. I suppose then that I somehow thought I could make our marriage better. I thought I could do better, be better, and I would make sure he loved me. I needed him to love me.

I couldn't stand for him reject me too. I don't know why it was such a big deal. Why HE was such a big deal. Especially when deep down inside of me I knew I didn't even like him.

But I longed for him to want and love me.

It sounds crazy, I know.

It felt crazy at the time.

It was crazy.

We rented a small apartment with the money I was making. It was right across the street from his mother's house. It was so small.

We continued to fight so badly and so much that people on the street could hear us. But we didn't care and our fighting just got worse and worse. There were times when he would go out with his friends until all hours of the night, and I would be at work dancing in the bar or home—engulfed in jealousy the whole time.

All the while he, of course, remained unemployed. We couldn't pay our bills. Our rent was always late. I remember hiding from the landlord as he banged on the door for his rent money.

I should have run off then.

I should have left then.

I didn't.



Here I was making all this money and nothing, absolutely nothing, to show for it. It was frustrating, I had no control over the money I made. No control over my life.

I felt so alone and confused.

I did things I never thought I would do.



I drank like a fish at the bar and drank a lot more at home too. I smoked pot from time to time. I hated that. I hated smoking pot, but, me being me, I didn't say no.

I wish I had.

I hated it when I would lose my voice, too afraid to really say how I felt. I hated my life.

But there was one hope at this point of my life.

The most amazing thing happened to me!

The most wonderful, incredible thing!

I was pregnant!

I was going to have a baby!

This would make everything so much better, I thought. My baby would be what it takes to fix this marriage!

I was so happy.

He was even happy.



## The Way Out



We were going to be parents. We were going to have a baby. When we had found out that I was pregnant we right away went over to his mom's house because we were so happy and excited and just had to share our news.

We told his mom that we were having a baby

Her response was, "That's your problem. You deal with it, I'm not taking care of it".

I was shocked. How she could not be happy for us and this new little life growing inside me. How she could say that the baby growing inside me was a problem and that we would have to deal with it. It was a precious baby! I knew my baby was a gift from God, I already had so much love for it. How could she not have any interest in her own grandbaby?

My heart once again broke for my husband knowing that his mother never really showed that she loved or wanted him. Now she was doing the same to his child.

I wanted to fix that for him. I once again determined to always be there for him no matter what. We would be a perfect family. The family he never had. I would give that to him.

So, there we were trying to be something neither one of us knew anything about. How could we be a perfect family when we didn't have any idea of what a perfect family might look like?

It is Hard to live up to something you have never really seen.

But needless to say, my being pregnant was the greatest thing to happen in my life. My little baby



changed my life. It literally changed my life and has continued to be an on-going blessing.

I found out we were having a little girl.

I promised myself that I would always protect her and treat her like the precious gift she was, that I would always treasure her and be the best mother I could.

While I carried her I would think of her all of the time. I would lay there and picture this wonderful little person, this amazing little life. Oh how I loved her—and I hadn’t even laid my eyes on her yet.

She was my heart.

I continued to dance for the first two or three months of my pregnancy, maybe longer. I’m not quite sure how long. I danced before I began to show. Believe it or not there are a lot of women who are pregnant and still dance in the clubs. The men don’t seem to realize it, or if they do, I’m not sure they care.

I always felt disgusted with myself while I was dancing with this little life growing inside of me. How could I be up on stage dancing like this with this precious little person, my daughter, growing in me?

How could I allow men to look at my body, lust after my nude body, with the most amazing, innocent, little child growing in there?

How could I expose her to this even if she was in my womb?

I hated every minute of it. I hated the way it made me feel.

So I allowed more numbness to enter my life at that point. I had to be numb in order to



## The Way Out



continue to dance, and I had to dance since we needed the money. And now that I was going to have a baby, I really had to dance for the money, there was no choice.

Was there?

Like a gold ring in a pig's snout—so is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

—Proverbs 11:22

Of course, being pregnant wasn't the wonder drug for our marriage that I thought it would be.

We continued to fight, with the fights getting even more violent.

I'm sure, being pregnant, I was over-sensitive.

I remember one night it was so bad that I honestly thought I was going to die. I thought, *This is it. They're going to find my body floating down the Detroit River.* And it was such a stupid fight. But neither one of us knew when to stop.

He always had to have the last word.

I always had to have the last word.

One night Hudson was late picking me up from work. It wasn't exactly the safest place to be waiting for someone outside a strip bar in the middle of the night. So I'm already angry having to wait outside late by myself.

He picks me up and I see that he was wearing a suit—like he was a big businessman or something.. This is the suit he was supposed to wear to my sister's wedding. This is the suit we paid the \$700 for—but now he wasn't going to be able to go to her wedding,



so the best use he can get out of it is to wear it out drinking in bars with his buddies.



So he picks me up, late, wearing this suit...the suit I paid for! It's obvious that he had gone to another club with his buddies and that he had been drinking to much.

And to tell you the truth, I lost it!

I was so angry. There I was working at a darn strip club, taking off my clothes, all my clothes, for money. And he had no job. And a, a regular \$200 suit wasn't good enough for him. So he bought one for \$700—and he isn't even going to go to my sister's wedding with me. And now he has gone out with his buddies and is drunk and picked me up late! And we can't pay our rent!

I lost it!

I couldn't believe it. I should have left it alone when I saw how drunk he was, but I had to keep it going.

I couldn't let go.

We pulled into an empty parking lot across from the river and we were just going at it when he then placed my head between the two front seats just screaming at me and banging my head up and down.

His actions cut huge scratch marks on the side of my neck.

I truly thought I was going to die that night, that I had pushed him over the edge. I saw the river across





## The Way Out



the street and really did think *I'm going to be dead and floating in it.*



No. That night ended with him putting his fist through the front windshield of the car and him kicking me in my back as I walked up the stairs to our apartment.

It never dawned on me that that kind of fighting was wrong or considered to be violent.

In my life and upbringing....

It felt like it was normal.

I didn't know that I should have gotten out of the relationship.

I remember him telling me the reason he fought with me so much was because he loved me. He said that if he didn't love me, he wouldn't care enough to fight.

In my mind that made complete sense. I thought, "He loves me so much, he has to do what he has to do". We woke up the next day as if nothing had ever happen the night before.

I have come a light into the world, that whosoever believes on me should not abide in darkness.

—John 12:46

I went to Florida for my sister's wedding, with scratch marks and all. I remember Mom asking me where I had gotten the scratches...

I told her it was my dog.

I wasn't about to let her know what my home life was like in Canada.

**Abused? Confused? NATIONAL HOTLINE Always open:**



## 24/7 BATTERED WOMEN'S HELP LINE

At this point my family didn't know that I was dancing again, and that they still disliked my husband with a passion. I wasn't going to give them more ammunition to hate him with. Although my parents were very excited about my being pregnant and were very supportive, they still weren't pleased with my life, or my husband.

I loved that baby growing inside of me more than anything and she brought me such incredible joy. I would just hold my belly and smile, picturing this wonderful, precious little life inside me.



I enjoyed my time back home with my family. It was good to see all of them again, and my younger sister, who was getting married, and I were always close. She too was pregnant so it was a fun time talking about our babies and our lives.

But of course I had to keep my job a secret.

I hated to lie.

I wanted so badly to be able to be honest with them. But I was so afraid of what they would think of me, or what they would think of my husband.

I also saw my biological father since he was there for my sister's wedding. He took us all out to dinner



## The Way Out



and he told me how proud he was of me for not having an abortion.

I couldn't believe he had just said that. How little he knew me, that in his mind he actually thought the idea of having an abortion would have even popped in my head. It never even crossed my mind to have an abortion. That night I realized my father had no idea of who I am..

The day I found out I was pregnant was the greatest day of my life. My baby gave me meaning and a purpose and a reason to live.

I shouldn't have been surprised at my father's comment though. I think I may have spoken less than a hundred words to the man in my whole life.

He scared me.

His words were always smothered in sarcasm. It wasn't that I was so much afraid of him hitting me—it was his words. They cut like a knife. They left gapping wounds in my soul. Any time I was around him, my self-worth would just sink. I'd feel as though someone had kicked me in my gut. I couldn't speak and that darn lump would form in my throat. My eyes would well up with tears.

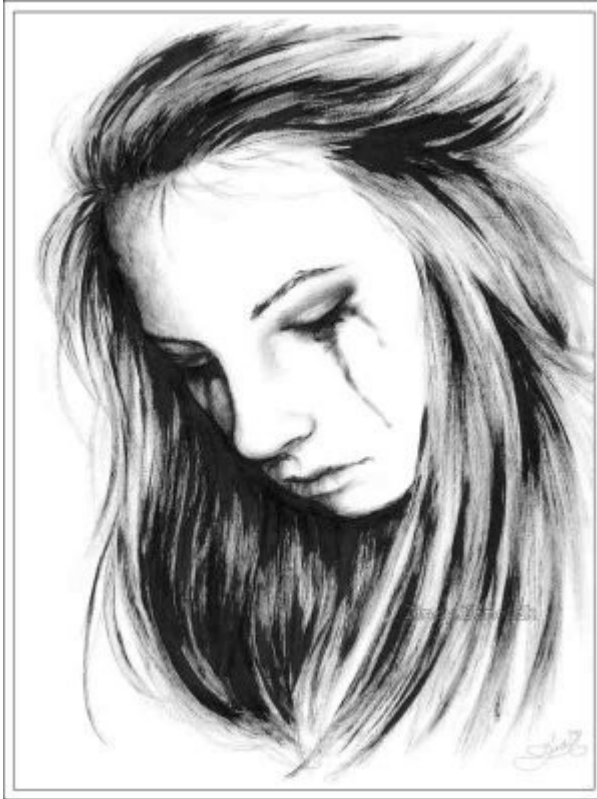
And the whole time I would just say to myself, "Don't cry, don't cry". I felt as if my father hated me. The very way he looked at me, it was more like with disgust, and never with any compassion or love. He made my insides crawl.

But ironically, I yearned to be loved by him. I dreamt of being daddy's little girl, and to know what it felt like to have a father's love. Honestly, I still struggle with that felling to this day. I wonder, *Why*



*doesn't this man love me! What did I do to make him dislike me so much? Why? Why? Why!!! Why doesn't he love me?*

And I cry.



When I returned from the wedding I could no longer dance. Not only because I was pregnant and showing, but I hated it and the way it made me feel.

I told my husband I needed a normal job, a real job. I applied for a job at a hotel across the river in the U.S. to work their front desk and, Praise God, they hired me. I was so glad to be out of the Gentlemen's Club environment, to be done with the whole dancing thing.



## The Way Out



For the first time in a long time I felt good about myself. I was pregnant, working a job I enjoyed and that did not require me to take my clothes off. Things were good. I almost felt normal—whatever that may be.



My husband actually got a job at a factory and we moved from our apartment to a much nicer apartment in a nice neighborhood. We were making some positive changes for this new little life growing inside me and for our new family.

There were still things that we fought about, things that drove me crazy about him though. For example, he would never go to the doctor with me. He still was always having his friends over partying, and I always had to call in sick to work for him.

Nevertheless, we pushed forward.

We were going to make this marriage work.

I loved my new job and I loved the people I worked with—I was happy when I was at work. I felt at peace and they truly cared for me. I remember the chief at the hotel knew I loved black olives and everyday he would come up to the front desk with a bowl of black olives for me. Little things like that went along way with me.

They even had a baby shower for me.



There were people actually excited about this baby and that felt awesome. They acknowledged me.

I finally had my baby, a wonderful sweet beautiful baby girl. I can picture that day as if it were yesterday. To feel those first labor pains, and how intense they became, and then out came the most wonderful person I had ever seen. I couldn't believe how much I could love someone, someone so small.

Her father and I were both overjoyed. I'm sure he too would say the night of her birth was the most incredible night of his life. We loved that little girl. I would just look at her and I couldn't believe that she was a part of me, that she came from me.

She was the only good thing or amazing thing I had ever done.

I can say that we had maybe a week of joy. ...Then things returned to the way they always had been.

He got fired for missing too many days work. Once he actually had me call his boss and say that he was missing the day for head lice!

I guess after so many far-fetched excuses to miss work, they let him go. So, of course, you know what that meant. I'm back to being the only one making money which meant my front desk job at the hotel wasn't going to be enough.



## The Way Out



I was going to have to go back to dancing.

I hated this. I thought, “Why? Why now?”

But, I quit my job and started dancing again.

There I was a mother, and I didn’t want to dance, I didn’t want this for *her* life, but we needed the money and Hudson was still going to school to be a nurse.

I had hated having to leave my baby to go to work at the hotel, but now to leave her so I could go and dance!

I hated it. Absolutely hated it. And, at home, More misery, more fighting, more pain. More numb!!!



**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11



## The Girls at Work.

He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

—John 8:37

At this point I feel it important to speak of the girls I worked with. Some of these girls left imprints on my heart, places where my heart has broken and I think of them from time to time. I don't know their real names. When you are an exotic dancer you use a stage name. My stage name was Tess. I pray for those girls I worked with.

Sometimes I wonder if they are still alive. We all seemed to have things in common—some things that were spoken; other things we never talked about.

Practically every girl I met or spoke with was working, and their husbands or boyfriends were not. Like my husband, the guys collected the money at the end of the night. So the other girls were like me.

I never got to spend the money I earned the way I wanted. I didn't buy new clothes, didn't buy my baby stuff. The money was used for other things—things Hudson was into.

Some girls did invest their money to pay their way through school, but, for the most part, money went to support some man in their lives.

I saw so much stuff go on—stuff no person should ever have to see. I saw so much brokenness in those bars. Gentlemen's clubs just reek of brokenness.

And not just for the women, but for the men too.

You have to be broken inside in order to be there. Something somewhere down the line, has to have





## The Way Out



happened to a person to make them willing to take their clothes off for a living—or watch women take their clothes off.

Some would argue that it is just a job, that it is the girl's choice, or that they are just doing it for the money. And for the men, it's just entertainment or art. I too once argued those same arguments.

But every girl up there dancing naked is broken inside in one way or the other. If it were just a job, drugs and alcohol wouldn't be needed in order to do it. I have meet so many girls who had to be high or drinking in order to dance, and to lie the way you have to lie in order to make money.

One thing about dancing is that you've got to create the person you wanted to be. You've got to create a persona and be someone you are not.



I remember one time I went into the restroom and Molly, one of the girls I worked with, was in there. Molly had never been very friendly towards me before. She was one of the highest paid girls; men would pay lots of money to have her dance for them or just to hang out with them. Like I said earlier I didn't really hang out with the other girls. It was just my job, but I



guess maybe if they had asked me to I would have, I don't know.

Anyway, I walked into the bathroom and caught Molly doing a line of cocaine. She was surprised to see me standing there and I had never seen anyone do coke before. Right away she started telling me that she wasn't always this way, that she had been going to college and had a 4.0 grade point average. But then she met this guy and he got her started in dancing.

And she just stood there crying.

Then she asked me for a hug.

She never spoke to me again.

The tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven, to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace”.

—Luke 1:78

I'm sure if I was one of Molly's friends she would have offered for me to do the coke with her. I'm grateful that she didn't. I felt bad for her in that bathroom. I knew at that point that she wasn't happy with who she was even if she was earning insane amounts of money. I saw brokenness there, inside her, right there in that bathroom.

I honestly believe that the Lord spared me from drugs. They are everywhere in those bars and just about everyone is doing them. I do honestly believe that if I had not given my life to Christ back in 1989, I would have been doing those drugs too.

But for some reason they scared me to death.

I didn't want to lose control.



## The Way Out



I never wanted to be raped again.

I didn't want to do something I would later regret due to drugs. I saw too much of what could happen to the girls I was around. I thank God all of the time for protecting me from that.



But my heart broke for Molly that night, to know that this gorgeous girl, one of the highest paid dancers, was ashamed. She didn't like where she was in life. And it seemed to me she wished more than anything to be back where she once was, in school making good grades.

There were so many girls like Molly.

There was another girl, Constance... I sometimes wonder if she is now dead.

She always wanted to be dead.

She scared me.

But I always seemed to end up in the bathroom at the same times she was there; even though I hated to be in there with her. She would block the door by standing in front of it, and, with her eyes wide open, she'd tell me all of the different ways she had tried to kill herself. But she said that she just wouldn't die.

I didn't know what to say.

I didn't understand why she was telling me all this stuff.



She had jumped off an overpass, ran out in front of a truck, but she just wouldn't die.

She always had this overwhelming sense of despair.

My heart had broken for her too.

I wondered if maybe the other girls could see Christ in me.

Yes, I had fallen way away from the Lord Jesus, but I do believe He was dwelling in me and keeping me safe. I know He wasn't pleased with what I was doing and I remember time and time again saying to myself, "Why am I doing this? My body is my temple".

I always struggled with that. But I would somehow justify what I was doing.

I do believe the other girls were drawn to me though, for whatever reason. I remember thinking I should start a support group for dancers, this is just too much for us girls to bare (no pun intended).

Well, about a week after she told me about wanting to die, Constance overdosed on heroine at the club.

It was crazy.

The paramedics had to come get her half-naked body off the stage and revive her.



## The Way Out



I never saw her again, but I hope and pray that she somehow was able to find a relationship with Christ, the only One who can ever truly give her peace.

I wish I had known and told her then what I know now. I wish I could have prayed with her and told her about Jesus.

You could just see the hurt in her eyes, they were always so wide-eyed, and crazy looking. She had a desperate deep, deep pain. I can still see it in those eyes.



There was another girl, her stage name was Carrie. She and I had danced in the same places on and off for several years. She was breathtaking. She wasn't friendly at all, very snotty. She started dancing at a bar when she was 14; when I knew her, she was 21. I was shocked that she had started dancing at such a young age—and her parents knew about it. I just couldn't understand parents supporting this kind of lifestyle. I tried hard to keep my life under wraps from my own parents, because it would devastate them to know I was still dancing.

The saddest thing with Carrie was that she was murdered in a very, very, violent way. It was so strange, she was at the bar the night before, I can still see right where she was sitting, only to be murdered just a few hours later.



She was a mommy. I think she had three kids. I do know that, deep down inside of this girl, she wanted a normal life.

Many girls who dance have had abortions. I have heard many stories about abortions. Girls talked openly about these things in the dressing room. I just knew from the mere fact that Carrie, the one who was murdered, kept her babies, that she wanted to be a mommy. She and I were pregnant at the same time and I remember admiring her for having her baby. I respected her for that. I remember waking up in the morning and hearing what had happened to her. My heart broke. Hers was another life that needed to know the saving grace of Christ, the peace that only Christ can give. Like I said, I wish I knew then what I know now. My heart broke for Carrie’s babies.

I saw other girls who came in as straight young girls who liked men, and they would end up in the restroom having sex with other girls. The sad thing too is that they didn’t even try to hide it. Everything was so open. I couldn’t believe half of the stuff I was seeing. I never did have a bi-sexual experience, but there was one girl that did try with me; I’m glad that I didn’t let that door open.

To be honest, it kind of freaked me out.



## The Way Out



I also was too sober and not high. I'm sure... if I were drunk or high, I may have.

There were girls who would leave with the men when the bar closed and basically prostitute themselves. I'm also grateful I never did that although I was tempted. I had plenty of offers and the money always sounded good. I am so thankful I never accepted one. Prostitution is a "no no" in the club, but once you left, anything you chose to do was all fair game.

During my time as an exotic dancer I grew to hate men. I'm not just talking about hating men lightly, I'm talking about hating men. I absolutely hated men.

All kinds!



I know this sounds really sick, but I always would say to the other dancers, and I remember telling the disk jockey, that if there were reincarnation, I wanted to come back as a man so I could have my way with men (I used different language more graphic and twisted), to let them see how it feels. It was a deep-seated hate. I hated, a real hate, and now it scared me sometimes how much I hated them.

But it didn't stop me from taking their money.

In my mind that was all they were good for, money!



I hated that men hurt me growing up by touching my body.

I hated that I had been raped.

I hated that they would pay money to watch me take my clothes off. At that point in my life men made me sick!



**YUCK! YUCK! YUCK!!**



I had one man relieve himself sexually while I was dancing. He had to be thrown out of the bar. It was disgusting. It made me feel disgusted.

But I used dancing as a means to control men.

For the first time in my life I could treat men like dirt and as I did they would pay me for it. I had the power and I hated them. I can't believe how much I hated them.

It is kind of scary to think back on how intense it was.

It was becoming harder and harder for me to dance.

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats, wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness.

—Proverbs 30:20

I would quit dancing for a while, get a “normal” job, to only go back.





## The Way Out



I met so many girls that would come into the bar so young and wide-eyed. Girl-next-door types. Nervous to dance their first dance, they would take that first drink, dance their first dance and only weeks later, get turned on to heavy drugs, bi-sexual activity and prostitution. It was just so hard, so sad, to sit and watch innocence lost—and, for some, it would be forever.



I have met girls who have been raped, molested, abused, or from divorced families. They were so much like me. Some were raising kids as single parents. Some tried to make it through school. Some supported boyfriends or husbands. Some supported drug habits—

But all were broken!

We were all living a lie.

We had made-up names and made-up lives.



In our made-up personas, none of us had boyfriends or husbands. We came from exotic, far away places. We traveled. We were models and actresses. We were glamorous and rich and drove fancy cars. We could make up whatever lie we wanted to in order to be whoever the men wanted us to be. We were whatever story needed to be told to make us the largest amount of money.

I remember thinking to myself I can't believe these men believe this stuff, so many lies on our parts—and on theirs.

Exotic dancing is a place of great brokenness, darkness, and loneliness for both women and men, for everybody involved. Naked dancing is a scene out of naked Hell for everybody involved.



## The Way Out



This chapter may have made a lot of dancers angry, for me to speak about the secret tricks of the trade. I want you to know I speak of these things because they are true.

We were, we are, broken whether or not you can see it. I once defended and justified my exotic dancing. I now realize I was broken, and not ready to deal with the truth of my life and my upbringing.

My intent in writing these things is not to hurt, or make anyone angry but to shed light and to help bring healing to a group of women who have suffered such great brokenness. My heart goes out to you.

I was you and I know there is hope, there is joy and a life that is not of shame, a life YOU deserve.



**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,**



**To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

## **The Customers.**

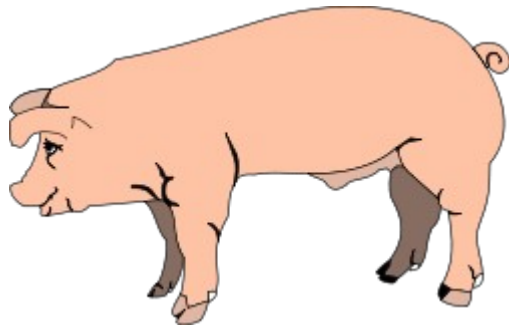
I’m sure in his own mind’s eye, every guy who came into the bar pictured himself like this:



## The Way Out



That's hardly the way I saw them:



Most men who came into the strip joints were guys hanging out with their buddies. I danced for bachelor parties and business men entertaining clients—I never really understood that one.

Then there are the regular clients. These are men that come to see you and only you. Most of the time they would pay you to sit with them for hours, eat some dinner, drink their drinks, and they would talk about their jobs, their homes, and sometimes even their families.

I think for the most part they were lonely, or like us girls they could pretend to be whatever they wanted to be in that place.



Let the wicked forsake his way , and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.

—Isaiah 55:7



I remember talking to men about their wives and telling them to go home and make things right, to stay in their marriages. I’m sure for some of them it was strange to go to a strip bar to have a stripper tell them to go home to be with your wife.

I never would tell any of the costumers about my private life, other than that I had a baby and I was a proud mommy. I think some of the men felt guilty being there after we would talk. Me too. As I said, I got to a very strange, angry place towards the end.

I did have one costumer, Mr. Ismay, who found out where I lived. I could have just died. He told me one night that he knew where I lived, but I didn’t believe him. Then he told me my address. I was speechless! Also a little fearful. I didn’t really know this man.

Mr. Ismay was an older Chinese man who was very sweet as regular costumer. He looked harmless, but I didn’t know what to do when one day he showed up at my house!

He knew I was going through a rough time and he offered to take me out to dinner. I went. We ended up having a legitimate friendship. He truly cared about me and was concerned for me. To my surprise, he truly wasn’t looking for anything other than friendship.

I sometimes wonder if Mr. Ismay were an angel.



## The Way Out



I know it sounds crazy, an angel in a strip club!

But he helped me so very much. He helped me get a car and an apartment. His was a listening ear and he would pop up in the most random places. He felt it was important that I didn't dance anymore. I think he was truly concerned for my well-being.

I thank God for giving me such a caring friend, my only friend in those days, even if it were at the most unusual place. This man allowed me to ramble on about God and my life. He knew I needed to be in a better place. I will always remember his kindness and his willingness to help with no strings or hidden agendas—and, most importantly with no sexual motive. Mr. Ismay was just my friend.

There were other men who said, "What are you doing in here? You are too nice to be here. Go home".

One bar owner warned me to stay away from the bikers. Once I sat with them and that was it. I never did dance or sit with them again. The bar owner never told me why I shouldn't, but I could tell he was trying to protect me. After that once, I took his advice.

I'm sure bikers are nice guys, but I didn't want to risk it. I thank God for those kind of warnings and that I was fearful enough to listen. Truth be told, I had no business being there. No girl does.





**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

## **The End Is Near**

I tried to work at normal jobs but they just didn't pay enough money. I worked for an indoor landscaping company for awhile; they paid only a little bit more than minimum wage Hudson was still going to nursing school, and was unable to hold a job.... because of his course work?

And, of course, somebody needed to stay home and watch the baby, he explained. He stayed home. But *I* wanted to be the one to stay home and watch *my* baby!!



I wanted to be a mommy, a normal mommy. I didn't want to be a stripper. I didn't want to work in



## The Way Out



bars. And I was so tired! I wanted us to be a normal family—whatever that was.

I felt like I was going crazy, as if I was losing my mind.

I would go from strip club to strip club, job to job, seeing if that made a difference. I thought that maybe I would like one club better than another, or maybe the men would be different, or the girls would be friendly, or the money more tempting.

After being followed home by some guy one night, I stopped working nights and only worked days.

My husband was always forgetting to pick me up after work and would “turn the phone off so as to not wake the baby”.

I would have to stay huddled in a corner of the building until he showed up, which sometimes wasn’t until three a.m. There were times when I would have to take cabs home late at night. I hated for people to know I was a dancer and to know where I lived—not even a cab driver. I was just getting plain freaked out.

It wasn’t hard for me to understand why so many of the girls did drugs. They would have to because they coped with just too much pain, too much to justify. It’s just too hard to keep telling yourself that what you’re doing is okay.

It was too hard to keep up the lies.

Along with knowing deep inside of myself that my body is my temple and that God dwells in me and that what I was doing was wrong—I honestly thought at one point that I was going crazy. I remember thinking how relaxing it would be if I could just check myself into a mental hospital.





I'd think, *Could I do that? How would I go about doing that? Do I call them up and tell them I'm going crazy, or do I just walk in? Does it cost money? Will they just let me stay and sleep?*

I would have those thoughts all of the time over and over.

Even changing my work hours didn't seem to make much difference. It's not unusual for men to show up at noon to watch naked women dance. They would lie to their wives. They would buy me gifts. They would give their families' money to me! They were the same at noon as they were at midnight. Sometimes I even thought the daytime men were worse.

I'd think, *Are you that addicted to seeing naked women that you come here on your lunch hour in your business suit, all well- educated and well-put-together to see my naked body?*

I couldn't wrap my mind around it. I started sharing some of my thoughts with some of my regular costumers. At one point I had a few costumers who would show up regularly and they quit having me dance for them. Yet, they would pay me hundreds of dollars to just sit there and talk to them.

One man even told me that I didn't belong there. He said I was too nice, a girl like me shouldn't be in such a place. I remember talking to him about God and about how I was feeling. It was all so strange.

The men would sit and listen and order me drinks and pay me lots of money. I literally started drinking at noon



## The Way Out



and drank until 6 p.m. I could drink six Long Island Ice Teas and not even have a buzz.

Sadly, I was proud of myself for that. I remember thinking this was a major accomplishment, *“Wow, I can drink six Long Island Ice Teas and not even have buzz...Way To Go, Girl! Keep up the great work. Way to hold your liquor!”*.

It was becoming overwhelming.

I hated my life.

I hated my job,

I hated myself.

I was so tired.

Finally, I had enough. One day I told my husband that I was done! I couldn't do it any more. I was on the floor leaning against the couch and I was screaming and crying and pulling out my hair and scratching my face.

I was losing it!

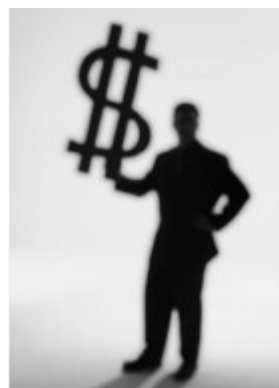
Hudson yelled at me, telling me I was crazy,... And, to be honest with you, at that moment, I think I did go crazy.

He said he'd worry about our financial state of being if I quit dancing naked.

Was this guy for real?

I'm sitting here losing it, going crazy, and he is concerned about the money I make!

I screamed at him that I was more worried about my mental





state! I was going crazy and the man I thought loved me was more worried about money. Are you kidding me? I’m losing it and he has the nerve to bring up money!

I could not continue what I was doing and I wasn’t going to do drugs. (But, once again I understood why some girls did them). Drinking no longer numbed my pain—Not even six Long Island Ice Teas or all the beers and shots in between.

I couldn’t kill myself because I had this precious baby who needed me. I was too afraid to leave her and for her to never know how much I loved her. But I wanted to die.

I wanted out in such a bad way!

I wanted out of my own skin.

I felt stuck with no way out.

I felt trapped. I could literally hear inside my head, *“Your body is your temple, your body is your temple...”*

This may sound weird, but I believe the Lord allowed me to lose my mind for a brief few moments or days to show me how dire a situation I was in.

When God dwells within you there is only a certain amount of the world that can get in until you lose it. God wanted me out of that life style and He allowed me to get to my end—and to my end I got.

I did work a couple of more days until the end. Praise God, it finally happened. The end. I can remember it like it was yesterday.

It was the end of the dancing.

And the end of my marriage,



## The Way Out



And the end of my life as I knew it.

There were times that I would think about what it would be like to married to one of the men from the club, or even my dentist—he was so nice and handsome and had a career.

What life would have been like had I not married the man I did? I would lie next to my husband in bed and would think to myself, *I don't want to be laying next to this man when I'm forty-five.*

I once thought of him to be the best looking man I had ever seen, remember “G.Q”.?



Now I would look at him while he slept and I just saw ugly. I didn't care any longer what he looked like on the outside, I couldn't stand his inside. I didn't want to be laying beside him when I was forty-five, living that same kind of life.

He used to tell me he was the best thing I could ever have! That I was lucky he picked me. That he could have any girl he wanted.

I didn't feel so lucky now. I thought, *If this is the best, then I must be a complete failure. I must be an awful person.* I had felt lucky because women found him attractive, but I no longer wanted to be envied for having the best looking man.

The way men look doesn't change the way you are treated.



I felt trapped but I didn't want this life anymore. I was tired of owing money to everyone under the sun. I was tired of dancing, tired of taking my clothes off, tired of being the only one working, tired of not getting to stay home with my baby.

As I sit here writing this, I'm sure now that Hudson was having an affair. That would explain why he was always picking me up late and never answered the phone (he said he turned the ringer off so as not to wake the baby). He mocked me and called me stupid, as I sat outside the strip bar waiting for hours on end for him to pick me up.

By now, I was ready to hand Hud over to any woman who wanted him, because I sure didn't. I was tired of fighting. I was just plain tired.

So, the day came when it all ended.

Life would still be hard but I knew it would slowly get better. No surprise Hudson and I had a huge fight—we broke dishes, we broke furniture, we screamed, we yelled. It was pure insanity and my poor baby girl had to witness it all.

Take heed not to despise one of these little ones; for I say that in Heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in Heaven.

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, doesn't he leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains, and seek the one which had gone astray?

—Matthew 18:10-12

I just couldn't take it one minute longer.



## The Way Out



I was done!

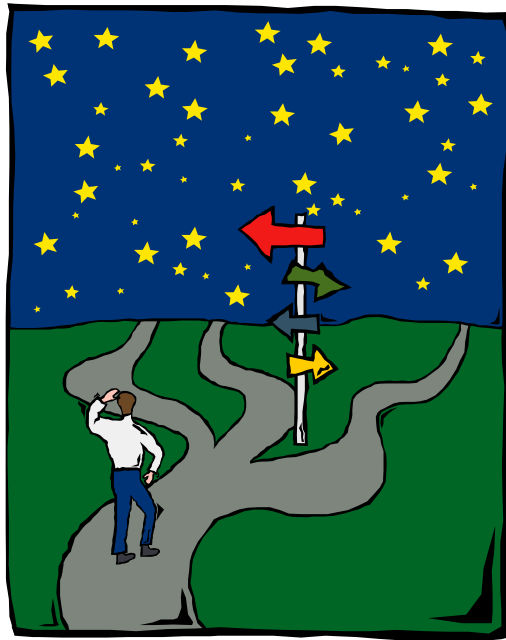
He yelled that he was moving in with his mother.

I yelled back, "Don't just talk it! do it! Move out!"

I wanted him gone.

And he went.

### **Beginning A New Life**



I had a choice to make right then and there.

Is this the life I want my child growing up in, seeing her parents scream, bicker and fight all the time? That's how I grew up, did I want to put her through that?

I went to work that day and told everyone that it was my last day to dance.

The girls all told me, "Oh no, you'll be back. Money is too good".



I am proud to say that I have never danced again!

I don't care how broke I am. I would flip hamburgers but I will never dance again. My clothes will remain on my body and I will no longer live a life built on lies. I carry no shame or embarrassment. I was a broken girl trying to make it in this world on my own.

My only regret is for not sharing God's love to those I now know needed it—those are the ones I wrote this book for, those broken, those who have lost hope, for girls who need the healing power and peace of Christ Jesus.



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They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

Things were hard after my husband and I split.

But I was not going to dance again. I didn't care how bad things got—and sometimes they got pretty





## The Way Out



bad. I was able to get an assistant manager's job at a restaurant across the river. They hired me on the spot. I was looking to be a waitress there. Honestly, I think I was hired strictly for my looks.

They found out quickly that I didn't know a thing about running a restaurant. To make it worse, I couldn't type or spell to save my life. That was embarrassing. I was bumped down to hostess quickly.

Oh well, I tried. And to be honest, I was glad that I didn't get to be the assistant manager. It was awful not knowing what to do. I felt so stupid and inadequate.

I enjoyed working there as hostess. It was a popular place. They served wonderful food and stayed busy. But... It didn't take long for me and Howard, the manager, to start a relationship.



There I went, back to my old ways, wanting to be wanted and loved.

I was separated from my husband, so in my mind it was okay to start a new relationship and to start dating again is just what you do.

Howard was handsome and smooth-talking. One day, he asked for the keys to my car. He wanted to get the car warmed up for me since it was cold and snowy that day. I walked to my car after work and there on the front seat were a dozen red roses!

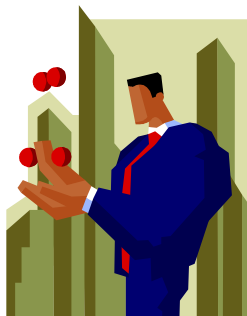
Wow, did I ever feel good.

He flirted with me all the time and I flirted back. He took me to fancy restaurants where the menu items were hundreds of dollars. We would sit and eat for hours, being waited on hand and foot by the staff.



He drove an expensive sports car, had a cell phone (at that time a cell phone was a big deal) and bought me gifts.

I was on top of the world. There was a time that we were going out to dinner and he had picked me up and asked me to close my eyes because he had something he wanted to give me. When I opened my eyes he had placed a beautiful blue topaz and gold bracelet on my wrist and told me he wanted me to look at something as beautiful as he did when he looked into my eyes.



I was completely blown away, this guy was too good to be true.

Too good to be true...

Sound familiar?

While dating me, this new guy I was dating was also dating a lot of other women, which surprised and hurt me very badly.

Did I heed that red flag?



But I was so needy and dependent on him, I just kept trying so desperately to fill that gapping hole in my heart. Even though he didn't care about adding to the width of the wound in my heart.



## The Way Out



I had moved out of the house Hudson and I shared. I dated a few men, even a pro hockey player.

I thought I was really something again. Men liked me.

Hudson wasn't helping me one bit. I had to miss a lot of work on account of not having a babysitter and I wasn't willing to leave my baby with a stranger. Then, I had to stop sending her to the day care she was going to because I owed them so much money and I wasn't able to pay them.

I had a little apartment, a cute apartment with just me and my baby, but I didn't like living alone so I called a friend who was still a dancer and we rented a house together.

It was a dive and a big mistake.

I was trying very hard to make ends meet but I was not in any shape financially to raise a baby.

I was a wreck, a complete mess.



On top of it all I couldn't legally live in Canada any longer because I was no longer dancing.

I was convinced that Hudson wanted to see me go back to nude dancing and that was why he wouldn't help. He knew I hated the dancing and knew I wouldn't



## The Way Out



be able to make it on my own without dancing. I couldn't make it financially, or legally live in the same country as my child. I needed help and was unable to get it. But I still was convinced that I would never dance again.

I went to an immigration lawyer to see if there was any way that I could stay in Canada and work a normal job. I found out that I would have to move back to the U.S. or continue to dance.

My baby could stay in Canada.... But I couldn't!

The only place I could move in the U.S. at that point was Michigan, but I didn't know anyone there other than Howard. He was dating other women, and not interested in me all that much any more. Michigan was too expensive to live in. I realized that I would have to live down town which cost more than I would be able to afford. Then I would somehow have to find childcare in a city I know nothing about.

On top of all that, I didn't know my way around and I was just plain afraid to live there by myself.

I didn't know what to do.

I felt like I was drowning, just being swallowed up, and trapped with nowhere to go.

Know how that feels?



I did not want to dance. I needed out, I needed help. I didn't know how much more of it I could take. I was falling to pieces.

And I had this wonderful little life, my baby, who deserved some sort of stability. I had to do something, Something quick...

So I humbled myself and called my parents.

My step father, Rick, said, "Please, just come on home".

He said he would send a one-way ticket for the baby and me just to come home.

So after five years of absolute insanity, making mess after mess with my life, that is what I did. I flew home.

I took my baby and moved back to Florida. A guy I was seeing at the time picked me and my baby up with our one suit case and our little kitten, and drove us to the airport.

My life in Canada was over.





### **New Life.... Same Old Lifestyle**

It was a great feeling flying over the border knowing that I would never dance again. The only things left from my old life were my baby, my suitcase, and my cat. Everything else, clothes, furniture, all other belongings, I left behind like the life I had lived.

I now feel like God was saying, *“Leave it there. You don’t need it. You had to give up so much of yourself in order to have it, now take your life back and leave the stuff behind. Hold on to no memory of stuff bought with your body”*.

I thank God for that, I do not own one thing bought with the money I made dancing.

I felt like I was moving to safety.

I knew that once back home near a Florida Beach with Mom and Rick I could slowly build a new life. I was ready. I was far more broken now than I when I’d left for Canada. I’d experienced things I never thought I would. Gone through times when I lived afraid, trapped, completely and utterly hopeless.

I had lived more life than I wanted to.



I was tired. I needed my mommy. I needed to come back home—a little girl with a little girl. I needed a place to rest, a place to breathe. I just needed some time to think.

It felt so good being back at home where I could feel the sea breeze, being back with people who truly loved me and my little girl.

My parents just decided to love me. They didn't harp on what a mess I had made of myself. They were just happy to have me home. They helped me get a job, get my finances in order, and get my life back together.

The third day home, I called Hudson to let him know that we were in Florida. He raged. He said I had kidnapped our baby by moving.

My goal had not been to hurt him. My goal was to survive and get some kind of order and direction for my own and my little girl's life. We both needed something solid to stand on.

Rick, my step-father, helped me to get a job teaching at a daycare. If I were having to put my daughter in daycare, then I wanted to be there with her. I took classes to be certified as a daycare teacher and I really enjoyed both teaching and the classes.

I dated a few guys on and off when I first got back to Florida. Once again I was a needy broken girl, looking for love, so desperately looking for love.

I even dated a few guys from High School.

They liked me, or so I thought.





## The Way Out



They really just wanted to sleep with me—but they still kept me at arm's length. One guy actually said, "You aren't marriage material".

Wow did that hurt!

He said the reasons I wasn't marriage material were that,

1. I had been married,
2. I have a child.
3. Everyone in town knew I had been an exotic dancer.

People gossiped. They chatted about whether or not I had danced naked, or done drugs, or was a lesbian.

Such talk didn't make me a good candidate for bringing home to meet a guy's mother....

But apparently it did make me a good person to sleep with.



So, why should I be treated with respect?



Why was it that all I was good for was sex-- that is all men wanted from me. But I craved so much more!

The empty feeling inside me never seemed to go away, even though I knew my daughter and I were in a better place. I still felt so incredibly lonely. I hated who I was.

I just kept getting rejected.

I would put my heart out there on the line and get squashed all the time.

What was wrong with me?

## Heart Hunger

To get to the school where I worked, I had to drive past the church where I had given my life to Christ back in 1989.

Every time I drove past that church I felt such a pull to go in, but along with that pull I felt a sense of shame and guilt.

You see, they had been right. My pastor told me not to leave with Hudson, but I told him I was going to bring this man to Christ, that this was *love*— and off I went.

How could I go back to church? I was such an awful mess.

And, if I did go back, would they just say, “We told you so”?



I was torn.

I loved that church

I loved that pastor.

## The Way Out



However, I had let them down. I was a failure. I could never again show my face at that church—but deep inside I wanted so desperately to be there.

At home, I was trying to make a go of it in my parent's house—but they still liked to treat me as if I were still in High School.

They gave me a curfew!

And chores to do around the house!

And they expected me to pitching in for groceries. I thought they were holding me back.

Any of this sound familiar?

I tried to get my own place.

First I moved in with a man who was a friend of my parents...

BIG mistake.

Again

Then I moved in with a friend from High School. She was a single mother also and that seemed to work for a little while.

My parents babysat my daughter Saturday nights so I could go out—night clubs, late night breakfasts, and hangovers.

During this time I ran into an old friend from the church where I had been saved. He worked at a Subway Sandwich Shop where I had stopped for lunch. He told me that I should go back to church.

I told him I didn't know if I would and I told him about my baby and about being married, and about how I had moved back (though I left out the dancing). He reassured me everyone would love to see me.





Needless to say I didn't go back.

Like I said, how could I show my face there?

Months went by and I was still trying to make it on my own. By this time I found a little apartment only a block from the beach. It was so nice. I could look out my window and the ocean was right there.



I loved it. But I didn't know how to live on my own. I was lonely. I was home in Florida, but still living by myself with my little girl. I was afraid to live on my own.

I was scared someone would break in and rape me. As soon as I got in my apartment, I locked the doors and wouldn't open them until the next day when it was time to go to work.



## The Way Out



It would take me hours to fall asleep at night. I always had to have my baby at my side. My mind just never seemed to shut off. I had so many thoughts of, *What if...?*

No matter how much fun I would have on Saturday nights, no matter which guy thought I was hot, I still felt so very empty.

Going out Saturday nights just didn't seem to be as much fun as it used to be. In the back of my mind I'd think, *Look at yourself, you are a mother, you have no business being here!*

I knew that people knew I was a mom and I knew that they probably thought, *"What kind of mother is she to be out here every Saturday night drinking and waltzing around"*.

I was embarrassing myself. I knew better, but my loneliness was overwhelming.

Hudson came down from Canada once with a friend of his. Although we slept together, his trip wasn't to get back together.

No, he was only down for a vacation and since I only lived a block from the beach and he felt no need to spend money on a hotel, he just wanted a place to crash.

Of course, we ended up having a huge fight. That reminded me of old times. I was happy to see him leave. His visit confirmed that we truly did not need to be together.

But again, I couldn't shake off that deep lonely self worthless feeling I had.

## Back To God



Patricia “Tess” Grace



I can remember it like it was yesterday. I tell people it was like having an out-of-body experience.

One Saturday night, or better yet Sunday morning. I left a dance club at 2:00 a.m. when the bar closed. I had breakfast with friends at Denny’s. I didn’t get home until 4:00 a.m.—my typical Saturday night.

Woke up at 8:30 and I just started to dress and get ready to go to church! I just sat up in bed knowing that I was going to church that morning. I had no hang over (and believe me I should have). I just had a mission to go to church that day.

I tell people it was as if the Holy Spirit was dressing me. I felt I had no control over my body or actions. I was just doing it without thinking about what I was doing. I had not planned to go to church. I wasn’t thinking about going to church because I thought it would bring more shame and guilt.

But there I was, without a hangover, getting dressed for church.

I wasn’t nervous or afraid at all.

I was just going.

Normally on Sundays I didn’t pick up my little girl from Mom and Rick’s house until later in the afternoon. When I got there about 9:30 that morning and they asked me, “Where are you going?”

I said, “Church”.

I was there to pick up my baby and we were going to church.

I just knew I had to go.

I got to the same church where I first believed in Jesus and walked



## The Way Out



into that building for the first time in five years. It felt and looked just the same.

I felt like I had stepped back in time.

I sat in the back with my little girl in my arms. I just sat there crying. I missed this place. I missed God.

I had made a mistake and now I was now back, more broken than before, and with this wonderful little girl who deserved so much better in life. I sat there and cried the whole worship service.

At the end of the service, the pastor had an alter call where he invited people to come to Jesus.

I did not go up to the front of the church. I sat back there trying to work up enough courage to go forward.

I waited for everyone to start leaving. Then I walked up to the pastor not knowing if he would recognize me. It had been five years since he saw me last. There I stood before him with my little girl in my arms and tear stains on my face.

He said, "Patricia, welcome home, we have been praying for you for the past five years".

I am convinced now that his prayers and the church's help protect me during my dancing days in Canada.

I couldn't believe it.

He remembered me.

Not only did he remember me but he even remembered my name! He didn't shun me or tell me I was going to Hell or fuss about what an awful mess I made of my life.





He didn't say "I told you so" or "You should have listened", he simply said, "Welcome home".

I couldn't believe it!

I was welcomed back into my church home with opened arms.



The Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel says:  
In returning and rest shall you be saved;  
In quietness and in confidence shall be your  
strength  
—But will you refuse?

—Isaiah 30:15

What was I so afraid of the past few months as I'd drive past that church? The reasons which I gave myself to keep me from returning were never even mentioned by anyone. I was just welcomed home.

My experience reminds me of the Bible story of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32). I too had walked in the world. I tried to make life on my own and had made a mess, but the Lord welcomed me back with arms open wide. I was back where I belonged

God was always there, always waiting. I had just chosen to do things my way instead of His way. I praise God for His redeeming love, His forgiveness and His arms being open wide.





## The Way Out



I'm thankful He doesn't shut the door on us, that He doesn't give up on us. He is always there. We have to choose whether or not to open the door. The Bible says He stands at the door and knocks. He waits for us to invite Him into our lives. It's up to us to open the door.



All the time I have people tell me that they have done so many awful and unforgivable things that they could never go to church. They say *lightening* would strike the church if they walked in.

I tell them they are so wrong!

It's just the opposite.



God wants them there. He is ready and waiting for them. He can forgive and redeem all things, all people. He did that for me! I’m a living testimony to what God can do, and to the fact that it is never too late to start your life over.

That Sunday was a new beginning for me. I knew that, no matter what, I needed God and that I was going to get involved with Him and the church.

And that is what I did.

So all my problems were solved and life turned rosy...

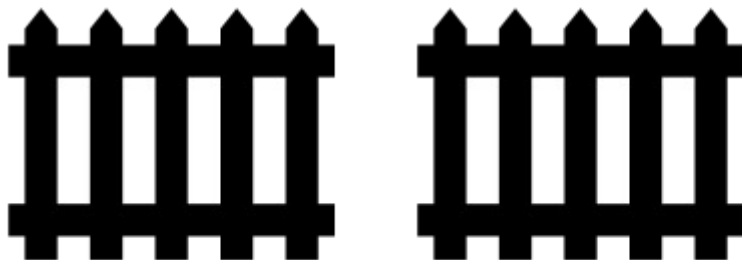
Not exactly.

In fact, not at all.

I didn’t completely give my life over to the Lord at that point.

I was still having too much *fun* on Saturday evenings. I remember going to church on Sundays and telling my pastor that I had one foot in Heaven and one foot in Hell.

I knew I was straddling the fence with God. But I didn’t have enough faith to get off the fence.



The ways of the world still tempted me. I still wanted to be loved so desperately bad. And I didn’t



## The Way Out



yet fully understand that I could only get the love I needed from God alone.

I still had such a huge problem of wanting to be wanted by men. I could not give up promiscuous sex at that point.

Still, I kept going back to church every Sunday.

Then came an event that finally pushed me over the fence. It brought me completely to my knees and caused me to give up those Saturday night clubs and drinking.

My bills were long overdue. My electricity was going to get shut off. My rent was due and I was so far behind on my payments that I didn't know what to do.

I didn't want to borrow more money from my parents; they had already helped me out so much. I was tired of asking them for help.

I knew at that moment, that night in church, that it was time for me to give my life over to Christ. I couldn't make life on my own and right there in that church for a second time, I made Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior and decided to hand my life over to Him. I invited Him into my heart, my soul, my life. I asked Him to forgive me for my sins and selfishness and to fill me with His Holy Spirit.

I decided to call my soon-to-be ex-husband. Hudson wasn't paying child support so I thought he should take some responsibility in raising his child. It was time for him to step up and help.

I went over to my parent's house to use their phone to call him since I didn't have long distance on my phone. It was one of the ways I was trying to cut costs. It was a Wednesday evening when I called and



his mother told me that he was not home—he was on vacation in Jamaica.

I thought, *Are you kidding me!*

I could have just died! I was so angry. How could he he afford a vacation to Jamaica? I was beside myself. I had busted my backside for five years while I lived in Canada, took my clothes off for a living to support him through nursing school—He didn’t have to work as long as I was taking my clothes of to take care of him.

I just couldn’t believe he was vacationing in Jamaica.

That made me furious.

My electricity was going to be shut off, I was behind on my rent—and he’s off having a grand time in Jamaica!

I was even angry at God.

How fair was this?

I was the one going to church and trying to pull myself together but Hudson is the one getting rewarded!

It’s not fair! Life is not fair! God is not fair!

I couldn’t understand why!

I got off that phone and just lost it. My parents had a friend over but I didn’t care. I just started crying and yelling and feeling out of control. Rick, my step-father usually had some kind of words of comfort, but even he was dumbfounded at my rage.

Finally, he looked at me and said, “Its Wednesday evening, don’t you have church”?

He knew there was nothing else he could say or do.



## The Way Out



I took his advice and went to church still angry at the injustice of it all. I just sat there and cried because it wasn't fair.

At the end of the service, my pastor came over to me and asked if there was any thing I needed prayer for.

I told him *faith*—that I didn't have faith in God.

I wanted to be where I was when I gave my life to Christ back in 1989. I wanted that fire and passion for God again, but I needed prayer for faith.

The pastor laid hands on me and started praying. Then a woman walked over and slipped her hand under mine.

I remember thinking, *What is she doing?*

My arms were crossed in front of my chest and she was slipping her hand under mine.

It felt strange and I didn't know what she was doing.

Thankfully, my pastor did and he had told her and some other people to continue to pray for me and he would be right back. When he returned he handed me some money. And at that point I realized that that woman had slipped me some money also.

It was *the exact* amount of money I needed for my bills!

The Lord used this act to answer my prayer for more Faith. He showed Himself to me that night, He showed me that I could trust Him, that I could believe in Him completely. The great faith I once had returned! I *knew* that the Lord loved me.



My mother showed up at my church that night to see if I was okay. She was that worried.

Now I knew that I would be okay if I continued to follow after God. I started to go to a single's ministry at the church where I met other young people who also tried to live their lives for the Lord.

I remember my leaders in the single's ministry asking me that if I were ever to remarry—if it were God's will for me to marry—what kind of man would I want to marry? I told them that I hoped it was God's will for me to marry again and if I were to remarry, the man would have to be someone spiritually stronger than me. He would have to hold me accountable, because I knew that I was weak and would fall to the flesh. I wanted someone who would help that not happen.

I did quit going to night clubs. I came up with a good analogy to help me with that. I thought, *If Christ were to return today, would I want to be in a bar on the dance floor dancing with some man with a beer in my hand?*

My obvious answer to that was *no*.

So I managed to stay out of the bars and I started to learn more about Christ and His love for me. I went



## The Way Out



to Christian concerts and learning about Christian music. That helped me because I really struggled with the urge to go dancing at night clubs when I would hear club music on the radio.

Then a girl from my single's ministry introduced me to Christian music with a club beat. It had the beat and rhythm I liked, but they were Christian. The music was called, *Hymns In The House—Yesterdays Hymns For Today's Generation*. It was amazing music; it took away that urge to want to go to nightclubs and it taught me to praise Jesus with music I enjoyed.



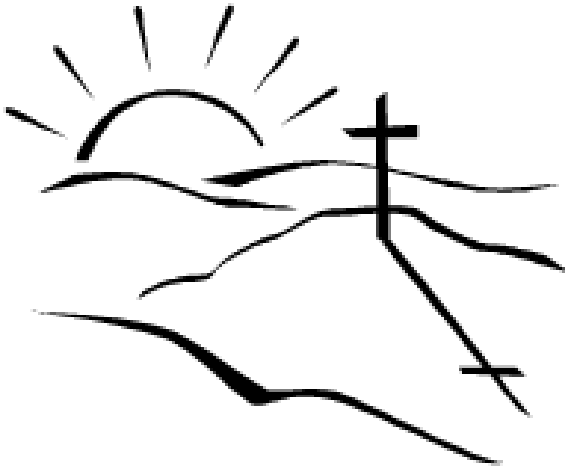
I was beginning to be happy. I started feeling a deep sense of joy.

That means all my problems were solved and my life turned rosy...Not exactly.

For some people turning from sin to righteousness happens in a snap. They turn faster than a Detroit taxi driver whipping into a U-turn in rush hour traffic.



Others of us change direction slowly, like a sunflower turning its head to follow the light, all day long it turns a little bit at a time, a little bit at a time. You can hardly see any change—but it is turning.



*Jesus* was despised and rejected by men,  
A man of sorrows, familiar with suffering...  
He was despised, and we esteemed him  
not.

Surely He took up our infirmities,  
And carried our sorrows,  
Yet we considered Him stricken by God,  
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

But He was pierced for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The punishment that brought us peace  
was upon Him,  
By his wounds we are healed.





## The Way Out



We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him  
The iniquity of us all.

—Isaiah 53:3-6

## On The Beach

Sadly, I soon found myself struggling again. Money and loneliness. I needed a job where I could make more money. I found a job advertised in the newspaper for selling suntan oil on the beach.

Sounded like it would be a fun job. And I'd make lots of money. I was excited about the job and I told my pastor. Again he had a warning for me. Again, I didn't listen.

He didn't think I should take a job where I had to wear a tiny bikini and show my body so much.



I reassured him I would be alright. I'm sure he and his wife just shook their heads over me, but they never gave up on me. I'm sure they questioned whether or not I would ever make it. I'm sure they thought that the world would one day gain back control over me.

Did I heed that red flag?

What do you think?

This is me we're talking about!



I took the job selling suntan oil at the beach and it didn't take me long to start making some poor choices.

Actually, it was only my first day on the job.

I had made one hundred and fourteen dollars that day! My money! My profit. They said it was the highest sales for anyone's first day.

I felt good about myself and my job seemed harmless enough. All I did was sit behind a hula hut along a pool deck and explain the wonderful benefits of the tanning oil and get people to buy it.

Sometimes I would walk around the pool with the oil just starting conversations. It all seemed good.

Then a girl I was working with invited me and some of the others to celebrate my great success at a reggae bar on the beach. That didn't seem like a bad idea. I thought, *What is one day, one beer by the way of a special occasion--my success at selling suntan oil!*





Needless to say, that one beer turned into I don't know how many—enough for me to make a complete fool of myself.

Once again I tried justifying what I was doing by claming it was for God!!!

If I was going to sit there and drink, then I was going to sit there and drink and tell my co-workers about Christ.

Seemed like a good idea to me.

I was just going on and on. I was preaching it. Really laying it on them. I was even proud of myself. That only shows you how drunk I was.

I had to excuse myself to go to the restroom and when I got back, one of the guys said he had one word



for me. Feeling proud that he had been listening—see, my pastor had nothing to worry about—this guy’s one word cut like a knife.

That word was—



Yes, Hypocrite~

Wow, talk about deflating my bubble.

I was speechless.

I got up and drove home and by some miracle of God made it home safe. I had no business driving and I can only praise God for keeping me and others on the road safe.

That night alone wasn’t enough to get me to quit my job because the money was too good. So I decided I would not go back out drinking and that I would stay away from *those* people.



## The Way Out



That was more out of embarrassment really.

I asked to work a different pool deck, so they moved me further down the beach where I worked at a pool deck by myself, which was just fine. I was still making good money and going to church and everything was moving right on along.

Then I met another guy....

This one seemed nice enough.

He was a hockey player .



His team stayed at the hotel where I was working. He would come down to the pool and flirt with me and tell me how gorgeous I was.

Obviously!

Once again I was impressed that this tall, dark, and good-looking hockey player liked me.

Me, out of all the beautiful women he met, he liked me.

He asked me out and asked me out and then finally I said yes.

The only problem was that his idea of going out was going to night clubs. So I found myself going back to clubs and hated every minute of it. This guy promised me that if I would go out with him that he would come to church—of course that never happened. I remember when I first met him he was good looking, but he had this tattoo of the devil on his arm.

Did I heed the red flag?



I remember thinking that it was God’s way of saying to me, *No. Don’t do this.*

But me being me, I did it anyway.

Needless to say, that relationship didn’t last long. I once again compromised myself sexually and spiritually. I just didn’t know how to say no even though I hated myself for it.

How could I keep doing these things?

Why did I keep doing them?

I always felt that I owed it to men to sleep with them.

If I didn’t, they would walk away.

I did.

They walked away anyway.

The odd thing about this guy was that he too was from Canada . I was grateful when he had to leave to move back north

Confidence in an unreliable man in a time of trouble is like a having a broken tooth, or like standing on a twisted ankle.

—Proverbs 25:19

I tell people that God has to basically scream at me to get my attention.

The little devil on the guy’s arm was not enough.

Being called a hypocrite was not enough.



## The Way Out



But I knew God wanted me out of a job that was just leading me down the wrong path.

The end of that job came abruptly.



**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

## God's Accident

On my way to drop my little girl off at my sister's house before work, I drove on the straight part of Highway US 1 in Ormond Beach. At 8:30 in the morning hardly anyone else was on the road

My little girl sat up front with me in her seat belt; she should have been in the back seat in her car



safety seat, but I made so many bad decisions back in those days.

I was thinking to myself that if I made one hundred dollars working Saturdays, maybe I should skip church and start working on Sundays...and as soon as that thought entered my mind, my car went off the road. Literally, it wasn't a minute later or a few seconds later, it was as soon as that thought went through my head.

One minute I was driving going about 65 mph, and the next thing I knew I was going off the road.



My heart was just racing. They say that your life flashes before your eyes when you are about to die. Well, it wasn't my life that flashed before me—but my little girl's.

At one point I just let go of the steering wheel. I knew there was nothing I could do. I threw my body across my little girl's and thought *I killed my baby! I killed my baby! We're going to die.*

Crossing both lanes, my car jumped off the road, headed for trees and a ditch filled with water.

I just knew that this was it.

*I was driving too fast.*

*We we're going to hit that tree and die. I've killed my baby!*





## The Way Out



Then all of a sudden my car stopped.

It was as if I was in a slow motion movie; I truly felt like I moved in slow motion. The car came to a stop, but not in the way I thought it was going to.

We hit the ditch, my front end was under the water.

We hit a tree, but it was only a branch!

I felt God had just stuck down His hand and softened the blow.

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die?

—Ezekiel 33:10

It was the strangest feeling ever, like hitting a pillow. The tree branch that should have gone through my windshield smashed a huge dent in the car roof above my head. It missed the windshield by inches.

The tree that my car should have hit head-on was maybe a foot and a half from the driver's side door. I remember having to squeeze out that door.

My little girl was fine.

I was fine other than a few scratches I got climbing out of the car.



I ran up to the road where people had stopped when they saw the crash. There was a women screaming. A man ran over to me. They couldn't believe that I was alive, standing there unharmed with my baby in my arms.

I stood just shaking in complete shock.

I looked at where the car had stopped and I knew the Lord had spared me—I was also very aware that He was getting my attention.

Police came and looked over the scene in disbelief.. They couldn't understand how I got into the accident in the first place. It wasn't raining, the roads were dry, and there wasn't a curve. One officer said that if it had been 8:30 at night he would think I had been drinking.

He said it just made no sense. But I knew it made a lot of sense.

I knew that I'd been headed fast as I could drive away from the Lord and He wasn't going to allow that to happen.

I told the tow truck driver the whole story. He agreed that it was a miracle, then he said, “I guess you will be in church on Sunday!”

Ever since then I never miss Sunday worship other than if one of my children are sick. I know it sounds crazy, but I'm sure the Lord allowed that accident to happen to wake me up.

I quit my suntan oil and bikini job that very same day.

I found a new job working at the front desk at a hotel. Then I return to child care work.



## The Way Out



To this day I praise God for my accident.

Like I said, sometimes God has to scream at me to get my attention.

I'm grateful He did.

At that point, I was committed to going to church every Sunday, and every Wednesday, and going to my single's ministry meetings.



I was still very lonely though.

The only thing I didn't seem to be able to get right was this Man Thing.

As if my car crash wasn't enough,. I still ignored the red flags in front of my face.

I quit going to bars...

But I'd met this guy.

Right before the accident I had met him at one of those bars. I stayed in contact with him. We started to date. He said he went to church too.

He was nice enough but once again I couldn't say no to sex. I hated myself for it. It always brought me pain and shame. I would lay there saying to myself the whole time, *My body is my temple. My body is my temple. Why am I doing this?*

What was wrong with me?

I just couldn't seem to get life right.





My desire to be needed and loved lead to a lot of my promiscuity, but I was scared.

Scared that somewhere along the way I may have caught AIDS

The sex I was having was always protected, but the men I was having sex with were a lot like me—broken and looking for love. That meant they had a lot of sex partners too.

The specter of death hovered above every bed.

The thought of AIDS worried me. Haunted me. Scared I had caught it, scared of getting tested to find out if I had.

When I finally worked up the courage to go and get tested, my test results came back negative. I was so scared they wouldn't. *What would I do if...* But, Praise God, I had not caught it. To be honest, I was so very scared to get those results. I just felt like for sure I would get what I felt I deserved and I felt I deserved death.

## My Knight In Shinning Armor



## The Way Out



While I taught pre-school, I met a strong Christian woman, Donna, an Episcopalian, whose daughter was in my class. Donna and I became friends and started spending a lot of time together. She was older than I but we really hit it off. Her husband was a nice guy too and they were just a sweet couple. She often invited me to her church, but I wasn't interested.

Her church seemed too much like the one I'd been brought up in. I never learned about a personal relationship with God there. They may have taught it, but I didn't take it in.

The church I attended as an adult was where my life had been changed. The people there introduced me to a life-saving relationship with Christ and I was happy to stay put.

Nevertheless, my friend keep asking me and asking me to go to with her to her Episcopal church. One Sunday I agreed to go with her family. Their service was okay. But I didn't think I would go back.

At the end of the service I bumped into a guy, Mark, I knew from high school. He was a grade behind me and two years younger than me but seemed like a nice guy. We recognized each other and talked a bit about God. He really had a love for the Lord which I thought was odd what with him being an Episcopalian and all.

Mark told me all he'd been doing since high school. He was in the process of going to seminary, training to become an Episcopal priest. To honor Jesus Christ and the Gospel, he planned to serve as a missionary within his own denomination.



I had no idea what was going on in the Episcopal denomination, but I remember thinking, *Wow, that is great!*

I heard through people we grew up with that Mark was going to become a priest, and I thought that it was pretty cool. It was nice running into him and hearing how fired up he was for the Lord.

But that was all, I didn't really think twice about dating him.

The Lord, of course, had other plans.

A few days later, Mark phoned me. He had gotten my phone number from the woman I went to church with. It just so happen that Mark's mom, Jane, and my friend, Donna, were friends themselves.

I'd actually met Jane about six months earlier, thought she was a very nice woman. She went home and told Mark that she ran into someone he had gone to high school with. She said I was pretty and fired up for the Lord.

She also told him I had been married and had a little girl.

Mark said he was not interested because he was on his way to seminary; he didn't want to get involved with someone lugging so much baggage no matter how pretty or strong a Christian she was.

So a relationship was out in both our minds.

Mark called with a scripture verse that fit with what we had been discussing that Sunday and invited me to go with him to a Bible study. I took the Scripture verse, but declined the invite to the Bible study.



## The Way Out



He continued to call me over the next two weeks just to invite me to go to different Bible studies.

Over and over, I declined.

Mark was really a sweet guy (and cute) but a little too short and a little too skinny for my liking.



Besides, I was seeing this one guy, Gerald, a golf pro, from time to time. He stood about 6'5", dark hair, dark eyes, good looks.

He made *me* look good.

Once again, the better-looking the guy was, the better I believed I was.

Sound familiar?

I had a very shallow way of thinking back in those days.

Gerald the golf pro wasn't really interested in me. All he ever talked about how fine I looked on his arm. That made me realize that to my way of thinking, and to his way of thinking, we each thought of the other as disposable.

There would always be someone better-looking around somewhere. If we each were looking to be with the best-looking person around, what future could there be to our relationship?

Either, I would meet someone better-looking, or he would meet someone better-looking and so it would end.

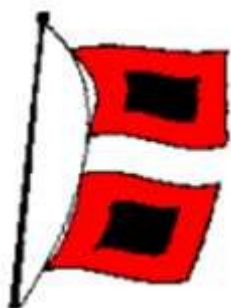
I can't believe I put so much value on looks.



After two weeks of Mark calling me to go to Bible studies, and me saying no, he finally quit calling. I didn't think much about it. A few days had passed since he last called and I wasn't looking for him to.

But then one Monday night I was out with Gerald, the golf pro, sitting at a red light in his convertible on our way to dinner when I felt as if the Lord said to me: *You are with the wrong guy.*

I'm like. "WHAT?"



Again I felt the Lord say to me, *You're with the wrong guy. The guy you said you wanted: the spiritually strong guy. This isn't him. It's the one calling for the Bible studies.*

It was that clear!

I knew at that moment that I was in the car with the wrong guy. It was a Monday night and for the past two weeks Mark had been calling me to go to a Monday night Bible study.

I had refused every time, and here I sat in a convertible with a man who wasn't even going to church.

I all of a sudden hit panic mode.

I couldn't enjoy the rest of our date or dinner at all. All I could think about was that I was in the wrong place with the wrong person.

I needed to get home.

Quick.

Well, days went by. Mark hadn't called again. I thought for sure he'd call again to invite me to another





## The Way Out



Bible study. But he hadn't. Had he given up on inviting me?

I had to do some thing. It was clear that he was not going to call again. So I looked up his number in the phone book and I called him.



at

He was living with his parents to save money for seminary. His mom answered, told me he was work, gave me his work number.

I panicked feeling that I had messed up.

But I called him at work and asked him if there were any Bible studies over the weekend? He said no. Once again I felt panicked but I boldly asked him if maybe we could go to dinner or something

He agreed.



Whew, a sigh of relief!

The Friday night before Mother's Day we went out. He picked me up at my parent's home, by this time I had moved back in with them. I remember telling Mom that first night we went out, even though we were only going out as friends, I knew that I was going to marry Mark.



I just knew somehow, even though he was shorter than the guys I normally went for (he likes to remind me that he is 5’10” which isn’t that short). I just had this feeling.



We went to a nice restaurant with another couple who were Christians and had good conversations about the Lord. It was great being around people who loved the Lord. He paid for my meal because it was

Mother’s Day weekend, which was sweet.

He was just a really nice guy. He walked me to my door. We hugged and said goodnight. From that point on I was going to the Bible studies that he had invited me to! We visited different churches and all we talked about was God and what God was doing in our lives. I really liked Mark, and he really did love Jesus.

At my parent’s house one night, after watching a movie with my sister and her husband, I told him that I was beginning to like him as more than just a friend.

His height no longer seemed to be a big deal. He just had such an amazing love for the Lord that was so incredibly beautiful and he said that he too liked me too—more than as just a friend.

We decided to start dating, a continuation of what we were already doing—Bible studies, church, and hours of talking about the Lord. We’d go out, then he would walk me to my door at the end of the evening, and instead of trying to kiss me, he would pray with me!



## The Way Out



I couldn't believe that this guy wasn't even trying to kiss me.

You know, at first I was a little offended at that. I thought that maybe he didn't like me, because in my mind physical contact meant someone liked you. If they didn't try to be with you, then they didn't like you. It was all I ever knew.

I wasn't used to men respecting me, no matter who they were.

It was amazing not to be pressured into having sex, or to even make out. We could just hang out, get to know each other, and enjoy one another for being the couple God created us to be.

Mark was the first man I had ever dated who didn't go on about the way I looked too. He never even mentioned it. He was the first man I ever went out with that wanted to spend all of his free time with me. He truly enjoyed who I was, and what I had to say.

He is living proof that there really are good guys out there.

I think every girl truly wants to wait for her wedding night, wants to be respected, wants to be valued for who she is. It's unfortunate that in our society that abstinence seems unbelievable, unattainable, and undesirable.

But take it from me, that's the kind of relationship I had been waiting for my whole life, and here I'd found someone who cares so much about me that he wanted to abstain from sex.

All my feelings about him being younger than me, or not as tall as I had liked—all began to fade away. I



saw before me one of the strongest, godliest men I’ve ever met.

## **Telling—One Big Scary Problem**

As we our relationship progressed, it seemed as if every sermon we heard or Bible study we went to was on marriage. We thought that maybe God was leading us in that direction.

Scary Problem.

I knew I was going to have to tell him about my dancing. How would he feel? What would he think of me once he knew?

All that I was sure of was that our relationship could get serious. And he needed to know about my past—or the dancing at least.

I worked myself up for ... The Talk.



I was so nervous telling him about my past.

But Mark was just so loving.

Shocked, but loving.

Mark saw me for who I was in the present not who I had been in the past.





I think it even made him love me more to see how I overcame that part of my life.



### **One Bigger Scariest Problem!**

One thing shocked me—Mark told his parents!

I just wanted to die.

I couldn't believe that he told them.

Now they would never look at me the same!

They already knew that I'd been married before. They were amazing with my little girl, who at this point was three.

But how were they going to handle this news?

Their son is going to seminary to be a priest and here I am a woman with such a bad past. I thought for sure they would tell him to flee far away from me and that I for sure wasn't the girl for him.

Mark had already dealt with my being married before and having a child. He didn't plan on loving me. I was hardly what he had pictured in his mind as the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with.

Jane, Mark's mother, invited me over....

She wanted to talk to me.

What could I expect?

It was Mark's MOM for Heaven's sake!

The prospect of having The Talk with her terrified me...

Turned out to be one of the sweetest things that ever happened to me!



I'll always treasure Jane for the way she and Dave, Mark's dad, treated me with such grace and Christian compassion.



Mark had told them about my dancing, they understood I had to do what I did to survive. They know all, that but Jane and Dave love me and see me for who I am today.

Wow! That was not at all what I expected.

My fear before The Talk made me think they might say things like, *You know, Dear, Mark is going to be a priest. It probably wouldn't be a good idea for him to be with an ex-stripper woman who was married before and already has a child.*



## The Way Out



No, that is not at all what happened. Not at all.

Mark's parents made me, a former dancing girl, feel so loved and accepted.



I had my soon-to-be Mother-in Law's loving approval.



Through her, once again the arms of Christ were wide open.

He approves too.

To the praise of the glory of God's grace, He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Christ we have redemption through His blood, and the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

—Ephesians 1:6

I thanked Mark's folks for loving the Lord, loving their son, and loving me. I know if their hearts weren't with Christ, being told I wasn't marriage material would have popped up again. Over and over I have to praise Christ for loving me.

My messed up life seemed to be coming together.

Mark and I decided to get married.



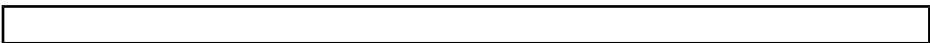


The big thing hindering now was the question of what his bishop would say. I remember being so nervous the day that he was meeting with the bishop to see if it would be okay for him to marry a divorced woman. I remember that Mark had every Scripture verse on divorce highlighted in his Bible. I know that he wanted to do what was right in God’s sight. Mark’s heart was for the Lord first.

I asked him, “What if the bishop tells you that you can’t marry me”? And Mark said, “Then I guess I can’t marry you”.

I wasn’t hurt at his response because I knew that God was his number one priority; that was the biggest reason that I loved him so much. God was first.

I hoped and prayed and prayed and prayed.







**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

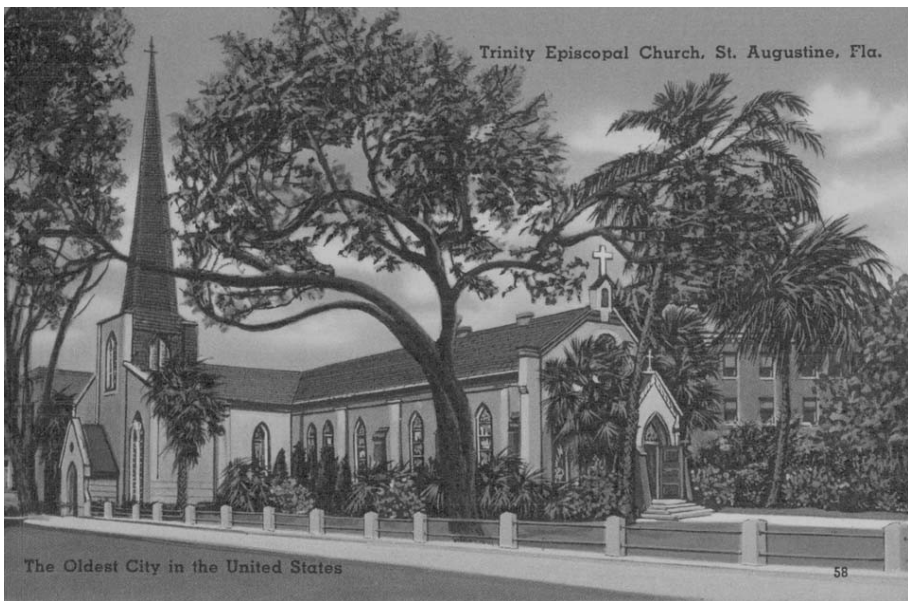
Well much to my surprise the bishop told Mark to marry me—and to marry me before he went to seminary in Pennsylvania so he could focus on his studies, the last thing Mark needed was to be driving back and forth from Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

God's redeeming love and power amazes me. God wants us to have the very best, He wants us to be treated with love and to love others. He wants us in loving, Christ-centered relationships. I stay amazed at God's love for me.

On September 25<sup>th</sup> 1996 I was confirmed in the Episcopal church. To celebrate Mark took me for a horse and buggy ride in St. Augustine



Mark had the horse and buggy driver pull up beside an old historical Episcopal church.



Mark knelt down on one knee, pulled out a ring, and said, “This is where I’m going to spend the rest of my life (meaning the church). Will you spend it there with me? Will you marry me”?

Here am I, a woman who has been through a lifetime of abuse and brokenness, who has been at some points hopeless, who has seen so much and



## The Way Out



been through so much—and here the Lord was blessing me with every little girl's dream.

I had my knight in shining armor!

Mark was on one knee, like in the fairy tales, asking me to marry him. The wonder of it!

Me, Patricia.

The little girl who was going to grow up and amount to nothing.

The stripper.

The broken, good-for-nothing Tess.

Never did I dream of my life turning out this way.

I promise you, the grace of God is good!

I am so blessed to have such an amazing man.

Not only is Mark wonderful and loving to me but to my little girl too. He told me that whenever we were to have kids of our own he would not love them any more than her. She would be his first child.



Dave and Jane felt the same. My little girl was their first grandbaby and his first daughter, they loved her as their own. I loved him so much for loving her, not only has he been the best thing to happen to my life but hers as well.

Mark would be going to seminary in August so we decided to get married in January to give us some time to get accustomed to married life and being a family. I had my dream wedding. I wanted so much to be a princess on that day. My mom made me the most incredible wedding dress so I looked like a princess.



## Patricia “Tess” Grace



Our marriage was my little girl dream come true—with a God of second chances. I never thought I would see myself standing there in an amazing gown with an amazing godly man. During the ceremony not only did Mark give me a ring, but he also gave one to my little girl too to symbolize her being part of our family.

Here are my two favorite wedding photos:



## The Way Out



There be three things which are too wonderful for me:  
The way of an eagle in the air,  
The way of a serpent upon a rock  
The way of a ship in the midst of the  
sea.,  
And The way of a man  
with a maid.

—Proverbs 30:18

I remember one time one of Mark's friends wasn't happy about us being together. The guy knew of my past and he made some underhanded remarks about me—along with trying to fix Mark up with a more respectable girl.

Mark told him one who sins much loves much. Mark reminded him the Bible parable about the man who was loaned five dollars versus the one who was loaned five hundred and both their debts had been forgiven—Which one was more grateful?. I loved that Mark knew my life was a life of God's redeeming power and grace.



I asked him, “What if someone was to find out about my dancing”?

Mark said, “Well then, it will give me an opportunity to share the Gospel”.

## **Here’s What Mark Has To Say**

When Patsy first told me she used to “dance” it certainly surprised me. We were dating at the time and I was already thinking about proposing to her. Being a Christian and going to be a priest, I had to quickly decide if this was “okay”. Did God allow this? Was it okay for me, a soon to be priest, to be married to a ex-stripper?

Through prayer and reading the Bible, God led me to Luke 7:47, that says, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little”. In this passage Jesus clearly communicates his love and passion for sinners. It is precisely for people like “strippers” that Jesus came to earth to offer forgiveness and transformation of life through his death and resurrection on the cross. This is exactly what the Gospel means, “Good News” for hurting people. There is forgiveness and there is hope for a better life now and eternal life forever with Him!

God showed me that Patsy was just the kind of woman a priest should be married to. Over the years, people have often asked me, “What if people find out what your wife used to do?” or “What if it hurts you or your church if people use that against you?”

My answer is always quickly the same. It is that if people have a problem with it, they have problem with the Bible, with the Gospel, and with who Jesus really is. I will simply use it as an opportunity to explain to them the real good news that all can find in Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Mark E. Roberts





## Married Life

We lived in Florida for another six months.

Mark let me stop working and be a stay-at-home mom with my little girl. I loved him for that too. He wanted me to be her mommy and didn't want me to work unless I wanted to. I finally got to be home with my baby. I finally got to be the mommy I always wanted to be.

We moved north for him to go to seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania and the Lord blessed our time there.

May your fountain be blessed:

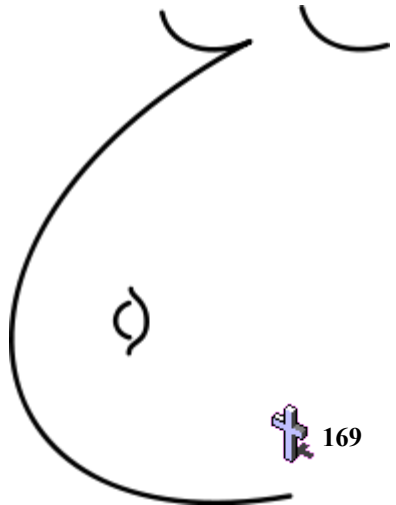
May you rejoice with the wife of your youth.

May she be as a doe, a graceful deer,  
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;

Yes, always be ravished with her love.

—Proverbs 5:18

I remember my little girl coming home one day after visiting a woman who just had a baby. My daughter she asked me if she could lay her hands on my belly and ask Jesus to put a baby in it.







I was proud at such a cute prayer request and, to our surprise, three months after we arrived in Pennsylvania, I was pregnant. For the longest time she would tell people that it was her baby because she prayed for it. It was such a sweet time. And our baby boy was and is 100% her brother. There is no half, or step members in our family, we are 100% family. My daughter is doing well now; she has a family and stability.

She and I have both got involved in Christian counseling and received years of healing through inner healing prayer. I learned about free-will and that God never wanted the bad things that happen to me to happen to me, the abuse, the rape, the unkind words by family members, all of my brokenness. These are the things that happen to people, to children, when human will is followed other than God's will.

If all those people who hurt me had been walking with the Lord, those things would not have happened.

The Lord wept as each horrific incident took place, but He did not stop it because He loved us so much that He gave us free-will. He never wanted those things to happen or intended for them to happen. He was always there, and I was never alone.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

—John 10:11





## The Way Out



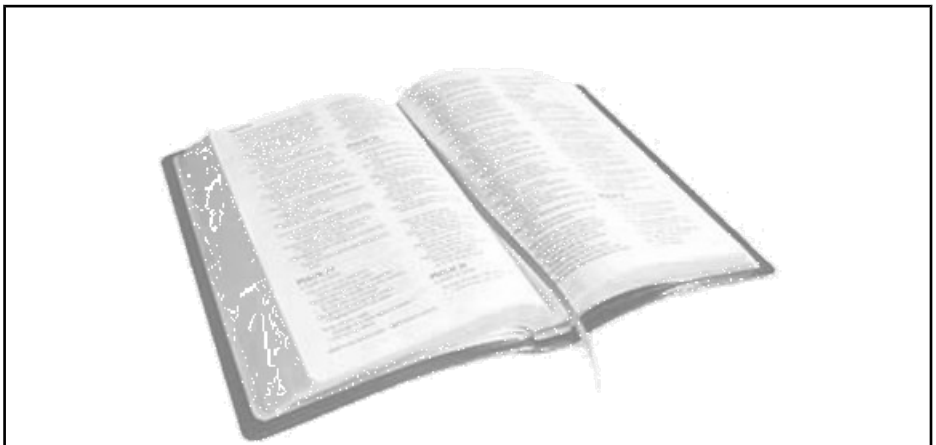
The Lord showed me that my own family was broken, that my parents were broken, those people who hurt me were broken, and we are all in need of the Savior and the healing that only Christ can bring.

For the first time in my life, my life made sense. My actions made sense, the choices I made, made sense.

I was trying, they were trying, to make it, to make life on our own and some weren't trying at all.

God did not create us to live our lives on our own.

We can't.





**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11

God does not force us into a relationship with him. He allows us to make mess after mess, to suffer—or cause—hurt after hurt, at times destroying our own lives along with the lives of others until we see we can no longer make it on our own, until we cry out to Him.

Unfortunately some will never cry out to God. They will turn to drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, and they continue to hurt others.

I made a choice and I cried out, “Enough is enough”.

I made a choice that my children will not be raised the way I was with all of the generational sins. That would stop here. With me.

My favorite life-altering Bible verse which the Lord showed me while we were at seminary is: Exodus 20:5b-6 *“I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments”.*

That verse comes out of the Ten Commandments.

God is talking about idolatry and serving other gods, gods which could be money, sex, drugs, alcohol,



## The Way Out



or anything else that comes before Him. This verse shows me about life and free-will. If we continue to do our own will, to walk outside of God's will, there will be consequences.

Generation after generation of abuse can occur. Sin just keeps getting passed down until someone is willing to break the chain. For me, that someone was me and my daughter. We said, "No More!"

For generations after me, my children will be shown love because we will choose to love and keep God's commandments with His help. My kids will not undergo the things I did in life.

They will not be devalued. They will know that they are *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14). They will know that God created them each with a unique plan and purpose for their lives, that their lives have value, and that this world would not be the same without them. They were created with purpose. I can't shelter them from the world, but I can give them the tools to better function in this world. I can tell them who they are in God's eyes. I can kiss the scrapes and bruises and pray over every hurt they encounter, and I thank God they are loved.

Our years in seminary were great for Mark and me. We studied hard as I learned to meet expectations as a minister's wife.

Sometimes I felt I was under a magnifying glass.

How did I deal with that?

With people in church knowing that I'd lived as an exotic dancer?

For so long I never wanted anyone to know about my past. I feared what they would think of me, not





only me but Mark too. I would never want to do anything to hinder Mark in his ministry.

Yet, I knew deep down inside that I had to be open about my past, because there are other women out there like myself, who needed healing and restoration.

After struggling with what to do about my past, Mark and I both agreed that my past can open doors to share the Gospel .

I ‘ve learned to carry my head high and not to be ashamed of my past but to be grateful for the present. Without my past I wouldn’t be who I am today. And that is a new creation in Christ.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

—II Corinthians 5:17

Sometimes when people hear that I’m a minister’s wife, they expect to see someone who looks like turn-of-the-century temperance crusader Carrie Nation, the lady with the hatchet—that’s what they think all religious women look like:



## The Way Out



I assure you that I keep myself groomed. I brush my hair, I watch my weight, take a bubble bath now and then. I dress attractively. I'm not an exotic dancer any more, but I have not gone to seed. I'm not dead.

For me seminary was a place of safety and growth and much needed healing. I met some of the most amazing Christians, felt the power of God there and began to understand and seek out who God created me to be.

Here's a poem I wrote while we were there:

### ***My Life I Give To You.***

*My life dear Lord I give to you, but let me warn you it's been battered and bruised.*

*Bruises dear Lord I can no longer heal, heart breaks I no longer want to feel.*

*Pain that cuts so deep within pain that has been caused by generational sin*

*Anger and brokenness from my head to my toes, and all my other sorrows that YOU only know.*

*I give you this life dear Lord all battered and bruised , to you Glory I WILL be Healed and Used!*

—Patricia

## **The Way Out**

It has now been 20 years since I moved to Canada, 15 years since I've been walking with the Lord, and 14 years that I've been walking full force with Christ. I sit back sometimes and can't believe that my life before was my life at all. That I did all of the things I did, that



I saw what I saw, that I experienced so much that was so out of control.

After seminary, Mark and I helped pastor a church in West Texas, then we moved back to Florida where he is the senior pastor at our church. We have moved from the Episcopal denomination and to the Anglican. Here’s a photo of Mark leading a service:



A false gospel can’t save lives, we believe that only the Jesus who is real can change and save lives. We stand firmly planted on the gospel of Christ.

Our marriage is going strong over the last 13 years. Mark knows all about my past and loves me—I think we love each other even more now. He is my best friend, the most amazing man ever. Sometimes, I just can’t believe how blessed I am, that this is truly my new life.

We have added another little person to our lives; she is a blessing. Mark is the best father to our children—including my first daughter. You would never



## The Way Out



know that he isn't her biological daddy, he loves her just the same, and she even has more of his mannerisms and characteristics.

She is now a college student and living a life for the Lord. She knows all about my past and knows that God is a God of amazing grace and love. He not only blessed my life but hers as well.

Sometimes I wonder where my little girl or I would be if I hadn't followed the call of Christ. The thought makes me shudder. I sit here today, still a stay at home mom, where money is tight with three kids and only one income—but my clothes are on. My husband loves me. My kids respect and admire me.

God shows His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

—Romans 5:8

I have a passion to help other women who come from brokenness, who have been abused or raped, who feel hopeless. There are so many of us out there. I worked two years with our senior high youth group and I was able to share with them my past and why I have such a passion for Christ. Knowing such things equips them to help girls and boys in their schools who are like me growing up. They have the answer that broken people need to know. Those teenagers' lives have been changed. I continue to share of the good news of Christ, I continue to live my life completely for Him, because I know that without Him, I would be a complete mess.

Recently someone asked me, "What is the way out? You speak of the way out for yourself, but how about me"?





My answer is the same for you and everyone else as it was for me: That is Jesus Christ.

There are all kinds of things we can do and take to take our pain away and to help our situation. But there is only ONE who can truly heal those deep-seated wounds and hurts: that is Jesus Christ alone.

I challenge everyone to give Christ a try.

Hand your hurt and heart over to Him.

Find a Bible-believing church. Read a Bible and find someone out there who knows a little bit more about Jesus Christ than you do. Ask them questions, pick their brain, seek and ye shall find.

I promise it is a life worth living, One you will NEVER regret. God Bless you in your journey to freedom.

May you find “The Way Out “ through Jesus Christ.



I harbor no anger or resentment toward those who hurt me because I understand why they did what they did.





## The Way Out



I feel no shame or embarrassment for my dancing because I was a broken girl doing what broken girls do.

I wish Hudson all the happiness in the world, because I understand that he too was broken.

I write this story with the understanding that it is not my story but God's story. This book is not about Patricia but about God. My message is that there wasn't any thing extra special about me to cause God chose to bless me. What He did for me is what He wants to do for everybody.

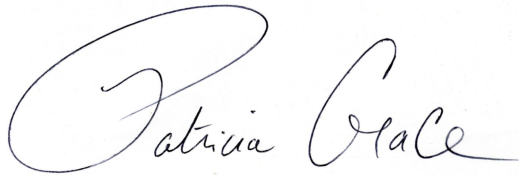
As you read this book, I hope it has blessed you. If you are living a life of brokenness, please know that there is hope.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

—Revelation 22:17

My prayer for you is that you will open the door and let the Lord in. You don't have to go through life on your own. It is so much easier with Christ. You will begin to experience the healing and restoring power of Jesus Christ and have a life of love, joy, peace, and happiness. I also encourage you to find a good Bible-believing church which can help you on your road to restoration.

## Patricia “Tess” Grace

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Grace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P".

**Patricia “Tess” Grace’s e-mail address is**  
tesstaylorwayout@gmail.com



**Abused? Confused? NATIONAL HOTLINE Always  
open:**



**1-800-799-SAFE** (that's 799-7233)



24/7 BATTERED WOMEN'S HELP LINE

**Run Away? Sick Of It? NATIONAL HOTLINE Always  
open:**



**1-800-RUN-AWAY** (that's 786-2929)



24/7 TEEN RUNAWAY HELP LINE

# Acknowledgements



There are a couple of people I would like to thank, for loving me despite my past. First and foremost is my husband, Mark. Without him I'm not sure where I would be. He is my "knight in shining armor," my anchor, my safe place. He has helped me become the woman I am today. He has showed me what real love is; there truly are "good guys" in this world. Mark, I love and thank you very much.

Secondly, to my children, Jacqueline, James, and Jane: You are Awesome! I never knew I could love this much. I am proud of each one of you and I praise God that He chose me to be your mother. The generational chains have been broken! Praise God!"

Thirdly, I would like to thank my family. Mom and stepdad, Jackie and Rick thank you. Even when life got rough and the road was rocky, you were there. I am grateful for the restoration within our relationship.

To my dad I praise God for the ongoing healing in our relationship. and I do love you.

To my husband's parents, Jane and Dave, thank you for loving me and accepting me. You have shown me what true Christianity is, even though I was, "the woman at the well".

To my sweet sisters, Sally and Heather, I love you both and would not have made it without you.

I would like to thank Pastor Dave Rutledge for never giving up on me; praying for me even when I did not know it. I am convinced that your prayers along with those of the

## The Way Out



church are what kept me safe through many years of darkness.

I would also at this time like to thank, Rees, Sydney, Signa, Joyce, Mary, sherry and Janna thank you for encouraging me when I was ready to give up on writing this book and thank you for reminding me that it isn't my story but God's and that is why it matters. I thank you for all of your prayers up in that room in Dallas. I believe if it weren't for you this book would never have gotten done. You gave me the push I needed, thank you for serving the Lord and I want to be just like you—wonderful amazing women of God doing mighty things! I love you.

Also I would like to thank Fr. Rob who has such a heart for the broken, and for encouraging me also to write this book, thank you.

I would also like to thank Bob and Helen, who have such hearts for Christ and would do whatever it takes to get this book in the hands of those who need it.

Above all else I thank you Lord Jesus! This book has been 12 years in the making and I pray that it blesses Your name as You have blessed me. Once again thank You for saving a wretch like me, Your Grace is truly amazing, Love Patricia

Special thanks to Bob Shelton of Midland, Texas; without your encouragement and help, this book would not have been possible.

Like I said this book has taken 12 years to write, I would like to let you know that this year, the 12<sup>th</sup>. My older sister Sally and I have restored our relationship through Christ and we once again are the greatest of friends. She and her husband, Jim, have committed their lives to Christ, God is beyond good, he is GREAT!

Above all I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank You for redeeming me, restoring me, making me whole! Thank You, Lord, for giving me new life, a life I

Patricia “Tess” Grace



never dared to dream of. I praise You! I Love You. Thank You for “saving” a wretch like me.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Grace". The signature is written in dark ink on a light, textured background.

**Patricia “Tess” Grace’s e-mail address is**

**tesstaylorwayout@gmail.com**



**I Know the plans I have for you,  
Says The Lord.  
They are plans for good and  
not for evil,  
To give you a hope—  
and a future.**

—Jeremiah 29:11





## Your Turn

“Tess” has told her story.

Now, it’s your turn to tell yours.

To get ready, please read the following short Bible stories and pencil in your own opinions across the page.

Then, you will find blank pages at the end of this book where you can write about what is important to you and what is going on in your own life.

If you have questions or comments, please e-mail Patricia at :

[tesstaylorwayout@gmail.com](mailto:tesstaylorwayout@gmail.com)

I’ll be glad to hear from you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia Grace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

## **Saint Matthew Wrote:**

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor".

Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her".

—Matthew 26:7ff



## **What Do You Think?**

### **How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

**You can pencil in your answers in the space provided**

In The Bible story across the page, who do you think feels the way you feel?

Mary's treasure was in an alabaster box, what do you treasure?

How do you like to use your own treasure?

If you had been there, what would you tell Jesus?

## Saint Mark Wrote:

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages<sup>[a]</sup> and the money given to the poor". And they rebuked her harshly.

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her".

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

—Mark 14:3ff

## **What Do You Think?**

### **How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

Here's the same Bible story told from a different guy's viewpoint.. Like Matthew and Mark both had cameras taking photos at the same party..

In The Bible story across the page, who do you think feels the way you feel?

Do you ever want to be world-famous?

What would make your dream of fame come true?

Britt Ekland starred in the movie *The Night They Raided Minsky's*; Ethel Merman starred in *Gypsy*; and Demi Moore in *Striptease*—which movie do you think is most true to life?

## Saint John Wrote:

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her". Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin".

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life".

—John 8:2ff

**What Do You Think?**  
**How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

If you were there, could you have thrown a rock at her?

If you could read what Jesus wrote in the sand, what do you think it might have said?

What lights up your life?

## **Saint John Wrote:**

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar... Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well...

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ?

The woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water".

"Sir," the woman said, "You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well ...

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life".

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water".

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back".

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true".

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet"....

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth".

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us".

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he".

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

—John 4:5ff

**What Do You Think?**  
**How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

If this story were a Broadway play, which role would you star in?

What's your own favorite drink?

Why in the world did Jesus ask to talk with her husband?

If you were there, what would you have said to the men in the city?



## Saint Paul Wrote:

**A**nd you hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)

And hath raised us up together , and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast .

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

—Ephesians 2:1ff

**What Do You Think?**  
**How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

Paul called the devil “the prince of the power of the air”... What causes hot air? Does the wicked one have more power over you than a fart?

When was a time when you felt dead, but still moving?

If you were sitting in “Heavenly Places” how would you feel then?

## Saint Luke Wrote:

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner".

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you".

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled".

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little".

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven".

The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace".

—Luke 7:37ff



## **What Do You Think?**

### **How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

Luke took his camera to the same party with Matthew and Mark; he takes a photo from a little different angle.

At first, Simon did not speak out loud... Do you suppose that Jesus could read his mind?

Jesus talks about two guys owing money here, Would you rather be the guy that loaned the two others cash, or the one with the debt?

If you were at that party, what do you think Jesus would say to you about what you owe?

## Saint John Wrote

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him". At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him".

Jesus said to her, "Mary".

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

—John 20:10ff

## **What Do You Think?**

### **How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

Mary Magdalene was the first person to see Jesus after He rose from the dead.

Do you think you would have recognized Jesus?

Why do you suppose she did not recognize the two angels?

If you played the role of Mary in a Broadway play, how would you act when Jesus spoke your name?

When was it that you once heard the voice of Jesus calling your name?

## **Saint Luke Wrote:**

Jesus said: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving



for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!

" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

—Luke 15: 11ff

## **What Do You Think?**

### **How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

In this story Jesus told, who do you think felt most like you feel?

Again, think of this as a Broadway play, which role would you be able to star in best?

When have you ever met an older-brother type?

Where and when have you felt welcomed Home?

## **Saint Luke Wrote:**

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her".

— Luke 10:38ff

**What Do You Think?**  
**How Would You Write Your Own Story?**

In This Bible story, two sisters bicker. Whose side would you be on?

Do you think Jesus was fair?

When have you ever felt Christ was not fair in your life?

If you prayed to Jesus right now, what would you tell Him?

An open book with a dark brown cover and a light brown tassel hanging from the center. The pages are cream-colored and feature bold black text. The text is centered across both pages.

**Behold I Make  
All Things New...  
Whosoever will  
May Come**

**—From the Last Book In The Bible**

## **An Editorial Comment**

When I first read Patsy's story, one thing struck me most — No matter what we have done, no matter what other people have done to us, there is hope in Jesus Christ.

The love of God is shown to us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When we have no strength, Christ died for the ungodly—that's folks like me and you.

We have hope because Jesus said that whosoever will may come.

Like that old church song says, "Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come".

Jesus didn't say we have to clean up our act first—no matter what our act is at the moment. He invites us to come.

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest".

We can't clean up our act.

We've tried and failed time after time.

We have to come, just as I am.

Let God worry about what needs to be cleaned up—God doesn't clean His fish till after He's caught them.

Jesus is called the Deliverer. So, what does a deliveryman do? He takes something from where it is to where it ought to be.

From where I am now, to where I really want to be.

He came from Heaven to earth at Christmas time. He healed the sick. He taught the ignorant. He fed the hungry—whatever was wrong, Jesus set it right.... And we nailed Him hand and foot to a cross and teased Him as He died for us. But the Lord of Life just won't stay down. He rose again on that first Easter Day.

And today, He invites whosoever will to come.

Think about it. Is there any reason you should not ask Jesus Christ to become your own Lord, right here, right now, today?

— the editor

**Use The Following Blank Pages  
to tell your own story:**













