

# Sixteen

## The Prologue

The sound of silence screamed, and everything around me just didn't feel real. I felt like Alice, trapped on the wrong side of the looking glass. My world was right in front of me, yet I could not touch it; I could not pass through the mirror back into reality. I was stuck between sane and insane.

My teenage years drifted by in a blur full of drugs and alcohol-a tale for another time. This is the story of how one day, just one damned day, eternally changed my life. The day that marked the beginning of many years of silent suffering. Of being lost, stumbling through the darkness that seemed never-ending. Oddly, it was also the beginning of rebuilding, learning, and discovering the woman I could be, of the woman I have become. I remember that day as vividly as lightning splitting the night sky, and by day's end, I was in a mental hospital.

...I was only sixteen.

## The Break

I woke up on a beautiful, clear, crisp fall morning to my mom saying,

“Get out of bed, Amy! It's time for school”.

“Ugh, I'm up”.

I wiped away the grogginess and reached for my glasses. Pressing play on my CD player, my room became filled with Korn's A.D.I.D.A.S. Finally awake, truly awake, I opened my eyes

fully for the first time. The absolute terror that overtook me was the worst thing I had ever experienced, and to this day, it is still one of the most dreadful days of my life.

I had no understanding of what was evolving and why I was breaking away from sanity. Suddenly, it was as if my life was turning into a raging storm on the ocean, with crashing waves engulfing my very being. Everything, all my sensations- what I felt, heard, tasted, and saw seemed like a nightmare come to life...

*One, two, crazy's coming for you.  
Three, four, this is a losing war.  
Five, six, you'll never again be fixed.  
Seven, eight, going to be your fate.  
Nine, ten never have peace again.*

And then it happened, all of me, every part, all at once, snapped into a million pieces.

My thoughts were grasping all around to find something, anything that would break me free from this living Hell, only to find an unstoppable force meet an immovable object. It was like vultures were surrounding me, waiting for their prey to die, so they could rip and pull me further away into a world of broken reality. Violently, I snatched the pocketknife off my bedside table and began slashing feverishly across my arm.

Silently, as I repeatedly slit my skin, I kept crying out, "*Fuck, just make it stop, make it stop!*" I hoped that by feeling the pain and seeing the blood, it would end this enslaved torment. That I would be thrust out of such waking terror and back to the right side of the looking glass. My fear and panic began to seep from my veins and drip onto the floor. As the bright, warm blood slithered down, my sanity continued to fracture. It didn't work; I was still descending into the abyss of madness.

Haphazardly, I bandaged the cuts. Blood continued to trickle down my arm and through the bandages. As I grabbed a Nirvana t-shirt and threw a flannel over it, doing my best to hide the sticky, wet despair, I heard my mother, now getting frustrated, yelling,

“AMY, GET OUT OF BED, GET DRESSED, AND GET DOWNSTAIRS!”

I felt like I had been in this dissociated state for hours...It had only been 10 minutes.

### **The Discovery**

I remember slowly walking down the stairs, but then my memory gets a bit fuzzy with certain pieces of this next part. I am unclear as to how my mom found out about the cutting.

Years later, I asked. She replied quietly,

“Amy, when you walked into the kitchen, I saw the blood dripping out of your shirt onto the floor. It was one of the most horrifying moments of my life, to see you seemingly out of it and blood all over.”

I apparently tried to lie and say my cat did it. My cat didn't even have front claws, so why I thought that would work, I will never know.

Then, it seemed within moments that I was being thrown into the car and rushed to the doctor's office. I, still in a dissociative state, tried my best to act normally and kept saying,

“I'm fine. I don't need to go see the doctor.”

These pleas fell on deaf ears.

Once at the doctor's, he carefully cleaned, stitched, and bandaged my wounds. He had been my doctor since I was a small child, watching me grow from the silly, goofy, happy child into what he saw that day. I had a feeling of both shame and relief as he gently tended to my mutilated arm. The antiseptic should've stung as he cleaned my skin. I should've felt the needle

that was threading all those feverish slashes closed. I felt nothing. I couldn't feel. I was still stuck in the world of unreal.

As he worked, he asked, "Why did you do this? What happened? What do you need?" I just sat there with a hollow stare and probably looked as crazy as a demented mental patient. Eventually, I was able to muster out, "I needed to make it stop, I needed to feel real. *Nothing* is real!"

Between the concerned look he gave me. The utter sadness and tears welling up in my mother's eyes, I instantly regretted saying it.

## **The Drive**

My memory here is still fuzzy. I can't remember leaving the doctor's office or what his decision was. I must have walked out with my mom, but I can't recall a single step between the exam room and the parking lot. One moment I was in the patient room, and then—what felt like an instant later—I was back in my mom's car. A wave of confusion washed over me. My hands trembled as I stared out the window, trying to piece together everything, but my thoughts slipped away like sand through my fingers. I was just so lost. The drive that followed was a blur, still lost in the madness of my mind.

*Where the hell were we going?  
When did we get on the interstate?  
Why was my mom crying more  
than before?  
How did a suitcase of my clothes end up in  
the car?  
Who was this strange girl mocking me in  
the sideview mirror?  
What the fuck was happening?*

‘About an hour passed, my arm throbbing in pain with every beat of my heart, yet I could scarcely feel it. The insanity seemed to be enshrouding my entire self: body, mind, and soul. As we continued to drive, all I could do was viciously shake my head, back and forth, back and forth, praying it would hurl me back from this psychotic break. My body shivered uncontrollably, my thoughts raced in chaotic circles, and a sense of dread seemed to weigh heavily on my soul.

Eventually, we turned onto this long, winding road, leading me into the unknown. By this time, it was evening, and rain was going every which way, upways, downways, leftways, rightways, pounding down hard and fast, lightning flashing every few seconds, bursting through; a hue like orange across the black sky. We turned around the bend and then I saw it, a huge old brick building, it almost looked like a dilapidated castle. As the lightning continued to strike, thunder roaring, and rain falling all around, I thought, *Where the hell am I? What is this place? I watch too many horror films for this shit.*

I was truly, madly, deeply frightened because I had no idea where I was and why I was being taken to this huge, scary place that truly looked like an insane asylum you always see in movies.

## **The Patient**

Suddenly, I connected the dots, remembered what was happening, what had been decided at the doctor’s office. It all became clear: going home, packing a bag, grabbing my favorite pillow, and hugging my dog and cat goodbye. The entire day came rushing back slowly, yet all at once, I was headed to a mental hospital...

Shit, I thought, I *am* the demented mental patient.

Funny thing is, by the time my mother and I got there, the dissociation had begun to subside, and reality was within my reach. I wished, if only I could've kept my mom from discovering what I did, I would be home now. Everything is fine now. The silence had stopped screaming. The disturbing thoughts, disturbing behavior had vanished into the night. I had begun to break through the looking glass.

I stayed in that mental hospital for a little over a week. I loathed every minute of it. I felt trapped, suffocated, as if the walls were closing in on me. The days faded together with group therapy, sessions with the doctors and psychiatrists, and patients shuffling about. I mostly sat in the common room doing puzzles. I mean, I was surrounded by crazy people. I wasn't crazy, not like them. I couldn't be right? And yet I was. I was given a diagnosis of 'slight psychosis'. Ironically, that felt unreal; I remember sitting there, feeling as if this was someone else's life unfolding before me. Later, I did discover it was a misdiagnosis; I would be properly diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder and Bipolar Unspecified Disorder.

They tossed me some meds and told me to get a therapist. It was the 90's, so basically, meds were the cure-all for everything. If you weren't getting better, hey, let's raise your meds and add more. Prozac and Depakote and Lithium OH MY!

Anyway, my mom came and just like that... I left.

## **The New**

That day, that god-awful, frightening, mad, demented, unhinged, unbalanced day. That day that left me forever scarred. That day when I was catapulted into the ocean of madness. That day that stripped me naked and took me to the brink of an everlasting nightmare. That day when I was able to eventually break through the mirror and back to corporeality, although vastly different from my existence before. However, once the mirror shattered and I was back on the

side of sane, it never occurred to me that pieces of broken glass, pieces of me, were left behind on that blood-stained floor. For many more years, I remained slightly lost, haunted by the echoes of insanity.

Finally, having a proper diagnosis, I began my journey to the new. It was quite a mundane day when I realized I could take that little girl lost and become a woman found. From that moment and throughout the years that followed, piece by piece, I collected all the scattered glass. Slowly but surely, with each fragment, I rebuilt the mirror, though never fully restored, as cracks will forever remain, sometimes distorting my reflection. I still get into dissociated states, walking that line between sane and insane, BUT not once have I ever gotten lost or stuck completely on the wrong side of the looking glass, on the wrong side of sane.

Though it took me a bit of time, I look back at that day when my before life crashed all around me- lost in crazed terror, panic, fear, and pain as the day I began my journey of learning to live, not just survive, but truly live with my form of reality. I have found peace and learned to love myself. I would tell myself, and still do, that I can heal and that life can be a wonderful, beautiful, fantastic ride. I have not self-harmed in years. In fact, where those scars once marred my skin, I now have a stunning tattoo that covers them. A piece that symbolizes my journey through darkness and pain, reflecting the passage of time, healing, and rebuilding that have shaped me into the woman I am today.

My body, mind, and soul have grown quieter, and the silence that once screamed has softened. I have found me. So, I suppose, in a way, I will always be grateful for one of the worst days of my life. Without that day, I'd probably still be trapped in a nightmarish dream.

... I was only sixteen.