

Creative Writing Contest 2022
Alive: A Story Still Going
1st Place Creative Non-Fiction

I never imagined that simple line would save my life. Asking for help was the most courageous and terrifying thing I have ever done.

Broken. Shattered. Destroyed. Take your pick of the three. They do t come close to describing how damaged I am. The noose around my neck tightens with every step I take. It thick, heavy, and black. As black as my soul feels.

The noose is fraying, of course. Anything would after wearing it for twenty-nine years. The ends of the rope fused together to create the strength needed to hold my head. It s choking me now. Every strangled breath leads me closer to death.

Please! I beg of whoever s out there. God? Jesus? The Devil? God anymore, but I certainly begged whoever s listening.

I sounded. I must have done something pretty fucked up in a previous life to deserve this one. To feel the way I feel. I will never understand it. I have begged God enough to take me away. something about me that pisses God off.

, my friend Amy says soothingly. She looks at me

way. dying

inside, everyone who found me knows it. White as a ghost, hands shaking, unable to speak.

Horrid, deep, choking wails come out of my mouth.

Apparently I answered their questions. How? I have no idea.

How do I do this?

My world

and more stress balls than anyone can imagine. I loved the bubbler. It like a long lava lamp that creates bubbles to stare at. I felt like Bubbles from *Finding Nemo* when I watched them.

The bed my the right, with a wall separating us in the middle. On my side is the shower and a sink. The shower has a plain, blue shower curtain. donning a blue shower curtain, and another sink. There are cabinets with no doors that line the back walls to put my clothes in. The beds are flat as a pancake. I get one pillow with a white pillowcase, a white sheet, and a blue . My guess is so that people can use them to kill themselves or others. My roommate could definitely smother me with her pillow though, and I lie awake that night hoping that she would.

A nurse gives me medications all day. I see my psychiatrist for an update for ten minutes a day. Psych techs check every patient every fifteen minutes, even when pooping. I have to stick my head around the curtain so they can see that not dying. I get to call my family whenever there I get multiple groups a day, some activities, and some talk therapy. I learn a new lesson each time. I start to get used to being there about three days in. Four of my loved ones came to see me throughout my stay. I was happy to see them and to show them all the iece.

announced. Beverly is our activities coordinator for the day. short, skinny stern but not strict a good balance between kind but not taking any shit.

The cards were green laminated squares with negative emotions on them. I pick out the words miserable, scared, and sad. Our lesson is to think of our happy place when we are feeling

those emotions. We close our eyes and visualize it. Mine is standing on the pier in South Haven. Even with my eyes closed, I can clearly see the catwalk that leads up to the red, gleaming lighthouse. I can smell the water and hear the waves crashing on the shore. After we picture our happy place, we pick a yellow card, all of them with positive emotions, that we want to feel. I pick alive.

Alive. I feel afraid to live. How do I live?

live? Feel alive?

has only allowed room for survival.

I hate being this way. The darkness that lives inside me grows with each suicidal thought. Growing. Festering. B I live in a hamster wheel, constantly spinning for fear I would lose everything if I dare to stop.

In our group craft, I picked oil pastels, and Beverly cut me off a piece of the white paper lighthouse standing tall at the end. The black catwalk that runs down the pier with the lights at and a light blue sky. I made the water with dark blue waves. For the finishing touch, I used white to write the word *alive* in the water. I left my seat to throw something away and caught Beverly looking at my picture with a wide smile. A small smile, as crooked and ugly as it was, came to mine for the first time in a long time. I had forgotten what that felt like.

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s and

one my loved ones saw close on me when I stared at them and they stared back, holding

themselves together for my sake.

ication is working for now, and I

have tools I need to keep me from dying: a notebook tucked under my arm with reasons to live

written inside, a safety plan, deep breathing exercises, my happy place, self-care ideas, and a

psychologist to start seeing every week. Everything will be monitored medications, access to

guns and knives, and my phone location on at all times. The noose is

Maybe

I can do this.

to make me realize life is worth living. I have to figure that out

myself.

to be here as much as everyone else wants me to. On my worst

days, I tell myself my only job is to keep living one step at a time. Some things cannot be

fixed. They can only be carried.

I know how easy it is to be yanked from this world.

for death, and death never finds you. I also know that you can keep going, long after you think

For everyone wh

it might not be for a long time, but we can

recover everything that the darkness has stolen. We are not alone. We belong here. We can carry

each other. We are always worth the energy and will it takes to stay.

Alive. Dee ~~BF mQ (G) (Y) JTE (W) nBF DE mQ (G) cWe JTE (Y) mQ (U) (G) (Y) JTY (a) aBF lo s6ug (W) nBF Ly~~