Table of Contents

**Synopsis1**

Outline2

INTRODUCTION4

**Her Smile Fades (Chapter 1)**5

**December 9, 2016 (Chapter 2)**7

**The Return and The Graduate (Chapter 3)**16

**Blast Off (Chapter 4**)……………………………………………………………………………………………29

**Sickness Defeated (Chapter 5)…………………………………………………………………………**

**The Final Straw (Chapter 6)………………………………………………………………………………**

**God’s Redemptive Power- December 9, 2024 (Chapter 7)……………………………………..**

Synopsis

A real-life testimony about the potter and the clay, metaphorically, of course. After a lifetime of brokenness, Hannah comes to the realization that all that God allowed to happen in her life was and is for a purpose. As the potter, the Lord, shaped her and molded her into what she is today, the clay, Hannah, learned to walk in obedience to bring Him glory despite all the heartache, pain, and brokenness. God shapes the clay every time molding her into something more beautiful than before.

Outline

Chapter 1: Her Smile fades

-Ash commits suicide.

-My mom forces me to move to California for the summer.

-I go back to school for senior year

Chapter 2: December 9, 2016

-I go to school as usual.

-I get taken to hospital and receive the diagnosis of a severe nervous breakdown and AMS (altered mental status).

-Flashbacks to parents' divorce and grandparents' death.

Chapter 3: The Return and The Graduate

-I went back to school. I met with the counselors and my teachers and got a 504 plan.

-The spring semester was hard. I dropped almost all my advanced classes. relearned to read, write, talk, and eventually graduated high school.

-Audition for OBU

-Disney

-Graduation day

Chapter 4: Blast Off

- I spent the whole summer with Nathan and Lillian.

???-Rico and the day he came over (possible flashback to papa’s abuse)

-I started college at OBU. I switched my major and accepted the call to ministry.

-freshmen year

-the summer after freshmen year

- Sophomore year I attempted to commit suicide. That summer I went on a mission trip to Peru.

Chapter 5: Sickness Defeated

- Junior year and that summer I applied to SkyRanch and got a job as a photographer.

-I caught COVID towards the end of summer. COVID led to pleurisy, then mesenteric lymphadenitis, then colon cancer, then endometriosis. (this was all 1st semester of senior year)

-winter break in Virginia, a bow

Chapter 6: The Final Straw

-I graduated college and moved back home. My dad said he wished I was never born. I went back to SkyRanch. I came home to work for a startup private school. I started working at Church on the Rock.

-Left Church on the Rock to go be a Director of Children's Ministry and moved out on my own. I totaled my car and went on my first ever date and that spiraled into the worst anxiety I had ever experienced.

-I was having at least four anxiety attacks a day. Depression was my best friend.

-I resigned and moved back home. I went back to Church on the Rock.

Chapter 7: God’s Redemptive Power-December 9, 2024

-Being delivered from anxiety and depression.

-Activating spiritual gifts

-As I looked back on everything, I have been through in this life, I can finally see God’s hand in it all. On this day it has been 8 years since I lost my memory. I substituted today and wrote the date down many times never realizing what today was. It was like every time I wrote it, the Lord redeemed it. I always thought this was the turning point of my life, but I realize now that it was just the beginning. I realized at 11:48pm, that today is the anniversary of the day that the Lord grabbed a hold of me and brought me back to Him and though this has not been an easy life, it’s a redeemed life. It’s a purposeful life. It’s a well-positioned life for the Potter, my Lord and Savior, to sculp something beautiful that tells the truth of His love, mercy, and redeeming power. A life molded and shaped to bring Him glory.

Preface/Introduction

Ever since the accident happened, everyone has told me to write a book. As I often brushed them off, the Lord began to grow in me the vision and message for this book that retells how the Lord never leaves you nor forsakes you. Though the names have been changed, the story being told is real.

How the Title came about: Three years ago, I was at a women’s conference with my oldest sister. During the conference one of the speakers talked about the biblical account of the potter and the clay, Jeremiah 18. She spoke about how everything we have been through has applied pressure in a place to mold us and shape us into who God has called us to be. As I retell you my real-life experiences leading to the accident and all the events following, I am telling you them from the new, blinders off, perspective of how “God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them” (Romans 8:28 NLT). He has molded me and shaped me into who He has called me to be, just as the potter does with the clay to make a useful piece of pottery. I hope as you read you are able to see how all the little broken pieces are mending back together.

I want to be honest with you though: The retelling of the events before March of 2017 are not from my own recollections of my personal experiences, or my memory bank so to speak, but the combination of journals I kept growing up, friends who lived them with me, and family members who stayed by my side. All those things combined; have come together to create what I know to be my memory of how things happened. However, I don’t consider them memories at all, more like recalling scenes from a movie I have watched. The events that follow March 2017 are completely from my own memory and my newfound personality and voice, Hannah 2.0.

I was once told that it’s not a testimony until something dies. To God be the glory my old self died. Even after that, more things begin to die off, and my prayer is that, if I haven’t scared you off by now, you will see throughout the stories I share with you how my life is a real redemption story, a personified new creation, one with I aim to please God with by the power of the testimony He has given. One though I wish on no other person but am finally in a place where I can say, to God be the glory, I am glad it happened because it had to happen.

Her Smile Fades

"Good morning! Good morning! It's great to be awake!" I sprung out of my bed singing. Not really, but I was definitely dancing around as if I was waking up the whole neighborhood on Christmas Day. Except, it's not Christmas time and it's just me that needs to get ready for church. I found the best outfit for the best day. It's Sunday and I woke up in plenty of time today. After I got dressed, I told my mom bye and that I'd see her later, I was going to church.

Once I got to church, I parked the car and put on my biggest smile. I walked through the front building just to say hello to the door greetings. My destination was Sunday school, well youth group, and it's in the second building behind the first. This walk is usually filled with joy and singing, and today was no different. Until suddenly, I feel my phone vibrating in my pocket. No big deal, it's just a call from a girl from school, Em. We are on Drumline together and sometimes she wants to come to church with me, however it's been a while since she has come with me, so I'm perplexed as to why she is calling me.

I answer the phone, "good morning!" I say just a chipper as kid in a candy store.  
"Good morning. I need to tell you something, where are you?" Em asked, sounding worried.  
"I'm at church, what's up?" Now I'm more confused than before.

"It's Ash, she uh...um... well she was found this morning." Em tried to get the words to come out, but I could hear tears falling from her eyes. "Ash killed herself, she's dead." Em bluntly blurted out.

As I slipped down the brick wall outside the second building I couldn’t say a word. Tears started flowing from my eyes. I had just talked to Ash days before, everything was fine. It wasn’t expected. I couldn’t believe it.

Ash and I met in Sixth grade beginner band class. She was a natural. She even had the look of a drummer. She was a hard dedicated worker, in music and in sports. She loved tennis and softball. She was always smiling, spreading her infectious laugh. She was also a food connoisseur so to speak. She always knew what to say and when to say it, making for the best hype girl.

I cleared my throat and blurted out, “Thank you for the call I’ve gotta go.” I hung up the phone and walked into Sunday School to find my best friend, crying, almost as if she already knew.

“I was going to call you,” Macey said sincerely. “I just found out from my mom.”

“Em called me.” I managed to speak.

I ran to Macey; we hugged for longer than socially acceptable. The news spread quickly. By the end of the day all of drumline met at the local park to grieve together. We talked about our favorite memories with Ash and relived the glory days with her on drumline. When we all left, we had a game plan for a memorial service for her at my church. It was nearing the end of the end of our Junior year of High School.

The memorial service took place not too long after the day in the park. Three of us from drumline were chosen to give a speech, Macey, Jac, and me. I went last. Honestly, I didn’t know if I was going to make it through without crying. At least by me going last it just appeared as though I was touched by the other speeches instead of like I couldn’t control my emotions about the whole situation.

“Ash had the brightest smile, and the most contagious laugh,” I began to speak. Tears seemed to stain my face and the words I had written on a page were getting harder to see. Although I don’t remember what the rest of the eulogy said, but I know that Ash was a beautiful soul and we had a lot of great times together in the five years we knew each other.

The memorial was beautiful, but we weren’t ready to say goodbye forever. On the last day of school, we had our annual band picnic. This was a time to eat junk food, play games, and celebrate all we had accomplished during the year. This year’s picnic was different though. We all dearly missed our band mate. After we ate and played games, everyone went outside and grabbed an orange balloon. With a black sharpie in hand, we wrote notes to Ash on each of the balloons. On the count of three we all released them into the air.

“Heavens gained another angel,” echoed throughout the church parking lot as the balloons released into the air. I know we don’t become angels when we die, but I couldn’t help but wonder where her soul went. Sure, we had serval conversations about God; she seemed to always enjoy them. However, she never said rather she believed or not. My curiosity wasn’t too focused on her belief or not, it was more focused on the way she died. I guess I wasn’t the only one because her suicide brought up a lot of questions amongst all our friends. It even affected conversations in my home. However, now was not a time to question my own beliefs. It was a time to be there for our friends, to encourage and comfort them.

My mom didn’t feel the same way. “Your nana is going to California, to stay with your sister, for 6 months while her husband is deployed. I think it would be best if you took this time to get away from this town and all the drama going on. You are going to live with your sister and nana for the summer.”

“But mom! I have plans with my friends!”

“This is not negotiable Hannah!”

By that tone, I knew my mom was not playing! She had already planned for me to ride to California with Nana and my sister as we went back for the summer.

We traveled in a white 2008 Toyota Matrix, filled with my sister and her Boxer, my nana and her Palmerian, me and all of our suitcases. To say the least we were beyond cramped. The drive was long and not filled with many stops. We may have stopped four times, each time swapping drivers. It was a 24 hour road trip. Driving through Texas was half the trip and once we passed El Passo the AC in the car could not keep up with the sunny blazing hot temperatures outside.

After finally arriving to California on base, I didn’t want to tell anyone I made it safely, there was no one in that moment I cared to talk to. I thought that feeling would go away, but it turned out I was just putting into practice what I had always been good at, pushing people away. Sure after a few weeks of being there the text came in from my so called friends, I never answered them. I was too busy being wrapped in my own head. My mom had goals for me this summer and they didn’t exactly include talking to my friends from back home everyday.

I came to the realization that I am really good at pushing people away. For so long I didn’t recognize that I did all the reaching out. That’s not to say my friends never reached out it’s simply to say, I know how to put myself out of sight and out of mind.

Throughout the summer my sister and I decided we needed to be healthier. Our plan was to eat better and exercise more. We took turns cooking and lugging the laundry up the hill. During the day we swam in the pool and went to a different beach every weekend. In the evenings we went on runs. Well, we would try to run but it soon turned into jogging which eventually led to walks. It’s the last week of summer and my attitude has become prideful. I started pushing my sister and nana away since I knew it would be a long time till I saw them again. My sister had been inviting a friend on our walks, and I became jealous that she wasn’t spending as much time with me. On our last walk of the summer, I decided to run up the hill and that’s when I decided to body slam the ground. It wasn’t a purposeful discission, but my feet sure thought it was. After an ER visit and some x-rays, the doctor told us I had severely sprained it. This was a relief, since the instant swelling and already dark green and purple indicated to us it was broken. The doctor decided a brace and crunches for a few weeks would be just the thing it needed to heal.

A week later I was headed back to Texas to start my senior year of High school. All seemed to be alright in the world. Both of my sisters moved out, my mom is remarried, and I have a part-time job. Health wise, I could be doing better. My relationship with God, kind of just exists. My friends and I started a new bible study group last year, and since most of them graduated I will be taking over. I am also a second-year business manager for the yearbook, section leader in band, and have great plans to take five advance placement class as well as three dual credit classes. Life was good, so my pride tried to tell my depression.

**December 9, 2016**

It’s a Friday, December 9, 2016. There is a football game tonight, an essay due in more than one class today, a test in college algebra, and don't forget finals are next week and my last chance to take the ACT for college acceptance is tomorrow. I go to band rehearsal early this morning. We made it to the playoff season. "It's going to be a shorter show since competitions are over." A band director probably announced. "A show a show no matter how short it goes," I most likely annoyingly reminded my section.

*It’s audition day for band. When I start sixth grade I will be playing the saxophone, so I think. My dad surprisingly took me to auditions. Maybe because he was finally in town for a bit before leaving again, or maybe because the other girls had nana and mom busy. Whatever the reason I was happy my dad finally took interest in me.*

*I had taken violin in elementary school most likely to bond with the middle child, however she quickly learned it wasn’t her thing. She had to stay with it for the whole year though. When she went to middle school she decided to follow our mom’s footsteps and play trumpet, however that wasn’t her thing either. She really enjoyed sports. By the time I was starting middle school she decided shed only do sports and I could do the whole music thing. I really did enjoy violin but was wanting to venture into the saxophone. I loved the way it sounded and looked. As we walked into the band hall I told the teacher I’d like to try out saxophone. She calmly asked, “Are you sure? You look like a tuba player.” She paused for a minute, “Or maybe a baritone player?” second guessing her gut intuition.*

*“She said saxophone, whatever that is.” My dad took up for me, probably the only time in my life. “Uhh yes sir. However there is someone currttly trying out the woodwinds. Would you like to try the Brass instruments while you wait?” She boldly responded. “Yes ma’am thatll be fine.” I quietly agreed.*

*Im going to save myself some embarrassment and put it plainly, none of the brass instruments worked in my favor. Once it was my turn to tryout the woodwinds, the teachers came to the same conclusion, I didn’t have enough air in my lungs to fill any instrument that required air to fill them. Right about that time the Percussion teacher stepped out of the percussion room and gave me a look. One that I just knew in that moment we were going to spending a lot of time together and he was going to have great influence in my life. He walked over and asked my dad what I was there for. By the end of the conversation, I was trying out for percussion and by the end of the day I was walking out of the school with an equipment list for sixth grade percussion. “You have rhythm, that I can tell. Your coordination could use some work, but you’re a fast learner. I look forward to having you!” the percussion director told me before we left.*

*From sixth grade all the way to my senior year in high school it seemed like I always had to work harder then everyone else to get where I was. Honestly, it felt like I was always held to higher standards too. However, that work ethic, and drive to always be great and do my best that Mr. D instilled in me, is something I still carry today.*

Band went by fast and now it is time for second period, Forensic Science.

Second period, check!

Now to enrichment. I mean UIL (Universal Interscholastic Leage) practice. My mom is my coach and this time being in her class has been a lot easier than the first go around, when I was a freshman in her English class.

*"Get up girls! Come to the living room, we need to talk," yelled my absentee father down the hallway, the same morning his mother was pronounced dead. Dad never wakes us up for school, and plus I thought we weren't going to school today because we had just said our last goodbyes to Grandma, my dad’s mom, 3 hours prior. What could this possibly be about? I pondered.*

*"Girls! Living room now!" Dad shouted down the hallway, as if there was an emergency. Once we all sat on the coffee table my dad stared at us and without hesitation said, "I've asked y'all's mother for a divorce."*

*The man that looked like my dad but could have never said those words, spoke the very thing, the only thing that could crush my world.*

*That's when it happened. My perfect normal life wasn't so perfect anymore, but funny enough it became normal. Almost all of my friends' parents were divorced, I had been the odd ball out all this time. And I was completely fine with that. In fact, it was a big thing that contributed to my perfect life! I prided myself on having loving parents. Who not only loved me but loved each other. They were going to grow old together. I mean sure, I never saw my dad due to whatever job he chose to take that would put him on the road or overseas at the time but still. They were perfect. So only pretty much I thought.*

*"Your mom has already called the school and told them y'all's grandma died early this morning and has alerted them that she won't be there and most likely neither will y’all. But I told her it's y'all's choice. Your mom is going to our hometown today to plan y'all's grandma's funeral. You can go with her or go to school. It's up to you." My dad explained with little care as if he didn't just drop a whole bomb on my life.*

*"I'll go with mom!" The oldest strunely stated. I got the feeling she knew this was coming.*

*"I'm going to school." The middle child said, as if that's the better option. I think she just wanted to avoid all things death talk.*

*"I'm going..... I'm going..... I'm going to band practice." I said as I stumbled across every word. I wasn't processing anything. I just knew I couldn't handle much talking about anything with my mom.*

*"That's it then. Love y'all see ya later." Without a hug or kiss goodbye, Dad was already out of the door.*

*Mom took me and the middle child to school. "Try to have a good day," she exclaimed, trying not to hold up the car rider drop off line, with tears streaming down her face.*

*"Love y'all!" Me and the middle child yelled in unison. I'm not sure where the middle child went that day, but I walked right into the band hall, straight to a practice room, sat on the floor with my knees as tightly held to my chest as I possibly could hold them, bent my face down into my knees and cried.*

*That was the whole school day. A few of my friends checked in on me throughout the day. But I didn't move. I didn't eat lunch. I didn't go to geometry, or whatever science class I was supposed to be in. I just sat. And cried. I didn't know if it was an A Day or a B Day and it didn't matter. I just sat and cried. I was already counted absent, since my mom called the school that morning, so it didn't matter and therefore I didn't care. I just didn't want to be with anyone, or do anything. I wanted a safe haven.*

*Things were bad enough with Grandma’s death and the divorce, but to top it all off two weeks later, my papa (my mom’s stepdad) died, and 40 days later my grandpa (my dad’s dad) died.*

*This may have been the sprouting moment of what had always been going on chemically in my head. The weeks following were miserable. My mom couldn't hold back her tears when I walked into her classroom. She'd hug me and sob, she couldn’t hold it together, as if I was her reminder of everything going on.*

*Thankfully I always knew what we were going to do in her class. She'd run it by me when she made lesson plans, always asking, "you think y'all can do that?" I'd always respond, "yes of course mom, you're a good teacher."*

*And so it was, I'd stand in front of all my friends and classmates, make an excuse as to why my mom was sobbing at her desk, and proceed to give instructions for the day.*

*I couldn't be sad. I couldn't be the one who was crying at their desk. Someone had to be strong, and it wasn't my mom.*

*By now my oldest sister was engaged and practically lived at her future in-law's house since my future brother-in-law was at boot camp. The middle child was nowhere to be found anytime I needed her so there it was, just me and my mom. Both of us sad. Both of our worlds were falling apart. And yet when you looked at us, only one of our faces showed the signs of the bomb that blew up our whole world.*

UIL practice went normal as usual. I hug my mom bye and tell her of my afterschool plans, which consist of getting on a bus and traveling to the playoff game. The bell rings, and I am excited because it is lunch time, my favorite time of the day. At lunch I get to sit with my friends and talk as much as I want to. What I have never looked forward to is the food that probably tastes like plastic, but it hits the spot. A short thirty minutes pass and the bell rings, it is time to start walking to my favorite class, College Algebra. Just as I stand up to start my trek to the class, my head starts pounding. Instead of walking to the nurse I continue the course to get to my class. As I march up the stairs in the math and science building I start thinking I am going to faint, but nevertheless I push through and go to class. Upon arrival I sit my bag at my desk and approach my favorite teacher's desk.

"My head is pounding." I say while holding my head in my hand.

"What would you like to do Miss. Terry?" My teacher asks in frustration.

"What are my options?" I question, slowly remembering we have a major test today.

"Lay your head down and get a zero for the possibility of cheating, go to your mom’s room and get counted absent, but you can take your test later, or take your test now and lay your head down after you turn it in." My teacher calmly explains.

I stand there and stare as I carefully but quickly think through each option. I have perfect attendance and it's my senior year; I don't want to ruin that. Why would I lay my head down and get a zero on a major test when I know for a fact, I could ace it in my sleep! I was coming up with an excuse for all of them except for taking my test. There isn’t a real choice to make here, I actually only have one option.

"I'll take the test." I say in a moan, knowing all I can hear is the pounding of my head.

She hands me the test and I go down. I start by putting my name on the front page then I carefully answer every problem. Finally! I think to myself, it’s done. I turned it in and as I am returning to my seat to put my head down, I glance at the clock and notice there are twenty minutes left of class. My head is still throbbing! I feel like it can explode at any moment. I had high hopes a twenty-minute nap would cure the ache, when all of a sudden, a loud noise echoes throughout the room, as if it was set off right next to my ears. I finally acknowledge that the resounding sound is the bell, so I stand up to start my venture to my next class.

I always take the long way around to avoid major social interactions with the big crowds, and plus it is a Friday, I don’t want to be caught in the middle of yet another stupid fight. Much to my dismay, not from lack of trying though, I ran into one of my mom’s students who also happens to be one of my classmates' little brother, we call him Little Fun-Chips.

"Hey Hannah! Your mom said you signed to a college, but didn't say where. Where will you be in the fall?" Fun-Chips asks with eagerness to learn of my college choice.

As much as I want to tell him I signed to Ouachita Baptist University with a music and academic scholarship offer, I can’t speak. Instead, I just stare at him, as if I should know him, but my brain tells me he's a stranger. I start to shout and try to run away. It was in this moment when my feet don’t move the way I want them to and my face heads straight towards the ground, when suddenly Little Fun-Chips hurries in my direction, stretches out his scrawny arms and catches me. The Lord has perfectly placed us to be right behind the freshmen building, the exact stairs that lead right to my mom's class, though no one was allowed to use those stairs as an entrance, Little Fun-Chips, carried me up those steps and banged on the back door. To his surprise my mom is the one who hears the banging and comes running.

"What are you.... HANNAH! Little Fun-Chips, what's wrong?" Her voice slowly rises as she hears nothing but screams coming from my mouth.

"Something's wrong with Hannah! I'm not sure what. One minute we are talking, the next she is running and screaming, she almost fell, I caught her, I didn't know what to do so I brought her to you." Fun-chips went on and on trying to describe the indescribable event that had just taken place moments earlier, as he helped my mom drag me to her classroom.

"Alright, thank you fun-chips, I'll take care of her. Here's a note for class." My mom, somewhat confused and scared, manages to blurt out.

She finally sat me in a chair that was right in front of her desk. She tried to make conversation and figure out what was wrong, but my gaze was transfixed on the things of her classroom walls. A cowboy with a gun, Romeo and Juliet, The Raven, and other English literature characters. They were moving.

As I looked over to the cowboy, I can tell that He was getting ready to charge after me. Then within seconds he is running towards me as if I am his opponent in a duel, I am unaware I signed up for. He has his Gun ready to pull the trigger.

"Stop! Help! Stop!" I yell in agony catching my breath in between crying and screaming.

"What's wrong Hannah? What's happening?" my mom questions me in confusion.

"They're trying to kill me!"

"Who? Nobody's here but me and you. You are safe."

"Them!" I raise my pointer finger in the direction of the cowboy. "Ahhhhh! It hurts! Make it stop!" I scream holding my shoulder believing I have been shot. “He’s going to kill me!”

The yelling turns into sobs and indistinct chatter.

"What's happening now?"

As I hold my arms and rock back and forth, I yell out, "The birds! They hurt," tears continuously flow down my face. And the gaze is not broken.

"Hannah, there are no birds in here! What is happening?” my mom is frantically thinking through all her options and responsibilities. She knows I need to go to the hospital, but she has to get her class covered first.

“Ahhhhhhhh!!!” The screams continue without stopping.

“We’ve got to get you to the hospital, to see what's wrong.” My supposed mom tells me.

At this point I have regreased so much so I have no idea who she is, where I am, or who I am. She begins to ask me questions about my schedule, as she tries to figure out which of my teachers she needs to call to let them know what's happening. She starts to dial for her principal first but it's too late. He heard the screams down the hallway and came to the door.

“Mrs. Terry, what is… why is Hannah not in class? Why is she screaming? What is…”

My mom interrupts him, “something's wrong with Hannah. She's hallucinating and Little Fun-Chips brought her to me. She can barely walk and she is not talking in full sentences, just a word here or there. I need to take her to the hospital.”

“I'll take care of things here for you, go. Take her to the hospital now.”

“Thank you!” My mom gathers what she needs to take me to the hospital.

It takes a little convincing and some restraint, but something in me decides to trust her. She hoists me out of the chair and hangs my arm around her neck, tucks her arm around my stomach and begins to carry me to the car.

Streams of screams follows me wherever we went. Once we got to the car I screamed for my nana, so my mom went to get her and then we went to the hospital. When we arrive at the local Emergency Room, my mom doesn’t park the car in the parking lot, she just pulls up to the door and gets out. She runs and gets a nurse; they bring out a wheelchair and take me inside. Then mom moves the car. Everyone is frantic. Even the hospital nurses seem scared, to the point that they take me directly into an ER room.

The level 2 trauma crash room is not lonely. It’s anything but. It’s confusing, and overwhelming, and a bit much for someone who has no clue who they are or where they are. It was terrifying.

So many people rally around. A sister and brother-in-law whom I have forgotten. A father and his nurse of a girlfriend or whatever she is to him now. A mother, whose face is as serious as a momma bear protecting its cub from their prey. And a nana, whose tears next to mine could fill the whole room. Of course that is what I've been told.

In between being taken to and from the crash room and the testing rooms, MRI room, lab for blood test, I am perplexed with the thought of my best friend. Though I cannot pick her out in a line up, my lips are fixated on asking the same question over and over, “Can I talk to Macey? I want to talk to Macey?”

My mom takes my phone and calls her, no answer. So she calls Macey’s mom, she answers. “Hey Hannah is asking to speak to Macey. Is she with you?”

“Macey is right beside me and says she wants nothing to do with Hannah. She says she has nothing to say. I am gravely sorry, and I am praying for Hannah. Please keep me updated with her situation.” Macey’s mom reluctantly blurts out.

“Will do, thank you.” My mom replies and she hangs up the phone. Looking down on me with a sorrowful face, my mom says, “I’m sorry Hannah, Macey doesn’t want to speak to you.”

I turn over in my hospital bed and let out a loud whale of tears. This was all that was needed to send me over the edge.

The doctor comes into the room to tell my mom all the tests they have run, He tells my mom to ask me a series of questions, ranging from the answer has always been the same to recently new things, just to see where my mental state really was. I think he wanted to know if I was faking it.

She began, “Who’s your best friend?” only screams and cries come out for a response. “What’s your favorite color? What’s your sister’s name? What instrument do you play? Who’s your percussion teacher? Where do you go to school?” Her voice starts buffering as she tries to hold in her tears, “What’s your favorite subject? Where do you go to church?”

It feels like the questions are continuing forever while I hear them, do not process them, and only respond to them with crying and screaming. By now I am rocking back and forth in the corner of my hospital bed with my knees crunched up to my chest and arms wrapped around them.

The doctor calmly explains, “That’s enough, that’s enough. Maybe some of those blood test results have come back. It’s obvious there’s nothing going on in her mind.

“Wait! Wait! Wait!!! Hannah, do you know who Jesus is?" Shouts my supposed mom in anticipation, and hope that I know the answer.

Popping up from a nervous ball and having paused from screaming, I turned to her with a blank gaze on my face and no personality in my voice and stated, "Jesus is my Lord and Savior."

"Hannah, do you know who I am?" My supposed mom responds in desperate hopes that since I remember who Jesus is then I have suddenly just remembered her. Much to her dismay, I return to my previous state. Scrunched in a ball, rocking back and forth, releasing nothing but screams, at the top of my hospital bed.

I say supposed mom because that's who they say she is. At this point I still don't know who she is, honestly, I don't even know what a mom is. And who is this Hannah they keep asking me about.

A few hours pass and the doctor returns to explain what he has found out. “Your daughter’s test all come back normal with a few exceptions. She is chronically depressed and anxious. Her brain scans show chemical imbalances causing depression and anxiety. Her blood tests show she has little to no iron, little to no vitamin C, D3, and B12, most likely due to her being in her menstrual cycle the past 36 weeks. All these things mixed together has led us to believe she is having a…” before the doctor can finish my mom interrupts, “No! NO! NO! She can’t be depressed, she has everything she could ever need, she has nothing to worry about! I want a second opinion!”

“Yes ma’am, we can fly her to Dallas or Little Rock children’s. Which would like?

“We can go to Little Rock; we took my other daughter there when she was having black outs. We will go there.”

“Yes, ma’am I’ll put the call in right away.”

As time passed, we learned the helicopter was not the best choice as an ambulance would be here sooner. As I was being rolled out for the ambulance, a friend of mine from school, Zynmari, walks up to me. My mom interrogates her to see if she knew if I had been drugged at school. Zymari has no idea what she is talking about. She just wants to see me and check to see if I am okay. She finally reached out to hold my hand and tells me she loves me and is praying for me.

After she left, they put me in a strait jacket and strapped me in so tight, I can only wiggly my toes. I can’t move my head, and my breathing is questionable. They’re treating me like a psych patient. My mom hops into the front of the ambulance while the paramedics load me up. My nana and step father follow behind us in the car and everyone else who was there, goes home.

Throughout the ride, of course there is no talking, however, I feel the safest and most scared I have felt all day. No one tries to talk to me or make me think. In the same breath, I cannot move or see where we are going. I fade into oblivion to escape. Before I know it, we are in Little Rock and I am being unloaded at the Children’s Hospital.

Upon arrival I am sent to a holding room to be evaluated. When the Psychiatrist comes in my mom and nana exclaim the situation and get her caught up. By now my mom has posted some of what was going on, on Facebook and has thousands of people praying for me. Their prayers have to of been working, since by the power of the Holy spirit and the grace of God I am able to answer the Psychiatrist’s questions. Well, to some extent. The answers come out robotic and consists of one answer mainly, “I cry.” Whatever the question is, that’s the response I was able to give out. The diagnosis from her is pretty much the same answer my mom received back at our local hospital, “She is suffering from severe untreated depression and anxiety. She needs to go to a counselor for 6 months at least. If we hear back, she is not in counseling, we will court mandate her to be admitted to a psych ward for 6 months. In addition, we’d like to give her a blanket what’s her favorite color and thing to do?”

“She loves music and the color pink,” my mom responds while still in shock and realization that there is something extremely internally wrong with me. The lady comes back with a small lap quilt that is hot pink with guitars all over it. After handing over the blanket she escorts us to my room for the night, or should I say morning, by now it is at least 3am.

Following all the excitement of the day, I finally lay down and go to sleep.

When I wake up, if I had thought it was a dream, my reality surely crushes it. There in front of me stands at least 34 neurologists and 8 brain surgeons all shrugging their shoulders in complete shock that they couldn’t figure out exactly what was going on. However, they feel confident enough to discharge me with this diagnosis that they have all agreed upon.

“Your daughter has suffered a severe nervous breakdown with severe altered mental state (AMS). Which has led to amnesia. Most amnesia patients regain full memory within 90-150 days. Just as well she has hardly any iron, vitamin D3, C, and B12. Theres’s barley any blood and oxygen flow to her brain. This is all due untreated clinical depression and anxiety as well as her being in her menstrual cycle for over 36 weeks.” My mother listens intently, like somehow this was all new profound information and not the same exact thing she heard at our local hospital. Continuing to talk as though I am not in the room, the doctor continues, “There are some things she can do to help regain memory and restore lost vitamins. We recommend going on gluten free, sugar free, dairy free, no red meat diet to help restore memory as well as take daily iron supplements and multivitamins. Her follow up should be with an OBGYN, to see if they can’t fix that problem as well.”

Before I was discharged, I relearned to walk and how to use the bathroom. It was as though my muscles and bones didn’t forget what to do or how to do it, but my brain did. My brain wasn’t sending signals to the rest of my body. However, once my body was forced to go through the motions my brain picked up on the signals and fell back in line.

The nurses wheel me out of Little Rock Children’s hospital and load me into a car with my so-called nana, mom and stepdad. I am completely lost, in my mind and in my life. I have no clue as to what is going on. I don’t know anybody or anything. The only thing I know is that Jesus is my Lord and Savior. Though this truth is comforting, I feel scared. I’m being sent home with complete strangers, that’s who they are to me at best, though the doctors told me they were my family, I don’t remember anything about them. Therefore, I don’t know them. This drive back to my so called hometown feels a lot longer than the actual two hours that it takes. My mom and stepdad sit in the front and my nana is in the backset with me. As we drive past all the city lights and the trees empty of leaves that follow, my thought process is nonexistent, all I hear is the echoing sounds of the one thing I know to be true; Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

Two sleepless nights follow, before I am thrown back into the whirlpool known as high school. As I lay in bed, I just stare at the celling repeating those words, “Jesus is my Lord and Savior”, with each breathe drifting into the arms of Jesus.

I didn’t know it then, but the Lord was calling me back to Him. He was allowing me to experience his presence like never before. Deuteronomy 31:6 was being displayed in my life. The Lord never left me nor forsaked me, not before this day and defiantly not after.

**The Return and The Graduate**

“Hannah! Get up!” Yells, my mom. “You have to get ready for school. You won’t be at band practice, but you will go to the band hall for first period.”

I am startled out of my slumber, shocked I finally had fallen asleep. I move my bones slowly, still hesitant to trust this woman they call my mom. My personality has not been restored. It’s robotic and matter of fact. Everything is black and white, and my gaze is tunnel visioned. It has been two nights since being in this house and back with this so called family of mine, and now I have to go to school? I’m a little confused, and nervous, and stannic all at the same time.

“Okay. What do I wear to School?” I genuinely ask, just now realizing I don’t know how I am supposed to dress for this place they call school.

“Here!” My mom says as she tosses me a pair of jeans and a random T-shirt. “Put that on. And hurry up, we are going to be late.”

I do as I am told and quickly put on my slip on sandals since tying shoes are the least of my worries. After I put my shoes on I grab my seemingly empty backpack and walk to the car. The ride to school is silent, not even the radio playing. I don’t know what to think or say or do. How is one suppose to behave in a car on the way to school? How am I supposed to react when we stop at the red lights? What do I do when I am bounced up because we went over a speedbump? I am not sure of all these things. So I respond how I acted the day I was sent home with this stranger. I stare out the window with my head in the palm of my hand and my elbow on the car window seal, silently repeating over and over in my head, “Jesus is my Lord and Savior.” It seems to ease my nerves.

Even though my mom is a teacher here and can park us in the teacher parking lot, she takes me through the car rider line and drops me off in time to meet up with Em.

“I’m Em. We are on drumline together. You can trust me.” Em exclaims reaching out her hand waiting for me to take it.

I am frightened by the gesture. I don’t know who she is. She seems familiar, but even with a name being offered, I cannot pinpoint who she is, and even though she says she is on drumline with me, I cannot compute what drumline is. I know my face has a gaze on it as I try to search for the needed information to force my feet to move, but at last all is lost.

“Who are you? What is drumline?” I manage to robotically say. “My head hurts.”

Just then, I see a girl running towards us. Her face is more familiar than Em’s. Could it be, the girl from the hospital just before I got on the ambulance?

“Hi, I’m Zynmari.” She reintroduces herself.

“Hi. My name is Hannah, so they say.” I respond in separated syllables.

Zynmari reaches out her hand, sweetly and calmly responds, “nice to meet you, Hannah. Would you like me to walk you to class?”

With a shake of my head and an outreached hand I agree to the company.

Em leads the way as we stepped off the sidewalk and into the grass, only to land on more concrete in front of a set of double glass doors outlined in black, that leads into the band hall. I force Zynmari to come to a complete stop as Em opens the door.

“Whenever you are ready.” Zynmari says patiently waiting and staring at Em still holding the door open.

“Take your time.” Em reassures me.

I take a deep breath in, and held it for a second then I let it out. I move one foot forward. Instead of my other foot going in front of the already planted foot it stops right beside its twin. I take another deep breath in, and without holding it I release it. Now I feel my feet are ready to slowly emerge into these doors. Zynmari’s arm is locked with mine and Em is now behind us. The first hallway is not too long, plus there is barely anyone else in the hall, besides us. Then Zynmari stops. “We have to turn here and go down this hall now.” She instructs, reassuring I am okay with these movements, she asks, “Are you ready?”

As we pivot to face the new hallway, I reluctantly shake my head yes, while taking in another deep breath and release in. The hallway is crowded. Zynmari starts to explain to me where we are going and who we are going to see, but as we weave in and out of the other students, I hear the many independent conversations going on and see the eyes of everyone staring.

“She’s back.” “That was fast.” “Wish she had stayed gone longer.” “I bet she’s faking it for attention” “Who does she think she is?” “Poor girl, this must be so scarry.” “How is she going to graduate now?” The conversations echo in my mind as we pass windows that peep into the band director’s offices. At last we pass the last office.

Em points at the window and says, “That’s our percussion director.”

I nod my head as if that means something to me.

Next to the window is a set of double black wooden doors with one long rectangle window in each door toward the middle where they meet.

Em hurries from behind us to open the door, “I’ll get that.”

“Thank you.” Zynmari says.

The room is big and in the shape of a square. I take two steps into the room and come to an abrupt halt, covering my ears with my hands. It’s loud. Too loud. How can anyone hear each other or even think. Our percussion director comes out of his office and silences the room.

“Hey sweetie you can come in here, it’s alright, you’re okay.” He says in a quiet but somewhat deep voice. His voice is calming. His face is familiar.

Zynmari escorts me into the office and sets me in a chair. Em followed behind us and closed the door. The chair I am sitting in is on the wall connected to the loud room. There are giant windows behind me, that allow me to see what everyone is doing in there. His desk is against the windows that peer into that long-dreaded hallway we just came from. As my eyes float to the right of me, I see a single door opened to a rectangular storage closet filled with extra percussion equipment and lots of music. Refocusing my eyes on what’s in front of me, I notice there is yet another single door, it leads into yet another big square room. All of this is overwhelming. I let out a big sigh.

“How are you today, Hannah?” my percussion director asks.

“It is a sunny but cold day. I am fine.” I robotically respond.

“What does the weather have to do with how you are?” He questioned.

“The weather is good therefore, I am good.”

“Gotcha. Well, I am glad to see you here!” He assures.

The room goes silent.

I chose to stay here all day. Seeing as the plan was to not go to my classes today but instead get reacclimated to the setting. Minute by minute the day goes by. I am unfazed by the random people who come into the office. Everyone who entered today tried to speak to me, but my voice seemed in shock, as if it was mute.

At the end of today my mom came to get me out of his office. “How did she do today?”

My percussion director leads her out the office, “Can we talk out here?”

I am suddenly aware that something is wrong. I can see their lips moving but I hear no sound. I can only assume there was pressure and an expectation to have a good day and make significant progress in recovery, but I failed to meet those expectations. Whatever they are saying, I am sure I disappointed someone.

The walk to the car is silent, and so is the car ride home.

The car came to a halt. We are home. My mom opens her mouth and speaks for the first time since we have been in the car today. “Tomorrow is a big day. You will return to your normal schedule at school. Although you will not be taking final exams, you will sit in all your classes. You also will be pulled from second period to have a 504-plan conference with your advisors, teachers and me. This meeting is how we are going to make sure you still graduate, that is top priority right now.”

“Okay.” I respond pretending to know exactly what every word she just said meant.

We step out of the car and walk into the house; I head to my room and remain in there until the morning.

The morning came quickly, and I didn’t get much sleep last night. I drag my feet around the room looking for something to wear. Yet another day, another pair of jeans, and a random T-shirt with my same slip-on sandals. The car ride feels repetitive, I’ve been here before. Oh yeah, it’s identical to the car ride we took yesterday to school. Quiet and long.

Em and Zynmmri are standing on the sidewalk awaiting my arrival.

“Good morning!” they cheeringly say in unison.

“Good good morning.” I respond stutteringly

Zynmmri stretches out her arm and ask, “ready?”

I nod my head and wrap my arm around hers as we start to walk towards the band hall. Today is the day I will stand in front of a snare drum, marimba, bass drum, triangle and all the other percussion instruments for the first time since I lost my memory. It’s the first time I will walk into each one of my classes and try to attentively listen to each teacher. The day I walk into my favorite class, college algebra, and see what all I can remember. The day my mom and I meet with the counselors and administration to devise a plan. Today is the first day of the rest of my high school career.

“Are you ready to play today?” My percussion director asks.

“I am here, so why not.” I say, already regretting my decision.

“Let’s go in here. You are in first band. That means you are a really really good player.” Em says leading the way into the big band room.

Band is seemingly calm as a whole; however my body is filled with unease, frustration, and confusion. The time moves quickly. I didn’t feel like we had been there for an hour and a half but somehow that’s how much time has passed because the bell rings. Zynmari walks me to forensic science. When we arrive, she reminds my teacher that I will be called out for a meeting. My teacher shakes her head and points to a chair seated next to her desk. Ten minutes pass and my teacher gets a call. “Please send Hannah to the academic conference room for her 504-plan meeting.” the lady on the phone instructs my teacher. She relays the information to me and sends another student with me, since I have no idea where the office is.

Upon walking into the room, I am handed a fidget to play with to help keep me calm. My mom does most of the talking. The counselors attempt to do a mild testing procedure to see what progress I have made, but the results are inconclusive due to me not saying a single word. The principals disgust what measures should be taken and agree for each teacher to do their own individual assessment, as well as each teacher gets the say of rather, I drop down to non-advance classes or if I stay in the advance class. The guidance counselor agreed to see me for thirty minutes each day. The academic advisor recommended I take my final exams in two weeks, at the end of Christmas break and in the meantime I receive extra help such as, printed out note, a buddy in each class, the ability to lay my head down for five minutes, and the ability to leave each class five minutes before the bell rings in order to beat the crowds, all of these things were to be offered until further notice. My mom seems to agree with all that has been suggested.

“Can we keep her in college algebra? I’m sure she will be able to pick up on everything easily. That’s her best subject.” My mom says.

“We can, but if she is not improved in that subject by Christmas break she will have to drop it in the spring.” The academic advisor mentioned.

“Deal.” My mom agrees and signs the document then slides it over to me to sign my name. She hands me a pen and puts it in my hand, positioning it exactly right so I could easily glide it across the paper. I try to write but I quickly realize I do not know how to spell my name or how to write it. I drop the pen and burst into tears. Everyone jumps at the chance to calm me down and finally my mom speaks up, “on behalf of Hannah she consents to the previously determined measures.”

“Thank you. She can be dismissed now.” One of the principals stated.

I get up and walk back to class with my paperwork in hand ready to give to each of my teachers. Not long after returning to class the bell rings, and I head to UIL practice in my mom’s room.

“Hannah!! I am so glad to see you back!!” Sophie Bradford yelled while running towards me with her arms stretched out ready to hug me. She wraps her arms around my arms that are down by my side and squeezes me tight.

Sophie Bradford is a freshman who is on drumline. I met her last year when she was an eighth grader on pit crew helping me push my equipment down the sidelines at football games. She has become like a sister to me. During band she has been giving me space to get adjusted but since this is UIL practice and there are only 5 students in the room, I guess she has decided I don’t need space while I am in this class.

“Ummmmm, okay.” I say confused as to why this blonde-haired girl is hugging me.

“That is Sophie Bradford, Hannah. She’s one of your greatest friends. Along with Alex.” My mom clarifies while pointing at the brunette standing in the middle of the front of the room.

I have known Alex since we were in sixth grade beginner band. We have been through a lot together. She stood by my side our freshman year when my grandparents died, and my parents divorced. She has always been a super solid God loving friend.

“Hey, friend.” Alex says as she waves at me.

The wheels in my head start turning. Theres something sweet and familiar about these girls. I feel connected to them but at the same time I am stunned by my lack of knowledge of who they are.

“Come sit by me!” Sophie Bradford eagerly shouts.

“You can sit here by me, or wherever you would like.” Alex says.

I start to walk over by them and take a seat in the desk that’s in between them, when my mom says, “alright, calm down. We still have work to do,” she pauses, eyeing Alex whose face does not seem eager to move right past my return. “uh but I suppose we can take a few minutes to just talk.”

So that is what we do, well what they do. I am overwhelmed by all the things Sophie Bradford is saying, all the stories she is telling. On one hand I appreciate her eagerness to reinform me, on the other, I can’t even begin to process everything she is saying to me.

“I think we should give Hannah a break,” Alex politely suggests.

“Yes of course,” Sophie Bradford agrees as she puts her hand on my back and starts to rub it to show sympathy.

“My head hurts,” I mention while folding my arms on top of my desk as a makeshift pillow for my head to lay.

“Today can just be a study hall,” my mom states.

Twenty short minutes pass, my mom interrupts the silence, “Who wants to walk Hannah to lunch before the bell rings?”

“I will.” Alex says while raising her hand. “Here, I’ll carry your backpack.”

I nod my head and manage to say, “Oh okay. Thank you.”

Upon arriving at lunch, I come to the realization that lunch is overly crowded, so I begin to panic. Alex puts her arm around my shoulders, “Everything is going to be okay, feel your feelings, but know I am going to be by your side every step of the way.” She reassures me.

“I can’t… I can’t do it.” I timidly say as I take a step back towards my mom’s class.

“Let’s stop and take a breather. We can try again in a minute.” Alex suggests while she motions to the outside bench.

We didn’t eat lunch that day. Once we sat down at the picnic table we just talked. She wanted to see how I was really doing and not many words came out of my mouth before she noticed it was time to take me to my next class.

“It’s time to go so we can beat the crowd. You have college Algebra next, right?” Alex asks. I shrug my shoulders. “Yes I believe that’s what you have next. I’ll lead, all you have to do is follow.’ She reassures me.

Once we arrive at my class, she walks me up to my teacher and I hand her the paperwork from this morning’s meeting. “Thank you.” Mrs. Blanco says. “I am glad to have you back in class Hannah. I would like you to, on your own, try to do this packet during class today while everyone else takes their final. It’s a quick and easy way for me to see what you remember. Do you think you can handle that?” She asks concerningly.

I nod my head yes and reach out to grab the packet, Mrs. Blanco acknowledges my shaky hand and lays her hand on top of mine, “it’s okay if you don’t know anything, but please try.” She softly reassures me.

I return to my desk and see a page full of numbers staring back at me. I know it’s not meant to be hard, and I know I should know what to do, however, consciously I’m lost, but as the moment passes, I come to the realization that my right hand is writing in answers. Two plus two is four. Five times ten is fifty. Ninety divided by three is twenty. Label the numbers on the number line, easy, one through ten. Calculate the slop, that’s funny, it’s rise over run of course. All the things from counting to multiplication and long division to the Pythagorean Theorem to geometry, flying my way through the calculus questions just to get stumped on the college algebra problems. My hand knew exactly what to write even if I couldn’t explain it in words.

“I’ll get this graded and let you know where you are at, Hannah. In the meantime, did you know you made a one hundred and ten on the test you took last Friday?” Mrs. Blanco says.

“What test?” I question.

“The one you took the day your head hurt.” She reminds me.

“Oh. Is that good?” I ask in wonder.

“It’s the best! I am proud of you.” She says while she pats me on my back. “Get your backpack, its time you head out to beat the crowd.”

I grab my backpack and head out for my fourth period class. The walk is easy since the bell has yet to ring, I don’t have to worry about bobbing and weaving through the crowd. I make it two fourth period, government. I don’t really like government, which is funny to me since everyone around me says I am going to Ouachita to study Political Science and then after that Law School and one day Congress. Maybe that’s what the old me wanted, but the new me couldn’t care less about government. Anyways, per my 504-plan I receive a printed out copy of all the notes.

“Thank you.” I tell the teacher.

“Your welcome, she will be your partner.” He says pointing to the girl sitting right next to me.

“Hi, I’m Kadence. We were best friends in sixth grade.” Kadence says excitedly. “Do you remember me?” Her face turns from excited to nervous and curious.

“Hi Kadence, I’m Hannah.” I stutter. “I want to remember you, but I can’t. I’m sorry.” I say answering her previous question with reservation.

“It’s okay. I understand,” she says while patting my back.

“Thank you.” I nod and face forward as our teacher walks to the front of the room.

I stay in my head the whole class period, not understanding one thing he says.

“You need to leave now before the bell rings.” He instructs.

“Bye Kadence.” I wave and walk out the door to head to my class, English.

Upon arrival I am greeted by my teacher who looks kind and sweet. “Good afternoon Hannah I have you a seat at the front. Your class can be rowdy but I have paired you with the best student in the room.” She assures me while pointing me in the right direction to my seat.

The bell rings and the students in the room leave while I await for the next class, my class, to come in. In walks a tall red head boy who seems shocked when he sees me sitting right next to his empty desk.

Hesitantly the red hair boy asks, “Um, hi, Hannah. When did you switch classes?”

“They moved me here.” I remind him this was not my choice. “Why?”

“Do you know who I am?”

“Why would I know you?”

“We went to the Saidie Hawkins dance together when we were in nineth grade. See!” He says as he pulls out a picture of us from that night out of his wallet.

I carefully take the picture from his hand and hold it close to my eyes. I point and ask, “That is you,” I pause. “and that is uh that is me?” I question.

“Yes, that is us. You had the biggest crush on me back then.” He says with excitement and suddenly switches his tone, “Do you know what that is?” he says with wonder in his eyes.

“I am unaware of this thing you speak of.” I huff and turn to face the front of the classroom. For the rest of class, we do not speak. This class was the shortest class of the day and before the bell rings, I am once again told to leave and head to my mom’s classroom. We gather her things and go home. The rest of the week is more of the same, awkward social interactions and conversations with each one of my teachers about how to prepare for semester exams.

Christmas comes and goes. I take my semester exams the day before we go back to school for the spring semester and I make passing grades on all of them, including a perfect score on the college algebra semester exam. Sophie Bradford and Alex toke turns all Christmas break coming over every day to help prepare for exams and social interactions. They have been so helpful in my recovery and have promised to be by my side every step of the way. They even helped me get back to church along with Lillian and Nathan my two friends, who are siblings, from church and school.

A few weeks have passed and lots of improvements are made. I have been doing private lessons with my percussion director gearing up for college tryouts. We have prepared a two-mallet marimba piece and a snare drum piece for my audition that’s in mid-February, which is now. My mom had previously emailed Ouachita’s Director of Percussion, Dr. Nyal, to alert him of my condition; however, he did not want to reschedule my audition.

My mom drives us an hour to the college for my audition. We are both led to his office and sit across from his desk. He proceeds to ask some questions and wants to hear about what happened and the progress I have made.

“As I stated in the email I sent to you in January, Hannah suffered from a severe nervous breakdown which caused her to lose all of her memory.” My mom begins to explain. “However, Hannah and her percussion director have been working diligently to allow Hannah to relearn everything in a short amount of time. With that being said, she did not have time to prepare a timpani piece, only a mallet and snare drum piece.”

“That is quite alright,” Dr. Nyal expresses with sympathy, “I would still like to see what you can do. If you are up for it, Hannah.” His eyes gaze at mine and suddenly all the nerves in my body are claimed. As if for the first time in my life there are no expectations. There probably are some sort of expectations, but for the first time I do not feel the pressure to meet them.

“Mrs. Terry, would you mind staying here while Hannah and I go to the percussion suite for the playing part of her audition?” Dr. Nyal asks kindly.

“Sure.” My mom responds.

“Alright. Thank you.” Dr.Nyal nods his head towards my mom. “Are you ready Hannah?”

I didn’t want to leave my mom, however, there is nothing that he has done to make me feel worried or insecure. He is a man and right now I do not feel safe or secure around men. I didn’t tell my mom that, I didn’t know how to say it. So I turn and look at my mom trying to hold back the tears held captive in my eyes and tell myself; Jesus is my Lord and Savior and is with me now, it’s all going to be okay. That seems to ease all my nerves.

Dr. Nyal keeps his distance and is very professional. He makes sure I am okay every step of the way. We walk into the percussion suite, “Take your time getting use to the environment and the sound of the instrument,” He suggests while holding his arm up in the direction of the beautiful 5-octive DeMorrow studio marimba sitting up against the wall.

I walk over to the marimba, “It’s beautiful,” I say as I gloss my mallet over each bar. “It even sounds better than it looks.” My face lights up and suddenly I am excited to play my marimba piece. “I am ready now.” I announce.

“Go ahead.”

I nod my head, take a deep breath, tap my foot four times, and then begin to move up and down the marimba playing the wonderous melodies written on the page in front of me. It’s the last measure, “Ahhh” I let out a big sigh and play the last four counts.

The moment is silent, then I let down my mallets and hold them to my side. I pivot on my right foot in an about face so that I am now facing Dr. Nyal. I take a slight bow and say, “Thank you.”

“Very good. Lots of potential. Your grip and technique is outstanding. You flow very well, movement wise, you’re not stiff. You played the notes on the page. I am proud of you!” Dr. Nyal takes a deep breath, “I can work with what you have. May I hear your snare drum piece?”

“Sure.” I say as I hesitantly walk over to the music stand holding my drumsticks. I lay down the mallets and pick up the drumsticks. While taking a deep breath I am suddenly engulfed with the realization of where I am and what I am doing.

“Ms. Hannah, are you okay?” Dr. Nyal asks, snapping me out of my inward thoughts and back into reality.

“Yes sir.” I respond as I take steps toward the snare drum. The drum is too short, and my hand begins to shake as I attempt to raise the height by myself.

“I’ll get that for you.” Dr. Nyal steps forward and raises the drum to perfect height. “Breathe. Take your time.” He says calmly.

I take a deep breath and let it out. Then I raise my drumsticks in position, tap my foot three times since there’s a pickup beat and BAME! The beats are coming alive off the page into my hands through the air into our ears. I am taken to another place. One where only the snare drum and I exist.

I am brought back to earth when I realize I only have one line left to play.

Dut da da dut da da dut click clack tat.

*Sigh.* I let out the breath, I seemingly held the whole time I was playing, relieved I got through it and happy because in my opinion it didn’t sound half bad.

“Ms. Hannah, I am so thankful, that against all of the circumstances going against you that you came out to play for me today.” Dr. Nyal says as he reaches out for a handshake. “Say, why don’t we go back upstairs and tell your mom the good news.”

We head back upstairs, and he offers me a band scholarship to play for him. I accept it.

I didn’t know it then, but that day would be the start of an amazing mentorship that would uphold me and push me to be the best in every way possible. He would go on to teach me more than just music, he would show me how to maintain balance, and a good work ethic. He would provide a listening ear when I needed godly advice on the next steps, and he would remind me to always give God the glory and follow what God says too. He would talk me out of quitting more times than I can count. He taught me to never give up even when it’s hard. It was always more than just music to him; percussion was and still is a family who I can always lean on.

My mom and I left Ouachita and went to eat at the local BBQ place. We enjoyed small talk and dreaming of the future. When we finished eating, we headed back home.

We get home and I run to tell my nana the good news, “I got the scholarship!! I’m going to be in the marching band!”

She smiles and says, “I’m so proud of you!”

Everything I have told you up till now has been retold to me, or what I have reread in the journals I kept growing up. The fact of the matter is, I don’t remember any of that. My memory starts in March of 2017, at the supposedly most wonderful, happiest place on earth.

I say supposedly because even though the bus is the best place to take naps and Florida has beautiful weather, my roommates, Em, Zynmari, and Sophie Bradford are the best, I was not happy. This was my first time being away from my family. I was excited but scared.

We arrive in charter buses in Florida. It’s sunny but not hot. Our first stop is the hotel. The directors get us all checked in and hands out room keys to everyone. “Go up to your rooms, get settled and be back down in an hour.” Our band directors instruct everyone to do.

We do as we are told and we return back to the lobby to load the busses again. Before too long we are back on the road again to the seemingly happiest place on earth. Once we arrive I find my percussion director and the rest of the drumline family. We take a group selfie and then enter the gates one after another. We are greeted with smiling faces and a giant golf ball at Epcot. Its beautiful, some would say breathtaking. It’s loud and crowded and suddenly I don’t feel so well. My heart starts pounding and my breathing speeds up as if I can’t catch my breathe. My chest is hurting and the world starts spinning. I hold my hands over my ears. “Jesus is my Lord and savior, He never leaves me.” I say over and over to myself, while sobbing until Josh and Kate walk up. As I see them walking towards me I start to wipe my tears.

“What’s wrong Hannah?” Kate ask.

Josh and Kate are dating. Josh is on drumline and Kate plays flute. Kate has been kind to me and we have hung out a few times. She has a sweet spirit. Josh on the other hand, I believe only speaks to me because of Kate. But something was different at Disney.

“Hannah, are you having a panic attack?” Josh ask, “Come, lets get you seated with some water over here.” He demands while holding my arm and walking me to a close by bench.

“Who are you hanging out with?” Kate ask.

“My uhhh myself.” I hesitantly respond.

“No ma’am!” Kate shouts, “You will hang out with us.”

“Yeah, you shouldn’t be walking around alone.” Josh agrees.

At last, I agree. I hang out with them pretty much the whole time. There were a few rides they rode, and I did not, and a few I rode, and they did not. Still, they waited for me at every ride. I was in shock but so grateful they took me in. I was glad they stayed by my side.

We don’t spend much time at Epcot since it’s the first day due to time. It’s day two and the plan is stay at Epcot all day long. We go from one ride to the next and I am being tossed between all the friend groups. Em and Zynmari, Sophie Bradford and other freshmen, and Josh and Kate, it’s like they are all in a custody battle for me but not in the good way. It feels like my anxiety is too much for anyone to handle. Finaly, we find my percussion director and his family. They don’t seem to mind me hanging out with them.

Epcot is beautiful and we are learning a lot about different cultures around the world, but there is not much to do except eat. By the end of the day everyone has full tummies and is ready to go back to the hotel and rest for the parade the next day.

We wake up early in the morning, since we have a parade today, for an early rehearsal at Magic Kingdom. We once again load the busses and head to the park. Upon arrival we are taken back to the parade VIP’s area. We are instructed to unload the band bus and set all the instruments up. Once we are done, we are to wait for further instructions. So, we do just that.

“Alright, good morning! I hope y’all had fun yesterday, here is the plan for today,” our head band director started announcing over the megaphone. “We will rehearse our two songs that we will play on repeat for the parade, then you are free to roam the park until 2:15. At 2:15 you need to head back to here so we can warm up at 2:30. Any questions?”

No one had anything to say. I think we were all just ready to have fun; nobody wanted to be at rehearsal longer than required. We play our songs once each and that seems to be enough.

“See everyone back here at 2:30, in uniform ready to march.” Our head band director announces.

I decide to hang out with the drumline group with our percussion director. It’s a fun day. Splash mountain is a blast, we get a picture with all of us at playing position going down the mountain. “We all look so serious!” Em says while laughing.

“Is that not what we were supposed to do?” I ask confused.

“It was a joke, Hannah.” Em says, wondering why I didn’t get that.

“Oh. Yeah. Haha.” I respond with a fake laugh. Even though I laugh, I am still confused. Which makes my head hurt. Suddenly I realized how wet I am. My heart starts racing and my head is pounding. I hold my hand on my chest and my breathing speeds up.

“Hannah, are you having another panic attack?” Kate sincerely asks.

In separated breaths I manage to say, “I can’t breathe.”

“Why are you panicking?” Kate asks in wonder.

I slap my pants and grab my shirt and try to pull them away from my skin.

“Oh, your clothes are wet. That’s okay, you’re not in trouble. We are all wet from Splash Mountain. You’re supposed to be wet. It’ll dry.”

I sigh with big relief and try to smile.

The day goes by fast, it’s two o’clock and we are on the opposite side of the park.

“We should head back to the VIP area now.” Our percussion director suggests.

“Okay!” we all agree and walk back to the VIP area.

Once we reach the buses we change into our band uniforms. It is the heat of the day, and the uniforms are very breathable. Once everyone is changed its past 2:30, there isn’t time to properly warm up so we are given one minute to warm up on our own. The noise level is so loud I can’t think straight. I decide not to warm up, plus there’s not much warming up I can do since I play crash cymbals.

The first part of the parade is fine, however, when we get about halfway through it, all the heat and sweat starts to get to me. It’s hard to catch my breath. By the end of the parade, I am in full blown Asthma attack. I pass my cymbals off to someone else, as I rip off my uniform jacket.

I was officially diagnosed with asthma when I was a freshman. The doctor thought it was due to my naturally enlarged tonsils and my closed adonis. After having both of those removed, the doctor’s thoughts were proven wrong. I still have asthma attacks when I do any slight physical activity. That’s the main reason I am in front ensemble during marching season. My percussion director doesn’t want me passing out on the field. Even though I don’t march during games or competitions, I march during parades and usually do pretty good. This one, however, is longer than any parade I have ever been in.

I take a seat on the curb and someone brings me water. It helps calm me down and my breathing picks back up as normal. Nothing like a little excitement to make this place better. The evening time flies by. Once it turns dark out, we witness a very beautiful firework display. The firework display must be my favorite part thus far.

The next day, we go to Universal Studios. Things start looking up. I’ve gotten used to being away from home. I really enjoyed exploring. I believe my friends are starting to enjoy my presence and not be irritated by it. I ride every ride possible and buy all the souvenirs. I wish we could spend more time here but one day is all we get, today. Tonight, we will pack our bags and head home tomorrow.

It has become apparent, I have no concept of time, seeing as today also went by fast. Even though it was the most fun I had on the trip I am excited for the ride home. The sun rises early and so do we. We pack up, load the busses, and eighteen hours later, we arrive back at school.

The rest of the school year flew by quickly.

“Good morning! It’s time to get dress so you can go get breakfast with Alex,” my mom shouted alarming me to start my day.

It’s graduation day and Alex and I decided to spend one last morning together before everything changes. Well not everything will change, we are both going to be in the same college town and we will be living closer to each other than we ever have before, right across the street. However, since the first time, since before I met her, we would not be going to the same school. We will be rivals!

I am so excited to get dressed and meet with Alex as we share all the memories of high school together. She has stayed by my side this last semester and I couldn’t have done it without her. I go by Alex’s house to pick her up and then we go to IHOP for breakfast. We spend time just talking about the future and laughing about all the crazy things that happened this last year. It’s a joyous time.

“So, y’all are moving today? After graduation?” Alex questions with concern.

“That’s what mom said. We have to be out of the house by end of today.”

“And your dad is coming to see you graduate?”

“Supposedly, we shall see if he shows up.” I began to tell Alex the current status of our so-called father/daughter relationship. “I haven’t seen him since the day I came home from the hospital. He hasn’t called or visited or texted. He had a second chance to prove what everyone was telling me about him wrong, and he chose to be the same ole-doesn’t care about his youngest daughter-kind of father. So much for second chances. I don’t care if he shows up or not!”

“I’m sorry I brought him up,” Alex apologizes.

“It’s fine, I’m just ready to leave this town.”

“What are you going to do this summer?” Alex asks.

“Mom said I have to get a job.”

“Good luck with that.”

We finish eating and leave to go to the church for the graduation ceremony.

The ceremony takes forever to get through all five hundred of my classmates.

After the ceremony, I am forced to take pictures. It doesn’t take long to get all the photos mom wants. Then we go to lunch at CiCi’s pizza.

Of course, when we get to CiCi’s my dad and his new girlfriend are waiting for our arrival. He introduces us and we all sit down to eat. My mom, Step-Father, Nana, the middle child and her husband, and I all at the same time.

“Congratulations on accomplishing the easiest thing you will ever do in your life!” My brother-in-law says.

This comment boiled my bones. I burst into tears. “Easy?” I yell. “You think it was easy for me to graduate?” I yell again. “There was nothing easy about starting my whole life over again in the middle of the year! There was nothing easy about having half the school treat me like a baby-child and the other half believing I was faking it! There was nothing easy about me graduating!”

Everyone just stared until, my dad spoke up, “Chill out Hannah, he didn’t mean it like that. Claim down.”

I look at my mom and say, “I’m ready to go. Lunch is over.” I got up and walked to my car and drove off.

For the first time since I lost my memory, a glimpse of the old Hannah had peeped out. The one that had anger outbursts, the one that made everything about herself, the one that didn’t care who she hurt, the one that nobody wanted to see return.

After all the progress I had made, it still wasn’t enough. I had, by the grace of God, relearned how to walk, talk, read and write, maintain my A/B GPA, and graduate with honors, still it wasn’t enough.

**Blast Off**

After my extremely dramatic exit from lunch, nobody wanted to say much while we moved. It’s awkward. I had made everyone uncomfortable. The summer officially starts with all of us going to the house and moving everything from our 5 bedroom, two and a half bath rent house, into a tiny three bedroom, two bath apartment down the street.

“I’m sorry I left lunch like that, mom.”

“Hannah, you had a rough year, and we didn’t know if you would graduate or not. So, despite what your brother-in-law said, I am very proud of you. You worked really hard, and it shows.” My mom says surprisingly with empathy.

I smile and give her a hug. She embraces it for a second and then her tone switches, “now you just need to find a job for the summer.” She pats me on the back and walks out the door.

Honestly, I don’t want a job. I just want to breathe and spend time with friends and learn how to better be in society since in just three short months I will be at college on my own.

I attempt to find a job the first few weeks of summer, even get a few interviews. When the managers come to the realization of who I am and what I have been through, they decide they don’t want to hire me because I am too much of a risk. I try to explain this to my mom, and eventually she understands.

Every day, I go to Lillian and Nathan’s house. I pick them up and then we go hangout around town. They have four other siblings and sometimes we take them too. Sometimes I just hang out at their house instead of going out.

Lillian, Macy, and I were all best friends when Lillian moved to our school when I was in seventh grade. Nathan is my age but he was sixth grade then. Macy and I would have sleepovers at Lillian’s house. Lillian and I would have sleepovers at Macy’s house too when we were all in school together. Since I lost my memory Macy has wanted nothing to do with me, but Lillian, Nathan and I still all go to the same church. We are still really close.

I am closer with Nathan, there was a time when Lillian had stopped talking to me but Nathan never did. We grew closer and closer together and Lillian and Macy pushed me further and further away.

“Do you remember having a crush on me?” Nathan randomly asks me while we are sitting in his livingroom at 10PM one night.

“What is a crush?” I ask him.

“A crush is when you like someone for more than just friends. Like you think they are cute and you want to date them. That kind of thing.”

I am ambushed by this question. I don’t understand exactly what he is talking about and I certainly don’t remember this.

I shake my head no.

“Well, I think you thought I didn’t know, but I know you had the biggest crush on me since that first sleep over when you were in seventh grade.” He reminds me of that night.

“I heard you telling Lillian you liked me. Then when you woke up first, early the next morning, you came and played video games with me. The way you acted, I knew you liked me.”

“Oh, okay. Well did you ever say anything? Nobody has told me I was dating anyone.” I questioned him in confusion.

“I never said anything.”

None of this was making sense to me. The day goes on and the conversation isn’t brought up again. We don’t talk about it again for a couple of weeks.

“Still no feelings?” Nathan asks while he is driving us around the long way back to his house in my car.

“Nope.” I assure him. Though by now I wasn’t sure that was my true answer. I had grown to know him, and I loved spending time with him and his family. I was also taken by surprise. “Where did that come from?” I hesitantly asked.

“Just checking.” He answers, never taking his eyes off the road.

This happened periodically throughout the summer and by the end of summer, his whole family seemed to be rooting for me and him to get together. They didn’t realize how serious he was about a different girl who lived in a different state. Plus, I’d be off to college, and he would still be in high school.

On the last day of summer, Lillian and Nathan’s family throw a huge end of summer bash. I am super excited because it’s the last day I am in town before going to college. I show up to the party a little late. As soon as I walk in the door, down the long entrance hallway I spot Macy sitting at the dining room table playing cards.

“Come on in,” Nathan happily greets me.

Lillian invites me over, “Hannah, you can come sit by me and we will deal you in.”

I slowly walk over flashing Nathan looks. I can’t help but think, why is she here, why now, why on my last night in town when I have heard nothing from her, why now. I take a deep breath and remind myself to show Christ no matter what. Though it doesn’t go as planned. Two hands into spicy uno and set my cards down and stand up, “I can’t do this.” I walk away and go into Lillian’s room.

Lillian comes after me. “what do you need me to do?”

“I want to talk to her. I need to know why after all those years of supposedly being my best friend how she could just leave me in the darkest day of my life. How she could abandon me just like my dad did.”

“I’ll go get her, and send everyone else outside.”

I shake my head in a gesture to say thank you.

“Macy, can I talk to you in my room?” I hear Lillian ask. “Can everyone else go outside, it’s time for the piñata.”

Macy walks in the door of Lillian’s bedroom to see me pacing back and forth praying that God would tell me exactly what to say and to have control of my emotions.

“How are you?” I try to start with small talk to ease the anxious feelings.

“I’m good. You?” Macy responds short and snappy.

“I can’t do this. Why didn’t you want to see me”

“When?”

“In the hospital, when I was dying? When I knew nobody and couldn’t say anything, but I asked for you?” My voice grew louder as tears started flowing from both eyes. “Did you not care? Was what everyone told me not true? The last seven years of friendship meant nothing to you?” I take a deep breath, while softening my voice. “Were we not ever really best friends?”

Macy sighs and shakes her head no, “I am not good for you. I saw the opportunity to rid you of myself and I felt you were better off without me.”

“You don’t get a say in what is good for me! You don’t get to just walk away and say you know what’s best! That’s my choice to make.”

“But if you knew the way I am living, you would not approve!”

“If you think, I am going to stop loving you, caring about you, being there for you, just because of your choices, then you don’t know me at all.” I take another deep breath. “You may have stopped being my friend, but I will never stop being yours! Rather its today, tomorrow, five years or ten years from now, I will always be there for you even though you weren’t there for me.”

Macy shakes her head and walks out, all the way to her car, without saying bye to anyone.

I go and sit on the couch in the living room and soon Nathan comes in and joins me.

“Can I ask you something?”

Nathan responds by nodding his head.

“Why did you ever start being my friend?”

He paused, a for a moment I saw sadness wash over his face as he looks down at his lap. “I wanted to fix you. All them years ago when we first played video games together, I saw something very broken in you and I thought I could fix it. I knew you were depressed and anxious and I had never hoped it would get as bad as it did, I had hoped I could fix you before then.”

“Thank you for that.” I said, then I stood up and walked out after telling everyone bye.

I drove home crying the whole way, not fully realizing everything that just happened.

The night time went by fast and morning came way to early. Today I get to move into college early for marching band camp. Alex is riding up with me in my car and my mom and nana are following us in their car. My roommate is also in band, so I will get to meet her when we arrive.

Band camp and the first couple of weeks of school go by fast.

Campus Ministries host a fall retreat at the end of August for any students who want to go. I pray whether I should go or not and conclude that I should. During the retreat we have worship services and breakout sessions. One of the breakout sessions involved a couple who are missionaries overseas in a country where Christians are illegal, they can’t even tell us their real names. As they speak, they are pointing to places on a map while telling us about all that the Lord has done. For the first time in my known to me life Holy Spirit allows me to see a vision. I see a set of hands holding a beating heart up to the map. I hear the words “You are called to spread the gospel to many Nations.”

I nudge the person sitting next to me and ask, “did you see or hear that?”

“See or hear what?” they respond.

“Never mind.” I say.

I don’t think anything of it for a long while.

Months pass and I spend most of my days studying because being a Political Science major who’s on track for Law School isn’t easy. Most of my nights are spent reading and re-reading for my comparative politics class, a class which I am currently failing. We took mid-terms last week and will get our grade back tomorrow. I decide I am going to spend time in prayer about what the next move is.

“God, I know what you say is true and you never leave me nor forsake me. Would you tell me what to do? Would you expand my mind to be able to understand what I read? Would you allow me to pass? What shall I do?”

I wait a few minutes to see if I feel anything or hear from the Lord. When I don’t, I make a deal with God. “Okay. If I fail the test that we get back tomorrow, I will do whatever you say do God.”

The next day goes on forever. Finally, I arrive to my comparative politics class.

“Good evening.” The professor says. “I have mid-terms graded, and I will pass them out now.”

There is only eight of us in this class, it doesn’t take long for me to get my test. To my dismay, I look down and see a giant red 59% circled three times. Before I even have time to process what I need to do, I hear a voice say, “Stand up and drop the class.”

So I do. I stand up and say, “I’d like to withdraw from this class.”

“That is a wise choice, we can go now and fill out the paperwork.” The professor responds, already halfway to his office.

We go around the corner and he signs the paperwork. “Take this to your current dean and get him to sign it. You have thirty minutes before you won’t be allowed to withdraw since it’s the last day to withdraw.”

I take the paperwork and thank the professor, then race up the stairs and around the corner to the deans office. The deans assistant takes the paperwork and says, “You will need to change your major unless you are going to graduate late because you have to pass Comparative Politics to move forward in your current major.”

“Yes ma’am, I will change my major.”

“What to? I need to know so the dean can fill this out properly.”

I hear the voice again, “Christian Studies”.

I respond to the assistant, “Christian Studies.”

“Alright, I’ll be right back.” The assistant says.

A minute later she returns, “Here, you need to takes this to the school of Christian studies and get their dean to sign it before they close in fifteen minutes.”

I take the paper and yell back thank you as I run out the door, down the stairs, and across campus. Out of breath I walk into the school of Christian Studies. “Here you go, I need the dean to sign this so I can change my major.” I say handing the paperwork to the dean’s assistant.

“What do you want to emphasis in?” she asks.

Puzzled by the question I ask, “What are my options?”

She begins to list them and again I hear the voice say, “Missions.”

“Missions.” I commit.

“Alright, thank you I will be right back.” She takes a few seconds and then she comes back. “You will meet with your new academic adviser next week.”

I am excited but nervous all at the same time.

I call my mom and let her know, “I knew you wouldn’t last long in Political Science,” she says.

“I’ve accepted the call to missions.”

“Whatever you want to do, Hannah.” She answers back, “as long as you graduate on time, I’m only paying for four years.”

She hung up and I went to counseling.

I don’t enjoy counseling much. Often, I feel worse leaving than I did when I walked in. In past sessions she has said that everything is my fault. She is supposed to help me manage the anxiety and depression but each week I feel myself diving headfirst full force right back into where I left it. The birth control they gave me to regulate my hormones, I feel is heighten everything else. My counselor says the reason my roommate isn’t kind to me is because I’m not considerate enough, though I feel I do everything in my power to please her, and the reason my roommate goes behind my back talking bad about me is because I am not spending enough time with her. But how can I when all I do is school, band, and work study. There is not more time in the day for a social life.

“I changed my major today.” I tell my counselor.

“Go figure. I knew you weren’t committed to the other.” She responds.

“It was too hard, I wasn’t getting anywhere, and I don’t want to be a lawyer anymore. I want to be a missionary.” I start to explain my decision. “I believe God is calling me to do missions overseas.” She seems disinterested. Before I start to cry, I get up and walk out.

I can’t handle it anymore. I don’t feel like her service was bettering me. I decided not to go back to her.

The rest of the semester drags on and on and finally I have made it to Christmas break.

“Mom, I can’t go back to school, I want to transfer and stay home. My roommate hates me and I have no friends. I can’t do it anymore.” I begged my mom, pleading to let me transfer.

“The local university doesn’t have your new major. You have to finish out the school year. If you still want to transfer come summer time, I’ll let you.”

I was beyond done with being at Ouachita. I have one friend who is a senior and I only ever see her at band and during percussion classes, sure she took me to hot springs to look at Christmas lights, which I enjoyed, but when I wasn’t with her, I felt so alone. College is hard enough, class wise, then throw in living there not knowing a bunch of people. Of course, I have Alex across the street but our schedules hardly ever line up. It is nothing like what we had planned.

Christmas time came and went and before too long I am back at school. Within the first week of being back at school I made some new friends and devised a plan to co-exist with my roommate till I could get a new one the next year. I start my Christian studies classes and enjoy learning more about the word of God and how to read and study it. It doesn’t necessarily come easy but I am picking it up on it a lot faster then I was Political Science.

Still, with all the people around me and my new found love for learning, I am sinking deeper and deeper into the depression that had me hospitalized before. The semester seems to fly by and my plan to avoid my roommate got me through the end of the school year. Now it’s time to think about summer plans.

My mom mentions, “Your oldest sister called and said she can get you a summer job working with her, but you have to help care for your new nephew when you are home and help with house chores if you go back to California.”

“You’d really let me go back to California and be with my sister?”

“Yeah, but you have to work, like really work!”

“Deal!” I agreed to going back to California and working. Who doesn’t need some baby snuggles.

California hadn’t changed much since the last time I was here. This time though my sister was heavily dealing with post-partum depression and asked me ways to help her. She had known I had dealt with it before but didn’t realize I was still struggling with it.

Every night I looked out my second story window thinking about jumping, wondering if the right bones would break. Then I wondered what my sister would do if she didn’t have someone to bring her baby boy to in the morning when she needed to go back to sleep. Who would do my job? How would nana feel if she woke up and found me dead.

Every morning came early with the same cry of a 3 month old boy who can’t decide if he wants to go back to sleep or wake up and play.

“Here, I’m going back to bed.” My oldest sister said while handing me her baby.

I sigh, and reach out to grab him. “Okay, goodnight!” I say with a chuckle. I stare into those bright beautiful eyes of his and wander how I’d ever want to leave him.

Day after day I go through the same routine, nightly thinking of a new way to off myself and deciding to go to sleep so I could wake early in the morning and see those dreamy eyes and feel the sweet love from this precious gift from God. God knew I wouldn’t give into that spiritual attack as long as I had this sweet boy in my arms.

However, at some point, I would have to go back to school and what’s stopping me from doing it then.

The summer ended quickly and now school has started. I’m excited to return to campus ministries fall retreat. It came early this year. And flew by.

I drop a fellow band mate off at her dorm on our way back from the fall retreat. I am exhausted, and just want to go home. On my drive back to my home town I start to doze off, realizing I maybe falling asleep, I begin to fight it. This happens often on long drives, and I haven’t crashed yet, so my tactics must work.

Suddenly I am taken to a place in my mind that remembers Ash. How I was in a dark place when she took her life, and I admired that she went through with it. I realized that if I allow myself to just “fall asleep” at the wheel no one would know I had given up, no one would be so heartbroken because it would be an accident. All the worries in this world would come to a halt, I wouldn’t have to deal with the things that plague my mind and the emotions I can’t control. All hope was lost. My eyelids fall and in a split second I was gone.

Suddenly the moment the back end of my car hit the guard rail I realized it wasn’t admiration at all, it was the spirit of suicide, it had attached itself to me through the depression I so deeply drowned myself in. I cried out to the Lord, “God I’m sorry! Please take control!”

The steering wheel straightened out and no one was miles in front of me or behind. I regained control of the car and pulled over. Instantly a black SUV pulled up behind me. A lady wearing a girly girl originals t-shirt that favored my mom gets out of her car and walks up to the passenger side of my car. “That’s some good driving you did back there. Are you okay?” She asks concerningly.

I shake my head yes and attempt to hold back more tears.

“Did you have that dent in your car before today?” she asks.

I step out of my car and walk to the back, noticing a second woman in the passenger seat of the SUV. “Oh my!! My mom is going to kill me!”

“Hey, sweetie, breathe, you are okay and your car will be okay. Where are you headed? Where did you come from?” She points to a sticker on my car, “You go there?”

I attempt to respond while stuttering through the words, “I go to Ouachita, I’m heading home, I uh um I fell asleep while driving.” And there it was. The moment I begin to tell this lie to cover up and hide that I hadn’t progressed as much as everyone thought I had. The lie that allowed me to bury myself in shame and keep it hidden. The lie that allowed the spirit of suicide to stay attached through depression for years to come.

“We are headed the same direction as you. Would you like to follow us?”

I agree.

They pull off onto the interstate and I follow closely behind them giving my mind something else to focus on. About 10 miles later they take their exit, the driver waves out the window and the whole car disappears into the air. I believe I was visited by angels sent by God to check on me. I take the next exit, and quickly get home.

I run into the apartment, “Mom, Mom, Mom, please don’t hate me or be mad.” I yell while crying.

“What’s wrong, Hannah, are you okay?”

“I am okay, but my car is not. Come look!”

We walk out to my car, and she stares at the dent in the car.

“How’d this happen?”

Again, I lie, “I fell asleep at the wheel”

“Well, you can’t help that. Let’s go in and you can take a nap.”

That was the end of it. She never brought it back again. I continued to allow shame to plague me, and depression to drown me.

The rest of Sophomore year zoomed by. I have made new friendships, seen old ones fade and live with new roommates that started off great but ended poorly.

I spent all of second semester preparing for my summer internship in Peru. It was time to put my calling into action and prepare to be in the mission filled. I would be spending 21 days in Peru doing missions.

No one could have prepared me for the sickness that would plague me after being in Peru for just ten days.

During the first ten days of the trip my team was at the orphanage in the village four hours from the mission center. I found a love for kids. A typical day at the orphanage looked like this; Wake up at 5am to go do all the girls’ hair then go back and do daily devotional before meeting at breakfast at 6am. Then we met all the kids in the worship room to share a message with them before they went to school. While the kids went to school we went into the village and did street evangelism. Talking to people in the community about Jesus, preaching the good news, helping in their gardens. By dark, we would return to the orphanage to eat dinner and play with the kids. Before it was too late, it was bed time.

I found a love for kids, I knew I had but finally experienced it in a different way. It made my heart happy to see the joy the kids experienced. It brought me back to a place of hope.

After the first part of the trip, our team swopped places, we went to the mission center and they came to the orphanage. A day at the mission center looked like getting up early for class training then going to the public schools and putting on Love Conferences for the students. During the Conferences we told and show the students the love of Jesus and how to stay pure in action and in thought. By dark we would travel to house churches and afterward return to the center for dinner and worship. I was at the mission center for two days before I broke out in a million tiny ‘bites’, so we thought.

“Um we need to take you to a doctor call your mom.” My advisor said.

I facetime my mom, as soon as the camera comes on she yells, “Oh my gosh Hannah you have the Chicken Poxs!”

My adviser overhears the conversation, “If you do you need to get out of here. Peruvians don’t have a vaccine for that.”

I walk out the door and wait for the local missionaries to come get me.

By the end of the doctors visit I am expected to stay with the local missionaries and not participate with my team until I am no longer contagious.

This ended up being a blessing. As soon as my fever broke the missionary couple took me to town and showed me the day in their life. I saw first hand what it looked like to do overseas missions full time and I was amazed. This experience grew a new found love for the calling God put on my life. A new found hope that it can really happen for me.

Here I am, Lord send me! And He did! I get to experience Peru in a way my teammates don’t get to. Even though I am sick the Lord still chooses to use me.

**Sickness Defeated**

The rest of my summer was filled with assignments to complete my internship.

I’m most excited for junior year. I am living in a campus owned apartment, by myself.

I know what you are thinking, how this possibly be a good thing after suffering from depression and anxiety. I actually believe this will be a good year for me. I’m believing that this year will be a magnitude of change for the better.

Fall retreat is the first weekend of school. I have been praying for the past few weeks for this to be an amazing time of refreshing and renewing. Of course, the breakout session I choose first is the mental illness and God session.

After going through all the things, I have heard before the tall, dark, man concludes the session with, “Does anyone have any questions?”

I raise my hand.

“Yes ma’am” he says while pointing at me. “The blonde girl.”

“What would you say to someone who has tried multiple different counselors and none of it has worked?” I thought I had stumped him.

He took a moment, then he spoke, “You haven’t found the right one then. Try again, and again, and again, until you find one that fits.” His toning started amping up, he was enthusiastic. “Not everyone meshes well together, not everybody tactics works for everyone. You’ve got to find what works best for you.”

I smirk and shake my head in disbelief that his solution to my issue was to try again. As if what I wanted to do was relive all the trauma I had ever been through with a new counselor, no thank you!

Later on at dinner, he comes and finds me. He sits his plate right beside me and sits next to me. He has a deck of cards in his hands. He begins to shuffle them and ask, “Wanna play?”

Hesitantly I agree.

The first few rounds are completely silent. Then he asks, “What’s your name?”

I point to my name tag,

“I want to hear you say it.”

Frustrated by the question I say, “Hannah. My name is Hannah.”

“And who is Hannah?”

Wow! Talk about catching someone off guard. The walls didn’t have to fall down because the timing of this conversation caused them to disappear.

“I…I don’t know.” I admitted.

“Here’s my card. When we get back on campus, I’d love to help guide you to finding out.” He spoke, then he got up and walked away.

I was intrigued. No one had ever asked me who I was, they always just went about their own assumptions. I always had to prove who I was. Nobody had ever cared about who I thought I was.

When I returned to school, I made an appointment to see the new counselor first thing.

“Good afternoon,” he began, “how are you today?”

“Tired.” I said, short and snappy like.

“I spent some time with the Lord on your behalf, this is how these sessions are going to go if you are okay with it.” He says, handing me a packet with a lot of questions on it. “I want you to answer these questions to the best, most honest, of your ability. The only way counseling works is if you are first honest with yourself and God, and then with me. I am not here to coddle you, I am here to help you. You’ve got to be willing to put in the work.”

Week after week I showed up and put in the work, and for the first time, felt like my identity wasn’t in all the diagnosis’ I had received. I finally felt like I was able to be who God made me to be.

During the late fall serval church/summer camps come through recruiting. I had fallen in love working with kids so much in Peru that I wanted to be a camp counselor at the camp I went to the summer before I started college. The cool thing about these camps, visiting schools is that they offer in person interviews even if someone hasn’t filled out an application yet. I saw this opportunity and ceased it.

“So tell me about your relationship with Christ.” The man from my camp I attended instructs after the usually name, age, major, and hometown small talk.

I begin telling him about when I was five and accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. I recited it just as it had been rehearsed after I lost my memory. Then I lead him down the path of my parents divorce and grandparents death. He still seems interested, nodding his head and taking down notes. Then I reach the point of saying, “but everything I just told you has been retold to me as I lost my memory when I was senior in high school due to what doctors could only classify as a severe nervous breakdown.” Before I could even get to the miracle moment his attention drifted off. I grew frustrated at the situation. “Anyways that’s my relationship with Christ.”

“Thank you. This concludes our interview.” He said while straightening his papers. He then gets up and walks away.

I sit still for a moment and pray “Lord, your will be down, in and throw me.” I wipe the tears from my eyes and get up and walk towards the front door when suddenly I hear a lady say, “Hey, would you like to chat a bit?” when I turn around and show her my face she says, “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine thanks for asking” I reply.

“Do you want to have a non-committable interview with SkyRanch Camps?” she asks.

“Sure, can’t be as bad as my last one.” I say with a begrudging attitude.

“I sure hope not. Here let’s have a seat and chat.” She says while gesturing to two comfy chairs.

The conversation is long and fruitful and heartfelt. Every step of the way through my story she is responsive in a positive manner saying things like, “Wow! Look at God work!” and “How incredible!”. The atmosphere has changed and I can feel the Lord’s presence all over this interview, even though I had never heard of this camp before.

“Thank you so much for speaking with me today!” the camp rep says as she leans in for a hug. “You have an incredible testimony, and the Lord has so much in store for you. Please apply for SkyRanch!”

I assure her I will and go about my day.

I apply for SkyRanch and am given the option between tons of different jobs and force to choose my top five picks. My number one option is customer service. I feel I could be good at this. My number three pick is photographer. It’s not something I know how to do but have always wanted to learn and loved doing when I could get my hands on someone’s camera.

A few weeks go by and I get a call from the camp office for the phone interview for customer service. I feel I answer all the questions correctly. It’s a flawless interview. However, a few days pass, and I receive an email saying, “We appreciate your interest in working with our customer service department for the 2020 camp season, however we have decided to go a different direction and do not feel you are the best fit for this position.”

I am devasted! My hope of working at a camp is crushed.

A few more weeks passed and I received a voicemail from SkyRanch asking me to schedule a phone interview with their media department. I set it up for a few days later. Coincidentally it’s set for the day Ashlynne and I will head to her home town for thanksgiving break.

Ashlynne is my college best friend. We met freshmen year but didn’t become close until sophomore year. By junior year she practically lived with me. We were inseparable.

It’s the day we drive four hours to get to Ashlynne’s home. I am sick with hopeful just allergies. None the less, I am miserable. Before leaving our college town we stop to get gas and my phone rings, “It’s skyranch!” I tell her.

“Answer it!” She says as she is siting in the driver seat waiting for the gas to finish pumping.

I answer the phone and the interview goes nothing like I had planned on it going. They ask a lot of questions about how I handle deadlines, conflict, constructive criticism; all the things I’d have to manage and deal with if I got the job.

My answers seemed very familiar to me as I began speaking, sounding repetitive, “I cry.”

I realized I had found myself in the same space, mentally, as I was in at the children’s hospital in Little Rock. Not much had changed.

“I cry, but not in front of people, I wait till I go to bed and am alone.” I say in response to one of the interview questions to soften the blow.

“That doesn’t sound healthy,” the interviewer says, “we will work on that.”

After a few questions later, I hang up the phone and look at Ashlynne, “Welp, do you think I’m going to get the job.”

“Absolutely not!” Ashlynne replies.

“Well, thanks for being honest.” I say while holding back tears.

Thanksgiving break seems to flash before our very eyes. It’s the last night before we return back to school. We are in Ashlynne’s living room and I get a phone call. I step out of the living room into Ashlynne’s bedroom to take the call.

“Hannah Congratulations!” a crowd of people yell on the other end of the phone.

“You are being offered to come spend the summer at skyranch as a photographer!” a man says.

“Thank you!” I manage to get out.

“Be on the lookout in your email for your job offer and the paperwork you will need to fill out to accept the job. We look forward to seeing you in the summer.” The man responds back.

I prayed about accepting the job and felt the Lord saying yes. So I did. Not many exciting things happened the rest of the semester. But then March 2020 came.

The rumors going around are that we are not getting to stay at school. There is some type of virus that is heavily contagious and the whole country is being put on lock-down. COVID-19 is a current pandemic plaguing our country. Ouachita has decided that only international students, and those that have immune-compromised families can stay on campus but they have to petition for it. Seeing as my nana is older in age, my immune system hasn’t progressed as much as doctors and I would like, I don’t get much work done at home, and I live by myself, so I petition to stay.

My petition is denied, and I am forced to move out.

Freshmen year Hannah would have loved being sent back home to do school online, but Junior year Hannah was highly upset. I missed my friends and most importantly my freedom. My mom is so scared I will get sick that she keeps me locked away in the apartment. When my mom and my stepfather bring gracious home, I am not allowed to touch them or put them away due to the possibility that the virus is contagious through a plastic Walmart sack.

The only social interaction I have is through the phone, which praise the Lord for facetime because I am going crazy. Though my mom is freaking out about this virus, I am still convinced that I am going to work at skyranch camps this summer.

My mom seems unphased by the notion since she has stated her case and demanded I not go.

“But mom! I believe God is telling me to go and I have to obey. Not only that, don’t you trust that He will take care of me and protect me?” I respond back to her foot being down.

“Yes, I trust God, but he also gave you common since, not to put yourself in the position to get sick.”

Her lack of trust in God to take care of my health baffles me. “Mom, respectfully, I am going, no matter what.”

“Okay.” She ends the conversation there and doesn’t mention it again.

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I am a senior in college and there’s very few weeks left of school and somehow, I find myself at the bottom of these stairs once again, lying on the ground crying because my ankle is throbbing. I have tried to stand up multiple times and somehow each time I fall back quicker than before. My ankle is swelling rapidly. Kaia walks up with her friend.

Kaia is my downstairs neighbor whom I have known since freshmen year when she stayed two doors down from me. She originally was close friends with my freshmen year roommate, but we had become acquaintances.

“Hannah are you okay?” Kaia asked.

As tears ran down my face, “I need help up.”

Kaia tries to lift me and about that time campus security shows up and commands we call an ambulance to come pick me up and go get x-rays. Reluctantly, I agree.

Kaia follows the ambulance so she can bring me back when I get discharged. We don’t spend too long at the hospital. The doctors say I sprained my ankle again, and this time I cannot put any weight on it for a whole week and after that week I will start physical therapy for six weeks, seeing as this is my fourth sprain on the same ankle, it needs help regaining its strength.

Kaia graciously drives me back to the apartment. When we arrive, she offers for me to hang out with her in her apartment, until my other friends get home so they can help me up the stairs. To which I agree.

“Did you watch the movie ‘A simple Favor’?” she ask.

“I did.” I admit.

“Wasn’t the scene where the women kiss each other just so hot?”

“Uhhh, no.” I say with a disgusted look on my face.

“Hannah, you’re too straight to function.”

“Oh okay.” I say back.

Kaia then gets up and walks back to her bedroom. She doesn’t stay in there long and comes out without her shirt on holding a whip. She runs towards me and shakes her chest in my face.

I’m shocked by the action and am taken back to the summer before I ever started college.

*One person in particular grew to hang around a lot, Rico. He was always just somehow there. He never really reintroduced himself or anything. One day he just popped up and never left me alone.*

*I figure the best thing to do was to ask Alex what mine and his relationship was like before I lost my memory. I trust Alex and her opinions. She seems to know the most about me before my memory lost, she also seems to allow me to explore new things and not force me back into who I was before I lost my memory but instead help gently guide me to who I am becoming.*

*“What do you want to know about him?” She inquires.*

*“Really I just want to know about what our friendship was like before.” I say, informing her of a previous conversation I had with him, “He asked if he could come over and hang out. I told him I would have to ask my mom, but before I do that, I wanted to know what you thought of him.”*

*“Hannah, I want to allow you to make your own decisions about things, but in the past, he has not been the best character to keep around.” She firmly stated.*

*“Thank you for that, but I want to find out for myself. Give him a chance, you know?” I respond. “I am going to ask my mom if he can come over.”*

*Alex didn’t seem to approve of my decision, however, my mind was already made up. I text my mom and ask. She responds quickly with, “I don’t mind.” I tell Rico the news and we make plans to hang out a few days later.*

*A few days have passed and it’s Saturday. Even though my mom and stepdad are gone, Rico is coming over to hang out. I prepared for his arrival by moving my tv to the living room and set up the DVD player. I hear a loud knock on the door. As I walk towards the door I yell, “coming!”*

*I look through the peep hole only to see Rico standing there. I open the door and welcome him in. “Come on in.”*

*“Thank you. Nice place. What are the plans?” Rico begins to asks, “Are we here alone?”*

*“Well we can watch tv, I have lots of DVD’s and no we aren’t alone, my nana is here in her room,” I say while pointing to my nanas room that connects to the living room.*

*“Oh I gotcha. Well at least her door is closed.” Rico oddly points out.*

*“I mean I guess.” Shocked by his observation I try to change the subject. “Wanna watch tv? My favorite show right now is Hawaii Five-0.”*

*Rico has already made himself at home laid out on the couch, “Come join me!”*

*I nod my head as I walk towards the couch and sit down beside him. He wraps his arm around me and pulls me in closer to him. I am unsure of exactly what is going on but everything seems fine for the time being.*

*As the show continues to play Rico adjusts how he is sitting causing me to slide down. Now my back is leaned up against his chest and his hand is hanging over my shoulder. “Give me your hand.” He demands.*

*“Why?”*

*“Just do it.” He says jokingly, with a sneaky laugh.*

*Concerned and a little scared, I give him my hand.*

*“That’s better” he says as he holds my hand interlocked with his rubbing it as if I needed comforting.*

*The show continues to play and he drops my hand and places his hand on my chest. He starts to rub my chest and draw circles with his fingers, soon he moves his hand down further and starts to grab my breast.*

*“STOP!” I scream while grabbing his hand and peeling it off of my chest.*

*“What? It’s what friends do.” He says, pulling me back to his lap.*

*“I don’t like that!” I say trying to sit back up again.*

*“Fine! If you don’t like that then take me home.”*

*“Of course, I’ll take you home, let me get my nana.” I agree and walk to my nana’s room. “Hey nana, can you ride with me to take Rico home?”*

*“I don’t feel good, Hannah, can’t you take him home by yourself?” She asks.*

*I didn’t want to be left alone with Rico any longer but I didn’t know how to tell her what was happening. I wasn’t sure if Rico was telling the truth and that’s what friends do or if I did something wrong. I didn’t want to upset my nana so I said,*

*“Okay, well, I am going to take him home and be right back then. Love you!”*

*She shouted, “I love you! Y’all be safe”*

*We walk out to the car, “You’re going to have to tell me how to get to your house.” I instruct Rico.*

*“Okay, I’ll direct you.”*

*We get in the car, and I drive off. There isn’t much conversation until we start approaching His house.*

*“Isn’t that your house?” I ask as we slowly pass his house.*

*“Yeah, but we can just keep driving.” Rico insists.*

*“Um no!” I swerve the car around and pull into his driveway. I park and he opens his door. In a blink of an eye he reaches one of his hands over and places it on my inner thigh squeezing it, “Well we should do this again.” He says while placing his other hand on my shoulder closest to my door pinning me down. Before I could respond, he is leaning in for what I assume was supposed to be a kiss.*

*I bend my knee to force him to release his hand and push him out the door with all my strength and drive away quickly. The passenger door closes because of the wind, and I can hear the tires screech on the concreate driveway. I start crying, and loudly repeating, “Jesus is my Lord and Savior!”*

*Once I arrive back at the apartment, I sit in my car and dry up all my tears. I don’t understand what just happened, but I know it wasn’t right. I call Alex, “You were right.” I assure her, “I am never talking to Rico ever again.”*

I’m brought back to reality when Kaia says, “Do you like that?”

I shake my head no wishing I could scream, but instead I just say, “Kaia, I don’t feel that way about you please stop.” Surprisingly, she stops.

As she walks back into her room, I hear her say, “Your no beauty queen yourself.”

“I think I should leave now,” I holler back.

I pick up my crunches and stand up, make my way to the door and open it. About that time my friends show up and help me up the stairs.