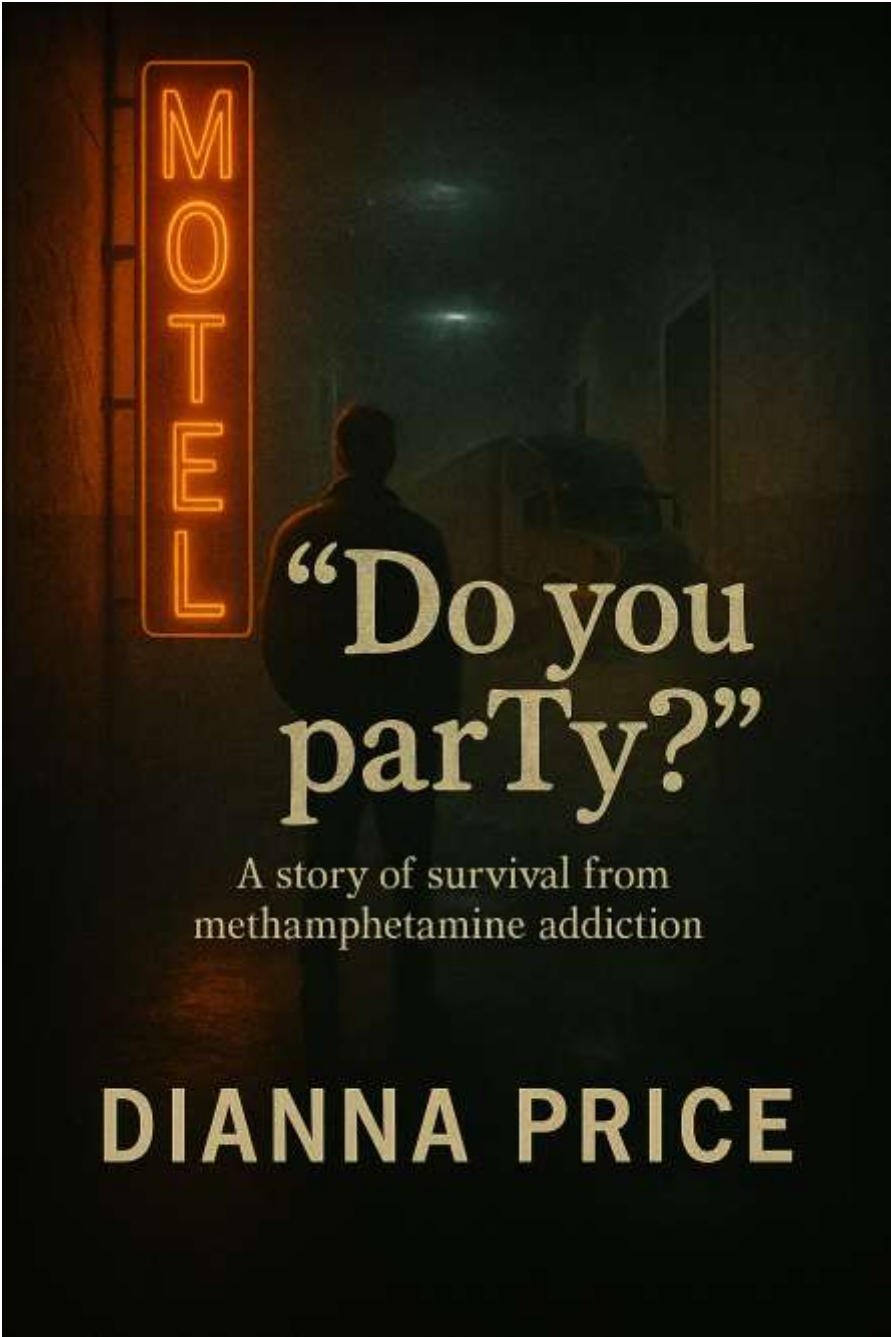




MOTEL

“Do you parTy?”

A story of survival from
methamphetamine addiction

DIANNA PRICE

“Do you parTy?”

A STORY OF SURVIVAL FROM
METHAMPHETAMINE ADDICTION
DIANNA PRICE, CPRS

Free Recovery Edition

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Email: DiannaPrice796@gmail.com

Prolog

Methamphetamine wasn't invented in the streets. It didn't start in alleys or motel rooms or trap houses. It was born in a lab—in Japan, in 1893—when a chemist named Nagai Nagayoshi first synthesized it from a plant used to treat asthma. It was refined again in 1919 into the form most people would recognize today: crystal methamphetamine.

It didn't take long for the world to notice what it could do.

During World War II, meth was handed out like rations to soldiers on all sides—to keep them awake, sharp, and numb to exhaustion. It gave them the ability to march without sleeping, fight without fear, and forget they were human. Nazi troops took it under the name *Pervitin*. American and British soldiers had their own versions. The drug spread quickly and silently, masked as usefulness.

In the decades that followed, meth found its way into medicine cabinets. It was legally prescribed in the U.S. during the 1950s and 60s for everything from depression to obesity. It was marketed, sold, and swallowed under brand names that sounded professional—safe even. But the damage was already in motion.

By the time meth was labeled a Schedule II controlled substance, the addiction was already outpacing regulation. Homemade labs sprang up across the country, built in sheds and trailers and suburban kitchens. Then came the cartels—flooding the U.S. with purer, cheaper, more potent product. What had started as science became

survival. And what had once been a tool for war became a weapon of its own.

That's the history.

But I didn't know any of it the first time I tried meth.

I wasn't looking for it. I wasn't chasing anything—at least, not at first. I was a truck driver. I had a clean record, a commercial license, and no history of substance abuse. I'd never smoked weed. Never popped pills. Maybe five drinks in my entire life.

I thought people who used drugs were weak.

I thought treatment centers were for people who made excuses.

I thought addiction was a choice—and one I would never make.

I was wrong.

This book isn't about statistics or science. It's not a clinical study or a cautionary tale told from a distance. It's about what happens when the unimaginable becomes your reality. When the life you swore you'd never live becomes the one you're barely surviving. It's about the subtle unraveling—the quiet pull—and the terrifying speed at which everything can change.

But it's also about something else.

It's about what happens when you don't die.

When you make it through.

When you claw your way back, inch by inch, day by day—until one morning, you wake up and realize:

You're still here.

This is a story about addiction.

But more than that, it's a story about survival.

And hope.

Because no matter how far gone you feel—you are never too far to come back.

The First Time

June–July 2019, Ontario, California

I didn't mean to try meth. Not really. Not the way it happened.

It was a hot day in Ontario, California, sometime in the summer of 2019. The kind of dry, relentless heat that soaks into your bones. I had parked my semi at a truck stop, just outside the lot near the back, where it was quieter. I was supposed to be resting for my next load. But instead, I was sitting in the back of my truck with a man I had met on a dating app.

We had been talking for a while, and I didn't feel unsafe. In fact, I felt oddly seen. I was 49 years old, a commercial driver with no history of drug use—not even weed. Maybe five alcoholic drinks my entire life. I had spent my adulthood chasing safety, rules, and sobriety, mostly because my CDL meant everything to me. You lose that license, you lose your living.

He offered me a drink—orange-flavored, cold, and sweet—and I took a sip without question. It wasn't until later I realized he had already laced it with meth. Then he pulled out a bong and asked if I wanted to try. I told him I didn't feel anything from the drink, and he smiled a little. Said, "Give this a shot. It's different."

I remember the first inhale like it burned itself into my soul. The taste of orange sherbet—just like those Push-Up pops I used to get as a kid—made it easier. Too easy. I

took another hit. And another. Waiting to feel something. I didn't understand that I was already flying.

And then suddenly... I was gone.

No slow build-up. No warning. It felt like falling off a building and never hitting the ground. My body was weightless, my thoughts disjointed. I couldn't stop moving, talking, looking. I was cracked wide open.

What scared me most wasn't the high—it was how good it felt. Too good. Like the world made sense for the first time in forever. I hadn't realized how much I was aching until my meth silenced the ache.

We stayed there, in the back of my semi, for hours. Time lost meaning. I was already hooked and didn't even know it.

Later that night, as I lay there staring at the ceiling, my mind racing and sleep nowhere in sight, I knew something inside me had shifted. A door had opened, and I wasn't sure I could close it again.

But I didn't tell anyone. Not yet. I was still a "good girl." Still a truck driver with a perfect record. I convinced myself it was a one-time thing.

It wasn't.

The Descent

2019–2020

It didn't take long after that first time for meth to start pulling me under.

I kept driving. I kept pretending. But something had changed. There was a new hunger inside me—a buzz just beneath my skin. I started craving the feeling of that first high like it was oxygen. Nothing else compared.

At first, it was occasional. A weekend off. A layover. Something I could control.

But meth doesn't care about moderation. It doesn't care about control.

Every time I used it, I promised myself it was the last time. And then the loneliness would creep in, or the silence would get too loud, and I'd find a reason to chase it again. I told myself I was still functioning. Still getting loads delivered. Still passing inspections. Still holding it together.

But bit by bit, I was slipping.

I started taking longer breaks between hauls. Staying in hotels instead of sleeping in my truck. Meeting up with strangers more often. Sometimes they had the meth, sometimes I brought it. But it was always there, in the background, waiting to take center stage.

And then there were the mirrors.

I used to avoid them, but meth made me obsessed. I would stare at myself for hours—fixated on my skin, on imaginary bugs, on flaws that weren't there. I'd poke and

pick and twitch and pace. Days would pass without sleep.
Food meant nothing.

Hallucinations began quietly. Shadows in corners.
Whispers. Faces in rearview mirrors that disappeared
when I turned my head.

Still, I kept driving. Because if I stopped... I'd have to feel.

My weight dropped. My eyes darkened. My laugh—when
it came—was brittle. But I could still talk to dispatch. I
could still climb into a cab. So, I told myself I was fine.

What I didn't realize was that I was slowly trading my
future for a substance that was tearing me apart cell by
cell.

I still had my license. I still had my freedom.

But meth had my mind, and I didn't even see the
handcuffs forming.

The Men

2019–2021

After a while, meth and men became indistinguishable.

I didn't seek them out for love. I wasn't looking for relationships. I wasn't even looking for companionship. What I was chasing was distraction—from the shame, from the stillness, from myself.

It started as curiosity. A swipe on a dating app during a layover. A stranger in a city where no one knew my name. Then it became routine. I'd drive into town, check into a hotel, and get on the apps before I even unpacked.

Meth made everything louder. Colors. Touch. Pleasure. Pain. And somewhere in that chaos, I convinced myself that if I could just be close to someone—even a stranger—I wouldn't feel so hollow.

Some of them brought drugs. Others expected sex. Most were willing to trade one for the other. There was no romance. No warmth. Just mutual escape. We never used condoms. I didn't care if I lived or died.

Sometimes, I'd invite them into my hotel room. Other times, I'd get in their car and go with them to places I didn't recognize. I took chances I wouldn't have taken sober. I put my life in the hands of men I had known for five minutes.

And yet, I never lost my empathy.

I never lied.

I never stole.

I never manipulated anyone for my addiction.

But I let myself be used, over and over, because in some twisted way, it felt like punishment I deserved.

The saddest part? I started convincing myself that this was connection. That maybe if someone stayed a little longer or touched me a little softer, I could trick myself into thinking I mattered.

But in reality, each encounter chipped away at my worth.

I can't count how many times I'd stare at the hotel room ceiling afterward, hollowed out, my meth pipe clutched in my hand like it was all I had left. Sometimes I'd hear them leave. Sometimes I'd wake up alone.

There were nights when I forgot their names before they even walked out the door. There were mornings when I couldn't remember if I used before or after they arrived.

And through it all, I kept driving.

Kept picking up loads.

Kept pretending I was okay.

But deep down, the truth was setting in:

I wasn't a truck driver anymore.

I was a ghost behind the wheel, running from a storm that never let up.

The 911 Call

2021

She didn't know it at the time, but someone had been watching.

It was just another late-night stop at a truck plaza somewhere in the Midwest. She had parked far off from the main lot—where the lights were dim and the foot traffic thin. She wasn't hiding. Not exactly. But she also wasn't inviting attention. Except attention had already found her.

A man inside the convenience store had noticed the strange patterns. She was in and out frequently. Alone. Restless. Sometimes twitching. Sometimes laughing to herself. Sometimes so focused, she wouldn't even notice the stares. And she was often followed—by men who looked like they didn't belong.

He was a retired officer, now working part-time as security. He'd seen this pattern before.

She looked like someone trapped.

After her last visit to the store, he picked up the phone and called 911.

"I don't know exactly what's going on," he said, "but something's off. She's parked in the far lot. She might be under the influence. Or being trafficked. Or both."

Dispatch asked for details. He gave her plate number, the truck company's name, and a rough description of her appearance: mid-fifties, thin, disoriented, possibly high. He didn't want her arrested. He wanted her helped.

By the time officers arrived, she was gone.

That call was just one of dozens placed over the years. Little flashes of concern from strangers. Some bystanders. Some gas station clerks. A couple of fellow truckers. Some of them called it in anonymously. Others tried to intervene and were met with denial, silence, or tears.

She had no idea how close help had been.

How many people had tried to stop her slow-motion collapse without her knowing?

But the truth was—back then, even if someone had put her in handcuffs or sat her down in a treatment center—she wasn't ready.

The addiction had too tight a grip. The pain was too loud. And her soul was too tired to listen.

That 911 call was lost in the noise.

Just like she was.

Resignation

September 2021

I walked into that terminal making the biggest lie of my life sound like a simple request.

I resigned from my \$100,000-a-year trucking job. I didn't storm out. I didn't get fired. I didn't cause a scene. I handed over the keys and told them I had something personal to take care of.

They didn't ask questions. I didn't offer answers.

What I didn't tell them was the truth:

I was quitting so I could do more meth.

That decision wasn't made in a moment. It was slow and rotting, like mold growing under the surface of my life. Meth had been eating away at me for a year by then, and I was tired of trying to balance the chaos. I didn't want to fake it anymore. I didn't want to keep pretending I could still function.

I just wanted to get high.

After I turned in my keys, I went back to my apartment, shut the door, and didn't come out for two days. I lay in bed with the blinds drawn and my pipe within arm's reach. My roommate knocked a couple times. I ignored her. I didn't want help. I didn't want hope. I wanted silence, shadows, and smoke.

I had money in the bank—\$10,000 in retirement savings—and I knew exactly how fast I was going to burn through it.

The hallucinations started getting worse around then. I'd stare at the walls and see them crawl. I'd hear whispers in the kitchen. My hands would shake. My speech started to slur. I was beginning to stutter out loud to people who weren't there.

My balance got bad. I fell once in the hallway and bruised my hip so hard I couldn't walk straight for a week.

And through all of it, I kept using.

The guilt was there. Always there. I knew I was wasting everything I had worked for. But I also didn't care.

Meth had become my job. My identity. My religion.

And I was a willing follower, spiraling into whatever came next.

I didn't know then that this chapter would mark the beginning of my full collapse.

But looking back, I can say this with certainty:

I resigned from more than just a trucking job that day.

I resigned from myself.

Kat

I was high when I met her.

It was the summer of 2022, and I was caught in a whirlwind of chaos. I was staying in an apartment that wasn't mine—an unfamiliar place full of danger. The man who let me stay there was a retired firefighter and combat veteran, and he was using too. Just like me. Meth had dulled his edges, and the apartment had become a quiet battlefield of paranoia and decay.

There was a man and a woman squatting there too, whispering, scheming. They were trying to steal from him—his retirement money, his peace, maybe even his mind. I knew their type. I'd seen them before. People like that didn't care who they destroyed, as long as they got what they wanted.

Maybe it was because my dad's a veteran, or maybe I just couldn't stand watching it happen to someone who had once been strong. Even in the middle of my own spiral, I felt the need to protect him. That feeling—protectiveness—was one of the last parts of me that hadn't been eaten alive by the drug.

And then Kat walked in.

I didn't know who she was at first. She wasn't loud or demanding. She didn't have to be. She had a stillness about her that cut through the noise. Her presence was calm, but strong—like she'd seen a thousand versions of me before and still wasn't scared.

She looked me in the eyes. Not through me. Not around me. Right at me.

I didn't say much. I didn't have to. She could see the whole story without me spelling it out. And when I did speak, when I tried to explain what was going on in that apartment and who I was trying to protect, she listened.

Really listened.

She didn't try to fix me. She didn't preach or pity me. She just took in what I said. And I could feel something settle in me—a flicker of recognition. Like maybe, just maybe, I wasn't completely invisible.

Before we parted, she handed me her phone number.

She didn't tell me to call if I got clean. She didn't set rules or make promises. She just said, "If you ever need something, reach out."

And then she left.

But the seed had been planted.

In a moment when everything felt dangerous and disposable, Kat treated me like I mattered. Like I was worth watching over. Worth offering a number to. Worth listening to.

I didn't know it yet, but she would become one of the most important people in my recovery. She would eventually become like a sister to me and more.

That meeting wasn't loud or dramatic.
But it was real.
And it stayed with me.

Fentanyl – The Other Women

April 2022

I was already drowning in meth when I walked into that hotel room. It wasn't a new place for me—just another dim room with stained curtains, the scent of chemicals clinging to everything. What made it different were the two women inside.

They were thin—frail, really—and their movements were slow and detached, like puppets with frayed strings. Their faces were hollowed out. Their eyes looked straight through me.

They were using fentanyl.

I had heard about it. Seen the headlines. But seeing it in real life... watching them melt into the mattress and drift away—it was something else. One of them nodded out mid-sentence. The other barely registered my presence.

Something inside me shifted. I didn't feel scared. I felt tired. I felt finished.

I watched them for a while. And then I asked one of them to do something I never thought I'd ask.

“Will you inject me?”

The words came out quietly, but I meant them. I was terrified of needles. Always had been. But I was more terrified of living.

I thought maybe this would be it. Maybe this was how I would go.

The woman looked up at me—really looked. Her eyes were cloudy but somehow still kind.

She didn't argue. She didn't scold me.

She just asked softly, "That's not what you really want, is it?"

Then she told me to leave.

And I did.

The next day, something pulled me back. I returned to the same room.

One of the women was still there—but this time, she was bruised. Her face was swollen. She looked like she'd been beaten—probably by a John. She was barely conscious. Her head tilted strangely, like her body couldn't hold itself up anymore.

She was broken.

And I didn't know what to do.

I couldn't get involved. Not directly. But I couldn't walk away, either.

So, I pulled out my phone and sent a text to 9-1-1.

I didn't say much. I kept it vague, just enough to give them the room number, the hotel name, and a brief warning about what I'd seen. I asked for help—but asked them not to reply.

I didn't want my name tied to it. I just wanted her to be okay.

I never heard back. There was no confirmation. No lights. No sirens.

But the next morning, I drove past the hotel.

The room was empty.

I don't know what happened. I don't know if they came, or if she walked out on her own.

But I choose to believe someone cared enough to check.
That she was helped.
That my text mattered.

Maybe it was naïve.

Maybe it was a lie I told myself to sleep at night.

But sometimes hope is the only thing that gets us through.

Meeting Brian

May 2022

We had known each other on Facebook for a while—Brian had followed me long before I ever really noticed him. He liked my posts. Left kind comments. Quietly cheered me on from the shadows. But we had never met face-to-face. Not until May of 2022, when I was living in yet another hotel room, still using, still lost, still hoping someone—anyone—might see me.

I sent him a message. He replied almost instantly. And an hour later, he was knocking at my door.

I didn't know what to expect.

He stepped inside, and everything about the room shifted. It wasn't just that he was kind. It wasn't just that he was calm. It was the way he looked at me—like he knew I was broken and didn't care. Like he wasn't afraid of what he saw.

I was high. I was scattered. But he didn't flinch.

He listened to me ramble. He smiled gently when I repeated myself. He never made me feel stupid or shameful. He just sat there and gave me presence—something I hadn't felt from a man in years.

And then, slowly, without pressure, without expectation...

We made love.

It wasn't sex. Not like all the others.

It wasn't transactional. It wasn't rushed. It wasn't used as a weapon or a form of escape.

It was magical.

We kissed slowly, like the world had paused just for us. We touched like we were learning the language of skin for the first time. We cried—both of us—silently, without words, because there was no need to explain what was happening. He held me like I was precious. Like I was human. Like I hadn't spent the past year throwing myself away in rooms just like this one.

And after... he stayed.

We lay there side by side, and even though the room was quiet, something between us felt loud and alive.

All through the night, I kept reaching for my pipe. I'd take a hit, turn my head to blow the smoke away from him, and pretend it was normal.

He pretended not to notice—but he did.

He watched with eyes full of heartbreak and restraint.

He didn't shame me. Didn't ask me to stop.

But I could feel it in the way he held me tighter after each hit.

He saw me.

And he stayed.

By morning, the light had changed. Reality started to creep back in. I walked him down to his truck. He kissed my forehead and drove away, the taillights disappearing down the road like the end of a dream I didn't deserve.

I stood there for a long time.

And when I turned back toward my room, I felt the meth pipe in my pocket.

I walked straight inside and lit it.

Then I sat on the edge of the bed and cried.

Because what we had shared—that moment of real, tear-filled love—was something I didn't think I deserved. And I was still too lost to believe I could have it again.

Pursuit

April–May 2022

After Brian left that morning, something inside me broke in a way I hadn't expected.

I had just felt real love—something warm, soft, human—and instead of reaching for more of it, I had reached for my pipe.

I sat in that room, sobbing, high again, feeling the weight of my own self-destruction. I wanted to chase that feeling Brian had given me. But I didn't believe I deserved it. I couldn't hold something that was real while I was still using. And I was not ready to stop.

So, I ran.

Not with my feet—but with my decisions.

I got back on the dating apps, started meeting strangers again, letting them into my space or getting into their cars. I went wherever the drugs were, trading pieces of myself just to stay high and stay numb.

Then, just a few days after Brian left, I applied for another trucking job. I still had my CDL. Still had a clean driving record—somehow. It gave me this illusion that I could pull myself back up through work. That if I could just get behind the wheel again, I could fix everything.

They hired me.

But as soon as they checked me into a hotel for orientation, I got high again. I did not even try to fight it.

I cannot remember if I took the drug screen or if they lost it. Maybe I skipped it. Maybe they let me go without saying anything. It all blurred together in a haze of hotel lights, meth smoke, and disappointment.

And I did it again.

Another company. Another application. Another hotel. Another relapse.

I bounced from state to state, chasing jobs I couldn't keep, pretending I was still a professional, still a person. The cycle became familiar:

Apply. Get hired. Use. Get fired. Repeat.

Each time, I told myself *this one* would be different. But it never was.

I wasn't ready to stop using. I wasn't ready to be helped. I just wanted to chase the illusion of who I used to be.

I wanted to work again.

I wanted to love again.

But I didn't want to stop getting high.

And that's the truth.

By the time summer settled in, meth had stripped me down to nothing—no steady job, no relationships, no safety, no sanity.

But I kept moving. Kept chasing. Kept “pursuing” whatever came next, even if it was another dead end.

Because sometimes when you're that far gone, running feels like survival.

Even if you're only running in circles.

Trafficked

Early Summer 2022

The last trucking company that hired me was based somewhere in The Dakotas. They sent me to a hotel while I waited to retake a drug screen. Either the first one had been lost, or I never completed it. I can't remember anymore—everything was a blur by then.

But I do remember the meth.

I used the moment I got into that hotel room. Someone brought it to me—or maybe I had it on me. All I know is that it wasn't just meth this time. It was mixed with something else. Something heavier. Something that made the walls tilt sideways and time slip through my hands.

After I did it, everything became fog. I lost track of the hours. The city. The date. My name didn't feel like mine. I looked in the mirror and didn't recognize the person staring back.

And then two men arrived. Strangers I had met on a dating app.

They brought more drugs. Got me high—too high. High to the point of disorientation. High enough that I couldn't stop them when they told me we were going somewhere else.

I don't remember walking to the car, but I remember the apartment.

If you could even call it that.

It was barely finished. No furniture. No curtains. Just drywall, exposed outlets, and a mattress on the floor. It

smelled like dust and sweat. I knew immediately I didn't belong there.

And yet... I followed them in.

I sat down on the edge of the mattress, and one of them bent down in front of me and began to untie my sneakers. Not sweetly. Not gently. Deliberately.

He took them from the room, disappearing from my sight.

I didn't fight. I didn't run.

Because I understood what that moment meant.

Bare feet can't run far.

I stayed in that place for at least a day, maybe two. They barely fed me. Kept me beyond high. Kept me passive. I remember trying to calculate the distance to the door. I remember trying to listen for sirens. For footsteps. For *anything*.

Then one of them looked at me and said:

"There's a guy upstairs. He wants a girl for the night. Just be a good girl, and we'll give you more."

That was it. No more pretending.
No more dating apps. No more "fun."
Just ownership.

I nodded. I didn't scream. I didn't argue. I didn't say no.

But inside, I was on fire.

I knew in that moment:

If I didn't get out of there soon, I wasn't going to leave at all.

There would be more men and more meth. Until the point of utter chaos in my brain as my vision and speech were greatly affected by the poisons flowing throughout every cell of my body. I had memorized where the door was. I looked for windows. I watched how the lock clicked. I waited until their attention wavered.

And when the moment came...

I ran.

Running

Summer 2022

After escaping the unfinished apartment where I was being held, I made it to a women's shelter. I didn't feel safe there, but I stayed just long enough to catch my breath. I was strung out, hollowed out, and barely surviving.

A man I met online offered me a place to shower and crash. I agreed. He picked me up and took me to his home. At some point, I asked him if he had any ice—meth. He told me no.

After pleasuring him, he passed out, and I went to the bathroom. That's when I opened a drawer and saw it: a stash of meth.

He had lied.

And I hated liars.

I took it and tucked it into my bra. I didn't feel guilty. It wasn't payment—it was punishment. Lying cost him. I justified it in my mind, just like I justified everything else back then.

Back on the couch, I opened the dating app and searched for one thing:

“Do you parTy?”

That was the code. I didn't care who said yes. I just needed someone—anyone—to help me stay high. Someone to help me escape whatever I didn't want to feel.

I was picked up by another man and taken to a new hotel. He didn't ask questions.

He didn't care about my name.

He used me like a rag doll—rough, fast, empty. No tenderness. No connection. Just function.

By then, sex wasn't about desire or intimacy. It was currency.

I was using my body like a credit card—and my credit limit was running out.

Later that night, back in the hotel, I made a decision.

I dumped out all the meth I had taken and smoked it—hit after hit, bump after bump. My only goal: to overdose.

I didn't want to wake up.

I didn't want to keep trying.

I just wanted the pain to stop.

But as my heart started racing and the panic set in, I did something I didn't expect:

I called 9-1-1.

I didn't ask for help.

I just wanted someone to talk to while I died.

The dispatcher's voice was calm. Gentle. Almost kind. I told her I didn't know what else to say—I just didn't want to be alone.

What I didn't realize was that she was typing behind the scenes, sending help my way.

The Police and EMTs arrived fast.

I barely remember the details—just the cold of the stretcher and how eerily quiet the world felt around me.

They stabilized me at the hospital.

By evening, I was in jail.

And strangely, I felt relieved.

Maybe this was it. Maybe I would finally get clean.

But in the morning, the jailer came to my cell and told me I was being released.

No charges. No plan. Just... out.

Before that, I had done something I'd done more times than I could count.

After smoking all I could stand, I took the rest of the meth and dumped it into a dumpster behind the hotel.

I didn't want anyone else to use it.

Even in my own addiction, I couldn't stop trying to save others from the same fate.

It was a strange pattern I repeated over and over again.

I'd meet someone, convince them to quit, and throw their dope away—sometimes right in front of them, sometimes quietly after they left. Then I'd disappear.

I didn't want anyone to suffer the way I was suffering.

It made perfect sense to me at the time.

When I walked out the back door of that jail, I had no idea where I was.

No clue what city or even what state I was in.

Still high. Still shaking. Still lost.

But I had this one strange, desperate ritual—this attempt to do something good before I disappeared.

I believed I could save the world from this evil drug.
That wasn't the truth, of course.
But it was my wish.

I didn't want to die for nothing.
And I was convinced this drug was going to kill me.
So I tried to do as much good as I could before it did.

If I couldn't stop myself, maybe I could stop someone else.
If they saw what it had done to me, maybe they'd think
twice before taking that next hit.

That was the only way I knew how to hang on—
One last attempt to matter... before I disappeared.

Greyhound

September 2022

I don't remember how I got the ticket—maybe from the human trafficking organization, maybe from someone who saw what I couldn't—but I know this: the Greyhound wasn't freedom. It was surrender.

The bus pulled out of the station in South Dakota just before sunrise. My belongings fit into a single bag. My body was tired. My mind was fried. I sat by the window, cracked lips pressed to the glass, watching the world roll by in silence.

It was a 36-hour ride.

No destination but Toledo, no emotion but a numb ache I couldn't name.

Each time the bus stopped, new people shuffled in and out. Sometimes someone sat next to me, and every single one of them—every one—before stepping off, turned and said:

“Have a terrific life.”

Those words landed like feathers and thunder at the same time. I couldn't tell if they were mocking me or if the universe was trying to remind me that something more was still possible.

I didn't speak much. I was still high, still coming down, still hallucinating in waves. My thoughts stretched and folded like mirrors inside my mind.

Sometimes I stared at strangers until their shapes
morphed into people I used to know.

Sometimes I cried for no reason.

Sometimes I didn't feel real at all.

When the bus finally pulled into the station in downtown
Toledo on September 25, 2022, it was raining.

Hard.

I stepped off that bus into a wet, gray morning with
nowhere to go.

No plan.

No money.

No one waiting for me.

I sat down on the curb outside the terminal, the rain
soaking through my clothes, and stared at the traffic
passing by. I remember thinking I'd just wait there until
someone told me to move... or until I disappeared
entirely.

But as the water soaked my skin and pooled in my shoes,
another thought crept in:

"I could walk to the bridge."

The High Level Bridge.

The one I used to drive across as a trucker, back when I
still had a future.

Back when I thought I was invincible.

I picked up my bag, stood on shaking legs, and started
walking.

The climb to the top of the bridge felt like rising into my
ending.

I stood there in the rain, wind whipping around me,
staring down into the water below.

And then... my phone rang.

It was a FaceTime call from Amy, my former boss and
friend. Somehow, she had seen my last Facebook post.
She was worried.

I answered.

And when the call connected, the first thing Amy saw was
the view behind me—the edge of the bridge, high above
the river.

Her voice cracked through the phone, panicked and
sharp:

“What are you doing? Dianna, where are you?”

I didn’t know what to say. I was soaked, broken, shaking
in the wind.

But she wouldn’t let go.

Amy talked me down from the edge that day. She pleaded
with me to wait. To come down.

And then she sent an Uber—paid for a hotel room, made
sure someone would come get me.

She saved my life. Again.

By the time I got to the hotel, I was shivering and mute.
But I was alive.

And that was the start of something I didn’t have a name
for yet.

Rock Bottom

September 26 – October 1, 2022

I didn't sleep much that first night in the hotel. Not really.

I was crashing from the bus ride and still hearing voices, still pacing, still hallucinating. The cravings were louder than ever—cravings for meth, for sex, for *something* to take the edge off the pain chewing through me.

I had escaped the bridge, but I hadn't escaped myself.

Over the next three days, I fell hard.

I got back on the dating apps. The familiar cycle began again—inviting strangers over, leaving the door cracked open, letting anyone in who wanted to use me. And some of them did. Others just watched. I didn't care.

I left the hotel with men. I let them take me places I don't even fully remember.

I was functioning off pure survival instinct—not emotion. Sex wasn't connection.

It was a transaction.

I was using my body like a credit card, and the balance was overdue.

On the third day—September 30, 2022—something shifted.

I was scrolling the app again when a man's profile caught my eye. He had written one phrase that stopped me cold:

"I have rape fantasies."

My chest tightened. I stared at the words and started crying. Not because I was scared—
but because I knew what I was about to do.

In my mind, a man who fantasized about rape wasn't far from actually doing more.

Maybe I could talk him into killing me.

And maybe... if I said the right things... if I told him I wouldn't fight back...

Maybe I could talk him into it.

I didn't mention death. I didn't tell him what I was planning.

I followed his instructions. He said I shouldn't look at him. So when he arrived, I pretended to be asleep, my eyes covered tightly with the blanket and sheet.

What he did not know was that I had tied my hands. So that I couldn't fight back.

I felt the bed shift beneath his weight.

I felt his hands on my body—rough, searching.

And when I thought the moment was right, I whispered:

“If you want to hurt me... I won't fight back.”

That was it.

No more pretending.

I wanted him to kill me right there.

Instead, everything stopped.

His hands withdrew. His weight lifted off the mattress. I

heard him stand, felt the cold air rush in as the door opened quietly...

And just like that, I was alone again.

There were no tears—not right away.

I was too exhausted.

Too broken.

But something inside me shifted—deep and low, like a floor giving out.

That was it. That was the bottom.

I turned on my side and stared at the mirrors on the wall next to the bed.

I saw my body—bruised, hollow, shattered.

And then the tears came.

They weren't soft.

They were like acid—burning my face as they fell. I screamed into the pillow in a soul shattering way wanting this to all end.

I cried out. I begged. I sobbed.

And I said the words I hadn't said in so long:

"God... help me."

"I quit."

"I'm finished."

"Please... help me."

And with those final words, I fell into a deep sleep.

No more searching.

No more trying.

Just the quiet darkness of surrender.

The Stranger

October 1, 2022

I had just cried out to God.

I was on the edge of something final—shaking, exhausted, broken beyond repair. After whispering, “I quit... I’m finished... please help me,” my body collapsed into a deep, heavy sleep. Hours passed. Maybe more.

But when I woke up, nothing had changed—at least not on the outside.

The hotel had asked me to leave. I’d overstayed my welcome. I was still wearing the same clothes, still twitching from the dope and the madness. So I walked. Nowhere to go. No destination. Just wandering.

That’s when a car pulled up beside me.

The driver—a man I didn’t recognize—leaned out and asked, “Where are you going?”

I didn’t have an answer. I meant to say “nowhere,” but all I could manage was, “I don’t know.”

He didn’t flinch. He didn’t ask follow-ups. He simply said, “Get in.”

And I did.

Part of me wondered if this was it. Maybe he would kill me. And maybe that would be okay.

But he didn’t.

He took me to a small hotel room. It was quiet, dim, and surprisingly clean. He helped me inside and told me I could rest.

At some point, while lying on the bed, I began to seize. I could feel my body jerking, my muscles locking up, and then I felt it—his hands, strong but careful, stopping me from rolling off the edge and hitting the floor.

Not in a sexual way. Not even close.

He never touched me like that.

His hands were protective. Gentle. Like someone guarding something fragile.

And then I was asleep again. Deep, full-body sleep—the kind I hadn't had in weeks, maybe months.

When I woke up, the light in the room had shifted. It was morning. And he was still there.

He handed me something to eat—chicken, of all things. I don't even remember chewing. My body was too empty to care.

Then he asked, "Where do you want to go?"

I didn't hesitate.

"I need to go to detox."

He nodded. Told me to get my bag.

Twenty minutes later, he pulled up to the front doors of a treatment center. He didn't just drop me off—he watched to make sure I got inside.

I turned back once, to look at him.

And then he was gone.

I never got his name. I don't remember the make of his car or the color of his eyes.

But I remember the calm. The stillness.

Some people would call him a stranger.

Others would call him an angel.

All I know is—he came when I needed him most.

Right after I asked God for help.

The First Steps

When he dropped me off at the detox facility, he didn't wait. He just made sure I got through the front door and then disappeared. No name, no goodbye—just the quiet slam of a car door and the rumble of tires pulling away. I never saw him again.

Inside, everything felt sterile and cold. Not cruel, just indifferent. The staff was calm and professional, but I was trembling—partly from withdrawal, partly from fear. As soon as I walked in, they asked me to submit to a drug screen. I had no choice. I peed into a cup, knowing exactly what it would show.

When the results came back, they said I'd tested positive for just about every drug except fentanyl. Meth, benzos, THC, cocaine—substances I hadn't even consciously taken. My body had become a dumping ground for whatever was being passed around. Nobody was shocked. Least of all me.

They logged the results, tagged me, and sent me to an intake room. That first night, I couldn't sleep. My body was coming apart from the inside. My skin itched. My muscles twitched. My thoughts raced and then vanished mid-sentence. I hallucinated nurses whispering to each other about me. I hallucinated needles, bugs, ghosts.

And demons.

Toward the end, back in that motel room, I had started seeing things I couldn't explain—dark figures, demonic shapes lurking in corners or rising from shadows. They

didn't speak. They didn't move. They just watched. I'd stare into the mirror and see them standing behind me. I'd blink, and they were still there. Those were the worst of all. Nothing felt safe anymore—not even my own mind.

On the second day, I was seen by a psychiatrist. I must have looked like hell—eyes darting, legs shaking, voice barely coherent. He asked me a series of questions I don't remember answering clearly. But I do remember what he prescribed: a low-dose antipsychotic to help with the hallucinations and sleep. I took it that night. It didn't fix everything, but within a few days, the hallucinations began to loosen their grip. The shadows quieted. The whispering stopped. And the demons finally disappeared. It was probably the single most important medication I would ever take. After months of terror and distortion, my mind finally started to come back. I could rest.

The detox process lasted just a few days, but it felt eternal. I was monitored constantly—vitals checked, questions asked, medications offered to ease the edge. I didn't want to talk. I didn't want to cry. I just wanted it to stop. Every minute was survival.

When I was discharged from detox, I was sent to a women's sober living house .

I was assigned a bed, a list of chores, and a curfew. It was strict but safe. I'd landed in a place where expectations were clear, and survival didn't require manipulation or sex or lies. I was terrified—and grateful.

That house became my training ground. I learned how to make my bed again. I learned how to sit still without a pipe in my hand. I learned how to attend meetings even

when I didn't want to, and how to call someone instead of running. It wasn't easy. But it was working.

That's where I met Joann.

She wasn't a resident—at least, not at first. She came from a local recovery program and participated in classes at the house. We met during one of those sessions.

Something in her eyes mirrored mine—defiance layered over heartbreak. We connected almost immediately.

Later, when she moved into the house permanently, our friendship only deepened.

Alongside us was Tiffany—my assigned roommate at the time. She was kind and funny, with a laugh that filled the room and a pain she didn't often talk about. The three of us quickly became inseparable. We leaned on each other, learned from each other, and tried to hold each other up on the days we couldn't stand on our own. We laughed hard, cried quietly, and sat together in the thick silence that sometimes replaced words. It felt like sisterhood.

But the house didn't protect us from the outside world.

Tiffany died later from a suspected fentanyl overdose. Her death shattered something in all of us—especially me. I still remember the way her absence echoed through that house like a wound. One day she was there. The next, she wasn't. No warning. No goodbye. Just a sudden silence where her voice used to be.

Losing her reminded me how thin the line is between recovery and relapse. Between life and death. It was a grief I carried with me—still carry. But it also solidified something: I couldn't go back. Not now. Not after everything.

For the first time in years, I was clean. Not just from drugs—but from chaos. And in that quiet space, something fragile and new began to grow: hope.

I Didn't Understand

There was a time—not that long ago—when I'd drive past treatment centers and halfway houses and laugh. Literally. I didn't even try to hide it. I'd glance over at the people outside—smoking, pacing, sitting on the curb—and I'd roll my eyes or mutter something under my breath. I didn't slow down. I didn't feel compassion. I thought I knew exactly what those places were and who they were for.

People who made their own mess.

People who chose to use.

People who could “just fucking stop” if they really wanted to.

That was my thought process.

You made the decision. Just stop. End of story.

I didn't understand addiction. I didn't understand mental health. I didn't understand trauma, compulsion, or desperation. I thought addicts were weak. That they were wasting taxpayer money, going in and out of programs like they were trying on shoes. I didn't believe in

withdrawal. I didn't believe in cravings. I believed in choices—and consequences.

And I believed it could never happen to me.

I was a truck driver. I held a commercial license. I'd never even smoked a joint. I didn't party. I didn't drink. I saw it as proof that I was strong, responsible, different. Better.

I had no idea how thin the line really was.

I used to think addiction had a look. I thought it lived on street corners or under bridges. I didn't know it could live in hotel rooms, behind makeup, inside people with steady paychecks and clean clothes. I didn't know it could creep in quietly—disguised as a relief, a break, a night of escape—and then never let go.

I had no idea what it meant to lose control. To chase a high so hard that nothing else mattered. To stare into a mirror and not recognize who you are. To want to stop but not know how. To beg God for help one night and be using again by morning.

I didn't know any of that—until I did.

Until I became one of them.

Until I found myself walking into a detox facility with nothing but a trash bag of belongings and a mind full of demons. Until I sat in a plastic chair while someone asked me when I'd last used and what I'd taken. Until I cried in a stranger's shower because I didn't know who I was anymore. Until I took medication to stop hallucinating things that weren't there—and some things that were.

And suddenly, all those people I used to judge?
They were me.

I was the one shaking. I was the one talking to myself. I was the one who couldn't "just stop." And I was the one who needed that facility more than I had ever needed anything in my life.

Kind of funny, really—
how I became one of the clients who needed their services the most.

Epilogue

Long after the chaos had passed, I found out what really happened in Ontario.

Someone had seen me that day—spotted the truck, the signs, the truth I couldn't hide. They made a call. Law enforcement came, quietly observed, and chose not to confront me directly. Instead, they contacted my trucking company, passed along the concern, and stepped back.

There were no sirens. No arrest. No questions. Just a silent relay of warning.

By the time the company was notified, I had already resigned. No further action was taken. The file was closed without consequence. The danger passed like a shadow—and I kept falling.

It would be a long time before I realized how many people had noticed. How many silent chances I was given.

I wasn't invisible. I was just lost.

In the months that followed, I spiraled. I hallucinated that I was being tracked, followed, watched. I whispered answers to voices that weren't there. I stood outside in the dark, waiting for someone who would never come. My mind fractured in ways I still don't fully understand. And I didn't care. I just wanted the pain to end.

If you're reading this and you're still in it—still using, still hurting—I need you to hear me.

There is a way out.

You don't have to want recovery. You just have to stop running from it. You don't have to believe you're worth saving. You just have to let someone else believe it for you—until you can.

I didn't get clean because I was strong. I got clean because people refused to let go of me. They saw something in me when I couldn't see anything at all.

Maybe you're waiting for a reason. A sign. A breaking point. Let this be it.

You are not beyond repair.

You are not too far gone.

You are not forgotten.

There is life on the other side of this. A life where you wake up safe. Where meals are warm, love is real, and your mind is quiet. A life where no one is hunting you, no one is using you, and no one is waiting for you to die.

I'm not special. I just didn't give up. And you don't have to either.

Let this be your first step—or your tenth. Just keep stepping.

Hope isn't a fantasy. It's a decision. And it's waiting for you.

Dedicated to Brittani Gail

July 1st, 1993 –

July 28th, 1993

Today

Today, I am clean. Today, I am alive.

I wake up next to a man who never gave up on me, even when I gave up on myself. Brian still wraps his arms around me like I'm something fragile and worth protecting. And I am. I didn't used to believe that.

Our home is quiet. Peaceful. The chaos has subsided. There are still moments—flashbacks, cravings, memories that catch me off guard—but they don't own me anymore. I talk about them instead of hiding them. I reach out. I don't pretend I'm okay when I'm not. That honesty has become my lifeline.

I have a marriage license with my name on it, and I sign it with pride. My cats, Bobby and Alice, climb into my lap in the mornings as I sip coffee and thank God I made it. I used to wonder if I'd ever feel safe again. Now, safety isn't just something I crave—it's something I protect with everything I've got.

I use Life360 on my phone—not out of fear, but out of commitment. Brian and I agreed: no secrets. If either of us is hurting, we speak. Silence is where the darkness grows, and I won't let it take root again. Not in me. Not in us.

I still carry the memories. I remember the faces of the people I lost, the strangers who saved me, the hotels and shelters and sidewalks I called home. But now, I also remember who I am.

Today, I help others find their way out. Sometimes through a conversation in my car. Sometimes with a simple, quiet truth: *"You're not alone."*

And sometimes, that's enough to start a fire in someone else's darkness.

Joann

Joann is still in my life—steadfast, honest, and strong. We met in treatment, two broken women walking through fire, and somehow, we forged a sisterhood in the ashes. She saw me at my worst and never turned away.

Today, she works in the same place we once fought to get clean in. She's the one holding space for other women now—guiding, listening, showing them that recovery isn't just possible, it's worth it. I watch her lead with quiet strength, and I know: she's exactly where she's supposed to be.

When I falter, I call her. I don't have to explain. She hears what I'm not saying. There's no judgment—only grace, truth, and a reminder of how far we've come. She knows my story because she walked beside me through it.

Joann isn't just part of my past—she's part of my present, and if I'm lucky, she'll be part of my future too. We remind each other that healing doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in connection.

And every time she answers my call with, “Hey, you good?”

I know I am.

Kat

And then there’s Kat. My sponsor. My guardian when I couldn’t guard myself. She stepped in when I was raw, trembling, and still teetering on the edge. She didn’t just offer guidance—she offered me her home, her stability, her peace.

Kat saw something in me I couldn’t see in myself. She laid down boundaries and structure, not to control me, but to protect what I was trying to build. She paid attention—noticed that even being around other recovering addicts could trigger me—and made changes so I could heal without falling backward.

Her home became my sanctuary. It was quiet, intentional. She taught me to sit still when I wanted to run, to speak truth even when it hurt. She listened without flinching, even when I confessed the ugliest parts of my story.

Kat doesn’t sugarcoat anything, and that’s why I trust her. She tells me the truth every time, even if I don’t want to hear it. She holds me accountable—not with shame, but with love.

She didn’t just sponsor my recovery. She protected it.

Today, Kat continues to serve others as an advanced caregiver for the elderly. She shows up every day with

patience, strength, and compassion—giving her best to those who need her most. Watching her serve so selflessly, it's clear: she is truly one of God's angels on Earth.

Kat believed in me when I didn't even know who I was. Because of her, I figured it out.

This book began in the shadows but ends in the light. Not because the darkness disappeared, but because I stopped walking through it alone.

If you're still out there, still struggling, still breathing—I wrote this for you.

You are not too far gone.

You are not unworthy of love.

And you are never beyond the reach of a new beginning.

Today, I am a Certified Peer Recovery Supporter, licensed by the state of Ohio.

This is how I share my story.

This is how I reach back for the next hand.

I made it out.

You can too.

References and Resources

Crisis Hotlines

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**
24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress.
 Call or Text: **988**
 988lifeline.org
- **SAMHSA National Helpline**
Free, confidential, 24/7 treatment referral and information service.
 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
 samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
- **National Human Trafficking Hotline**
Help for victims and survivors of human trafficking.
 1-888-373-7888 or Text: **“BEFREE” to 233733**
 humantraffickinghotline.org

Addiction Recovery Support

- **SMART Recovery**
A science-based addiction recovery program focused on self-empowerment.
 smartrecovery.org
- **Celebrate Recovery**
Faith-based recovery program addressing a wide

range of hurts and addictions.

 celebraterecovery.com

- **NA (Narcotics Anonymous)**

Peer support network for those recovering from drug addiction.

 na.org

- **AA (Alcoholics Anonymous)**

Fellowship of people helping each other stay sober.

 aa.org

Trauma & Mental Health Support

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

Education, support, and advocacy for people with mental illness.

 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

 nami.org

- **RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)**

Resources and support for survivors of sexual trauma.

 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

 rainn.org

- **The Trevor Project**

Crisis support for LGBTQIA+ youth.

 1-866-488-7386 or Text START to 678678

 thetrevorproject.org

Education and Harm Reduction

- **Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Get Smart About Drugs**

Resource for parents, educators, and caregivers.

🌐 getsmartaboutdrugs.gov

- **Partnership to End Addiction**

Resources for families navigating substance use.

🌐 drugfree.org

- **National Harm Reduction Coalition**

Support for people who use drugs and harm reduction advocacy.

🌐 harmreduction.org

Ohio-Specific Resources

- **Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (OhioMHAS)**

Treatment, prevention, and recovery services.

🌐 mha.ohio.gov

- **Recovery Within Reach (Ohio)**

A resource hub for finding local treatment and recovery support.

🌐 recoverywithinreach.ohio.gov