

Testament of a Dreamer (in 10 chapters)

The Morning Of

Not much happened in the little forgotten city of Bluefield, West Virginia. It was the kind of place that preserved the old brick buildings even though they were empty. Many artists had expressed themselves all over the place, creating sculptures, galleries, and murals. It was the old place where many small businesses tried to open, but never stayed very long. Grandma told me how that part of the city used to be known as 'Little NYC', known for its overpopulation, busy streets, and fancy stores, but became almost like a ghost town. Few came and few went, but that day was different.

Historic Bluefield was hosting a series of Christmas festivities, including their very own ice skating rink! The locals just couldn't resist. Mom, my sister, Bailee, my best friend, Kaitlyn, and I piled into Mom's car to go meet Dad at the bank. Once he joined us, we were fun bound. When we got there, cars lined the streets, Christmas carols rang out through the falling snow, and hot chocolate was handed out from every corner. A smile covered my face for the first time in a long time.

The five of us huddled together to stay warm while waiting in line to ice skate. Once we were inside the building, my jaw hit the ground. At the time, I wasn't the type to get too excited about much, but this definitely lifted my Christmas spirit. This shabby old empty building was transformed into Santa's winter wonderland. There was Christmas trivia, hot chocolate tables, picture booths, elves, reindeer, and Santa Claus, himself! I walked over to the rink. I had never skated, but it couldn't be that hard.

"What size skates d'ya need?" the man asked.

I told him I needed a nine, but for some reason he gave me an eleven.

"Oh sir! Sir!" I said, trying to get his attention, but he was already wrapped up in the rest of the chaos. I ended up putting those size eleven skates, and I hit the ice.

Dad stood off to the side to take pictures, expecting us to sail by, but in reality, Mom, Bailee, and Kaitlyn sailed by while I wobbled through everyone with my noodle-like legs. If you've ever seen a deer learning how to walk for the first time, that's what I looked like when I skated.

There was so many people rushing past me, as I was struggling to keep my balance. It was loud, I couldn't hear a word. Everything around me was happening so fast, yet so slow. My heart started beating fast, I couldn't find my breath, and sweat poured from my forehead. What was wrong with me?

"You okay?" Kaitlyn asked.

"I'm fine," I replied.

Needless to say, I didn't stay out there long. I crawled my way back to the bench, took my skates off, and sat all alone watching everyone else enjoy their day.

Almost half an hour later, we filled our cups up with hot chocolate, piled back into the car, and dropped Kaitlyn off at the local antique shop her mother worked at.

"Goodbye," she said as she hopped out the door.

Oh how I didn't want her to leave.

"Bye," I said with a fake smile.

2

Mausoleum of Old Businesses

Mom and Dad decided that we should go to our local mall to shop and eat. Mercer Mall was like a mausoleum of businesses. The ‘big stores’ were Belk and J.C. Penny’s, but that was about it. A couple years after, we got a Hobby Lobby, and it was the talk of the town. Just like Bluefield, many stores opened, but very few stayed open. If you entered the doors of the mall, you’d see a few name brand stores, a few quaint local shops, three or four restaurants, but mostly empty spaces with a ‘For Lease’ sign sitting in the front window. It was so sad.

“Dad and I are going to Belk to exchange a few last minute Christmas gifts, you two can walk around, but STAY TOGETHER,” said Mom.

“Okay,” we said, excited to have a little independence.

Then, we went our separate ways, and now that I look back, I see that changed everything. Bailee and I wandered down the mall, but it wasn’t long before that loving sibling bickering came.

At first, it was about the stores we wanted to go into. She wanted to go into this store, but I didn’t. I wanted to go into that store, but she didn’t. It wouldn’t be a big deal, except Mom told us to stay together, and I was not breaking the rules.

“Why do you have to be rude to me all of the time?” Bailee shouted.

I stopped, and looked at her as tears filled my eyes. She’d said worse things than this to me, but this one hurt. My chest started to hurt, and I didn’t know why.

“I’m sorry, Trev. Please don’t tell Mom and Dad,” she begged.

I couldn’t help it. The anger had been building up inside me for weeks. I had faced so many challenges they didn’t know about. I had talked to my friends, teachers, and the school counselor, but nothing helped. I was going to tell Mom what she said. Maybe it would relieve some of this darkness.

The whole way back up the mall Bailee begged, “Trevor, I’ll do anything if you don’t tell. Please, please, PLEASE!”

I never would’ve guessed we both would’ve been punished, but everything happens for a reason.

As soon as I told Mom she demanded my cell phone and Bailee’s iPod. We looked at each other, both with sorrow, and handed them to her. Just then, it was like the world turned black and white. The air grew cold. Pain filled my chest. She was going to figure out.

As we pulled out of the mall parking lot, Mom slid open my phone. I closed my eyes, held my breath, and I prayed. God may not have done what I asked of him, but he answered my prayers in much greater ways that day.

Dad drove, Bailee slept, Mom stalked, and I felt sick. My thoughts soared through my head, “How would she react? What would she say? How would she say it? Would she stay calm? Would she completely overreact? Would she try to help? Where would she take me?”

She turned around, and looked at me.

“Trevor!” she screeched.

Tears poured out of my eyes. Little did I know my life was about to be changed forever.

3

This Isn't A Joke

She started sobbing with me. Her face grew red with the anger, and I could tell she didn't know whether to feel mad or sad. That's the battle I had faced for the past three months.

"Why didn't you tell me?" She asked.

Dad and Bailee looked around in curiosity and fear.

"What are you talking about?" Dad asked.

"Our son told someone he was considering suicide as an escape from his 'problems'," Mom replied.

Bailee looked at me in almost a daze as if she couldn't believe her brother would do such a thing. Dad screamed at me, "Trevor! This isn't a joke! You don't say that kind of thing!" He kept screaming, I kept crying, and Bailee kept staring. Little did they know, it wasn't a joke.

That message Mom found on my phone had no intentions to be the slightest bit funny. It was a call for help, because I needed help desperately. Mom and Dad didn't understand because they always had the 'perfect little family'. They never wanted to see the day when their own son was depressed. They didn't want to believe it, but it was happening.

I couldn't help the way I felt, and I knew that because I tried so hard. I faked a smile every day, I acted like it was okay, I made them believe I was okay, all because I didn't want them to worry. Now, it was all too late. They figured everything out, all except for the reason behind it all.

"Why?" Mom kept asking.

"Why?" My conscience repeated over and over.

It rambled through my head thousands of times, "Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?"

I didn't know why. I had never thought about why I felt this way. It just was, and I had to deal with it. For those months of my life, stress became my hobby. Darkness had swallowed all of the light from my life. I didn't know how to deal with it. I didn't know how to tell someone. I didn't know how to get help. I didn't know. I didn't know anything.

I remember it was about this time, everything slowed way down. Red lights took forever to change to green, the clouds took forever to uncover the sun, and the car ride lasted for what seemed like eternity.

In our community, the bank was always the place to leave your car if need be. Dad left his truck there that morning. Mom drove to the bank and told he and Bailee to go home.

"Bye," Mom said to Dad as if she had lost all emotion.

"Goodbye," he said.

Dad and Bailee pulled out in that old truck, but Mom and I sat there.

She looked down and said, "Trevor, we can go home, but I don't know if I'll be able to trust you. You'll have to leave your bedroom door open at all times, and you can never stay home alone. You'll always have to be with an adult, or we can go to the hospital."

I had never thought about having an actual mental illness. It never occurred to me that's what this was. I wasn't crazy was I? "Let's go to the hospital," I said.

4

Pulled Away

We pulled in at the local mental hospital, The Pavilion. I got out of the car sobbing, and Mom walked me into the front door. The nurses at the front desk looked up in awe as if they had never seen a depressed teenager.

"Can I admit him?" Mom asked the nurses.

"How old are you, bud?" one of them asked me.

"13," I replied.

They looked at each other with deep sorrow. Tears filled their eyes as they both turned and look at Mom.

"Ma'am, I'm sorry, but we can't admit minors. You'll have to take him to the ER," they said.

"Thank you all," Mom replied.

We turned to walk out the door. Mom took me by the hand, but I pulled away. There was no compassion in my heart whatsoever. One of the nurses stood up to catch my attention. "It'll all be okay," she said with a tear rolling down her face.

I looked back, but couldn't find any words. I made my lips form a smile even though I didn't feel it. I nodded. Mom smiled through her tears, and told her thank you. Then, we got in the car to head to the hospital.

"I'm sorry," Mom finally admitted.

I looked over at her. As much as I wanted to say that it was okay, I couldn't. I wasn't okay, she wasn't okay, nothing was okay. The tears still fell like two waterfalls landing on my old grey sweater.

"I just don't know what I'm going to do, Mom. I can't be happy. I can't be free. I can't go home. I can't be normal." I confessed.

Mom started sobbing even harder. So many tears were shed that day. I could see the sorrow in her eyes. I knew she never wanted this, but I couldn't help it. I needed the help more than ever. On our way to the Emergency Room, we never said a word. I don't know if it was that we already said it all, we didn't know what to say, or that we didn't need to say anything. The radio was off, and Mom just drove.

We pulled into Bluefield Regional Hospital, and my heart started pounding.

Only one question rolled through my head, "What will they do?" I imagined it like in the movies. They would put me in a white padded room, or strap me down on a table.

Mom was a nurse who had worked at the hospital, but I didn't want to ask her. I didn't want her to explain it all to me, but the curiosity and fear crawled over me. I couldn't stop myself.

"Mom, what will they do to me?"

She could see the fear, and quickly replied, "They'll just introduce us to a counselor you can see. They'll help you, I promise."

I took a deep breath, and the fear left.

"Help," I thought. It was the light at the end of the tunnel.

5

Broke the News

We walked into the ER, and went through all of the nonsense at the desk.

A blonde lady looked up, blowing her bubble gum, and asked the never ending questions, "Name? Birthday? Social Security?" The list goes on and on. She put the bracelet on my arm, and I went to take a seat. Everyone stared at me. Why? I had stopped crying, so nothing was apparent. I pulled out my cell phone and look in the screen. I may had stopped crying, but the evidence was still left. I had bright red streaks leading down my cheeks. My eyes were watery and swollen. I was always one to care about my appearance, but at this point I didn't care.

It wasn't long before they called me back to get my vitals. I was fairly healthy, but my blood pressure was sky high.

"What's your reasoning for coming to the ER," the old woman asked me.

"I- I," I stuttered, because I couldn't find the words.

"He's contemplating suicide," Mom finished.

"Oh, darling," she said to me. "You know that everything is okay in the end, right?"

I had never really thought about it. All problems do end up getting fixed in the end. I shook my head yes, and she escorted me to my room. It was larger than the others, and surrounded by windows. They gave me ugly blue scrubs and green socks to change into. I didn't want to, but they made me.

A nurse came in, and asked me a few questions, then she broke the news.

"You have a decision to make. You can either stay at a facility in Beckley or Charleston. Its your choice." she said.

I looked at Mom. She looked just as confused.

"Facility?" Mom asked.

"Yes. Anytime a suicidal patient comes in, we have to admit them into an appropriate facility," the nurse replied.

Then, she asked Mom to step out into the hall with her. I noticed they knew each other previously. Mom must've worked with her before.

As soon as she walked out the door, my phone rang. It was my Aunt Kim.

"Hello?" I said.

"Hey," she replied. "Why didn't you tell us, Trev? You know I always listen,"

The tears started falling again.

"I'm sorry," I cried.

"It'll be okay, Trev," she replied. "I'm going to keep Bailee until you get back home. Don't worry about her. Just get better."

How did she know already?

"I love you," she said.

"I love you too," I replied.

Mom, walked back in, and explained that I was required to stay in a facility for five to seven days.

"I told them that you wanted Beckley so that you'd be closer to home. I'm sorry, Trevor. I didn't know they'd do this," she explained.

"I called Dad and Kim. Dad's going to come sit with you so I can run to Walmart to get you some clothes," she said.

So I sat in that bed as the phone rang and rang. It was my family. I wasn't allowed any privacy so my father had to sit there and listen to me explain to everyone that I was going to be in a mental hospital for a week or longer. It was the same conversation with everybody. I cried just as hard with each phone call, and so did Dad.

We waited forever on Mom to get back from getting me the things I needed.

"Will she get here before the ambulance?" I asked Dad.

"I hope," he replied.

I watched the second hand on the clock for almost two hours. Stress building more with every move it made. Finally, she walked through the door, followed by the paramedics.

"Well hello! What's your name?" One of them asked.

"Trevor," I replied.

He introduced himself along with his partner.

"We're going to be taking you to Beckley tonight," he said.

Then, he escorted me from the hospital bed into the ambulance for the longest ride of my life.

6

Time for You to Go

I sat on the stretcher, Mom sat across from the paramedic, and Dad followed us in the car. In that ambulance, I talked to the paramedic. He asked me about life, about my family, and about me.

After I described it all, he asked me the question, "Then, what's causing you to feel this way?"

I looked out the back window expressionless, "I don't know," I said.

"Well, they're gonna take good care of you here," he promised.

"Care," I thought.

We pulled into the parking lot of the hospital, and my eyes started to fill.

"Don't cry," Mom said.

We all stepped outside, and made our way to the bottom of the hospital. They escorted my parents into a small room to the left, while a nurse took me down the hall into a bedroom. He was short and skinny. He had a thick moustache, and wore a rather large bowtie.

"This is your room," he said. "Here are some of our scrubs to change into."

He stood and watched me change into the new scrubs, he took my old ones, and returned them to the paramedics. Then, he escorted me into the room my parents were in.

"You have five minutes to say goodbye," he said.

Then, he closed the door.

"I'm sorry," Mom said.

She grabbed Dad's hand, and they shared a glance.

"We're sorry," said Dad.

That was strange. My father was never one to get emotional about anything, but he sounded like he was going to cry.

"We're sorry that you're here, and we're sorry that you feel this way," Mom explained.

"I'll be okay," I said.

That was the first time I had said it, and believed it.

"I will be okay," I repeated.

"You'll get out soon, but in the meantime, I'll come see you every chance I can. I'll make sure of it," Mom said.

Then, the man came back in.

"Okay, I'm sorry, but its time for you to go," he said.

I stood up, and started crying. Mom hugged me. I knew she wanted to comfort me, but she started crying too. I hugged Dad. His tears fell onto my shoulders.

"Bye," I said as the nurse pulled me aside.

I watched Mom and Dad leave as I made my way to bed. I laid down, covered up, and cried.

"Have hope," I whispered to myself.

Then, I closed my eyes and went to sleep.

7

All Kind of Abrupt

"Good morning, Trevor," a lady said.

I opened my sleepy eyes, and looked out the window. It was still dark.

"I'm here to get your vitals," she explained. "Lift up your tongue."

She stuffed a thermometer in my mouth, and put a cuff on my arm.

"Oh! Your blood pressure is high, but that's normal for your first day. Let's keep a watch on that."

Then, she gathered her belongings and headed to the door.

"Your doctor will be in, in a few hours, to see you," she said as she left.

"So it really wasn't a bad dream," I thought.

I looked around to really observe the room for the first time. I didn't realize how empty it really was. Two beds. One dresser. One window. One bathroom. That was it. The walls were painted a strict white, and the mattresses like I was laying on the ground.

"I can't be here," I thought.

I could hear my family members talking.

"Why didn't you tell us?" They asked.

It scared me. Voices? I had never heard voices before. Maybe I was crazy after all.

I walked over the bathroom, and looked in the mirror. I stared at my reflection for several minutes, noticing little details I had never seen before.

I leaned in close to my reflection and said, "You are smart. You are kind. You are strong. You can do it."

I backed away, smiled, and climbed into the shower. I remember the feeling of that warm water hitting my face. It was the only comfort I had felt through this whole mess. While I was in the shower, I thought, because that's the place to do it. I thought about what Mom and Dad would be doing at that moment. I thought about what Grandma and Poppy were doing. I thought about what they were thinking.

"I wonder if they're thinking about me?" I asked myself.

I got out of the shower, dried off, and put my scrubs on. I laid back down on that hard plastic mattress, and I heard a knock at the door. It was my doctor.

"Hello. I'm Dr. Hasan. I'll be taking care of you while you're here," he said.

Then, he asked me normal questions. Are my parents still married? Do I have any siblings? Where do we live? What's my favorite color? Song? Any hobbies? They went on and on. He asked me why I was there. I told him.

"I'll see you tomorrow," he said. Then, he left.

It was all kind of abrupt, that first day. I wasn't allowed to leave my room. So I sat, I sang, I prayed, and they watched. The light from my window quietly grew dim, and became the hazy glow of street lights. The

nurses changed the number of days on their 'Countdown to Christmas' bulletin board. A tear slid down my face at the thought I'd still be there for Christmas.

8

Beyond That

"Good morning," I woke up to for the second time. It was that same lady, there to get my vitals.

"Blood pressure is much better," she said.

I repeated that same process. The mirror talk, the shower, the doctor. Then, the nurse came in.

"Time for breakfast," he said.

Finally, I could leave. They didn't have to bring the food to me. I walked down the long hall with the nurse. We entered the cafeteria.

There were four other girls in there.

They all instantly sat up and introduced themselves in a seductive manner. I grabbed my tray and sat down beside one of them.

"No sitting with the girls!" the nurse shouted. I quickly stood up and sat at a table by myself. We talked, we ate, and, honestly, we laughed. It felt so good being able to laugh again.

The girls hung out in their lounge, but I had to walk quietly to the boys' lounge, all by myself. A nicely dressed lady walked in.

"I'm Bev, the counselor here," she explained. She sat down and asked me those endless questions. I answered them all the same way. Then, I remembered.

"I have a choir show, Tuesday," I said. "Is there any way I could get out by then?"

"I doubt it," she replied as she walked out.

That day was spent mostly by myself. I saw the other girls during meals, but that was it. My mom got to see me for the short 45 minute time period. It was mostly spent crying and saying, "It'll be okay."

That evening, the nurse came in the lounge. "We don't normally do this, but since you're the only boy, we've decided to let you go to the rec room with the girls," he said. I gleaned with excitement. Little did I know, we were soon going to be a little family.

When we walked in, I spotted it. The piano. I ran over, and sat down on the bench. Everyone looked so confused. Then, I played my ass off. Still, to this day, it's the best I've ever played. As I played, I turned around, they all smiled at me.

That's when the nurse knew, I needed to get out. He heard it through the music. He walked me to my room that night.

"You are awesome," he said.

"Thank you so much," I replied.

Then, I sat in bed.

I looked up at the ceiling, knowing beyond that there is stars, knowing beyond that there's solar systems, knowing beyond that there's galaxies, knowing beyond that there's a God, and he was looking out for me.

After realizing that, I laid down.

I closed my eyes, I smiled, and I went to sleep.

9

Don't Sweep It under the Rug

I woke up to the sunlight shining in my window. No vitals. No doctor. I woke up, and went through my ritual, the mirror talk, the shower, except instead of thinking, I sang. Oh how I sang my heart out. I got dressed and headed out to the nurses' station.

"Can you unlock the lounge for me?" I asked Bev.

"Of course," she said with a huge smile. That wasn't like her. She was a strict lady.

I walked in, turned on the TV, and watched the 'Fresh Prince of Bel-Air'. The nurse came carrying a cup.

"Here's the medicine you're going to start," he said.

The pill was small.

"How could this make me better?" I thought.

I took it, and went back to the TV.

"Heard you're getting out of here," he said as he walked out.

"Maybe soon," I said.

He smiled, and held up his finger gesturing to hold on. I waited, and waited. Nothing. He came back in, followed by my parents.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"You're leaving," Mom said with a smile.

I jumped up and gave them a hug. Dad smiled and hugged me back. That was strange, but sweet. Bev came in, and closed the door.

"Time for our come to Jesus meeting," she said.

"Well, Trevor, you're about to be discharged, but before any discharge, I have to meet with you and your parents," she explained.

We all grabbed a seat around the table, and Bev pulled out papers galore. There were charts, forms, informative brochures.

"Your boy has depression," she said to Mom and Dad.

"You need to realize that. Don't sweep it under the rug."

I had no clue how she knew that I felt this way. I never told her. She told Mom and Dad how hard it was going to be to raise a child with anxiety and depression. She told them the truth, and I was so thankful.

"Your clothes are waiting for you in your room. Go change," she told me.

I picked myself up, and walked to my room. Finally, I could get out of those ugly maroon scrubs. I put on my holy jeans, my gray sweater, my vest, my converse, and my long beanie, and I went to the mirror. I did my mirror talk for the last time, "You are smart. You are kind. You are strong. You can do it."

"Thank you God," I added.

Then, I left that hospital, never looking back.

10

Today

Today, I am as strong as ever. I know I have the ability to do anything I set my mind to. Some may say I suffer from depression and anxiety, but I disagree.

I do not suffer.

I live with depression and anxiety every day. Since I rode out of that hospital parking lot, I've experienced high moments and low moments, but no matter what I'm feeling, I keep moving forward.

Today, every time I perform, I sit on the piano bench, close my eyes, take a deep breath, and remember that rec room in the bottom of that hospital. I remember the battle I faced, the emotions I felt, but most importantly, the people. I play for them. I play for their hope.

You may say this whole story is just the testament of a dreamer, but it happened, and it's my inspiration.