

The Antidote

by Ashley Berreth



Your past may have the power to choose who you are, but you have the power to choose who you become. May 1st, 1991, started the beginning of a long winding road about the terrible struggle of being an eyewitness to drug and alcohol abuse.

My mom was young and beautiful. She possessed a strong family, a good job and three adorable children. Behind the hazel, happy eyes of this strong woman was utter defeat - defeat we had rarely even dared to witness before. Her life was always full of cons, she had me in high school and was forced to place me in the care of my grandparents when the stress became too much for her to handle. She also gave birth to two more children, a little boy named Sean who was given up for adoption and stolen out of my life and a little girl named Amie who suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome and was also placed in the loving arms of my grandparents.

Throughout my life my mom went

in and out of jail for theft and many other charges. She would get out and we would be best friends again. She would take me to the super slide park and we would fly down the slide, she would take me shopping and we would giggle and try on the craziest of outfits. Everything was wonderful, my mom was back! A month went by and before long new friends began to enter her life. Soon I spent much less time with her and more time with my grandparents. She was always at a party or with her countless boyfriends who, at that time, were her main priority.

Sometimes I would sneak to her house and peer in the windows, but I'd see the same thing over and over again. My mom would be sitting on our old tan love seat with a group of her so called friends, drinking a bud light and laughing obnoxiously at the bright television filled with smiling, all too cheerful faces.

As I grew up I suffered from both sadness and hatred. I hated her with everything in me for not being like all of my friends parents: the role model that I so desperately needed. I was sad however because a huge part of me knew it wasn't her fault. Alcohol and drugs were her antidote to the daily stresses of life and she knew of no other escape.

Fast forward to the summer of 2006. I remember it being warm, sunny and peaceful. I walked home from Wachter Middle School only to find my grandma crying. Earlier that day my mom was arrested for multiple counts of burglary and theft. She had already

stolen everything in our house, including our car, all in the matter of just a few years. I was taken aback by the news but not completely surprised. I knew long ago that my mom would not give up her antidote ...after all nothing lasts forever.

Two years have gone by and life keeps surging ahead. My mom was sentenced to 10 years in New England Women's Correctional facility. There she receives daily classes in alcohol and drug addiction as well as anger management. She has told me that things will change when she gets out but only time will tell.

My past had a huge impact on who I am and my values. I could have turned out just like my mom, however spending my whole life in that kind of environment was really a life changing situation both physically and emotionally. I live every day with the urge to prove everyone wrong, I won't follow in her footsteps. It's a daily struggle to hear stories about my mom and about what horrible things she has done. I can't find it in my heart to hate her anymore; it's only the disease that I've learned to hate. I was forced to grow up at a very young age, but I think it definitely shaped my values and helped me get through life's other stresses much easier. It taught me the value of honesty and forgiveness, that's something I don't believe I could have learned until I was much older. I stare life directly in the face. I appreciate what I have and don't dwell on what I've lost. The past influenced who I am but I will choose who I become.

The editors and staff of Alert Magazine are proud to congratulate Ashley on winning the North Dakota scholarship and would like to encourage her to pursue her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to enter our essay contest.
Sincerely, Alert Magazine

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