



It Won't Happen to Me

By Chelsea Salma

AS HUMANS we tend to believe that we are invincible, that the downfalls of others could never possibly become our own, and that we will never become followers. These assumptions can be as real as we decide to make them, but for many, the reality of them is not like anything they ever expected. For the latter, the harshness of these realities can be crippling.

I am one of four children, the only girl, and the third to come along. My closest sibling at the time of my birth was five years older than me, so all throughout my early childhood I looked up to him. This was a critical flaw in my young judgment leading to more bumps and bruises than one could possibly imagine.

Nonetheless I continued my admiration of my older brother. When he was about twelve he started to get into trouble and a lot of the time I was right there with him. First he started smoking. He convinced me to steal cigarettes for him from my grandparents' house to feed his habit, because no one would ever suspect the seven year old. Soon smoking was no longer enough of a thrill for him, and he turned to marijuana. He would continue to smoke only marijuana for many years, but finally the gateway drug was just that, a gateway into much harsher drugs.

Not that the things my brother did while under the influence of marijuana weren't enough, but by the time he was eighteen, he had been charged with well over fifteen offenses including: beyond parental control, running away, possession of marijuana, and petty theft. Because of my brother's continued use of drugs and general disregard for the rules, he and my mother were constantly at odds. Whenever a fight arose he would call for me, to have me witness the horrible events. Due to this fact, by the time I was thirteen I had seen my brother being arrested and led away in handcuffs more than ten times. Once I actually had to call the police on my own brother while my mom and her friend held him down. He was so intoxicated that he was a danger to himself and others. Shortly after this incident my brother disappeared and we did not hear from him again. He had started to become involved with meth, and we thought that he was more than likely dead somewhere. We dreaded the call that one day would ask us to come and identify the body of my brother and childhood hero.

After a year had passed, while at school I was called down to the office. It was my birthday so I didn't think much of it, but it was a call I had not

been expecting. My brother had come home for my birthday; while we were all asleep he had snuck into the house and stolen the car. My brother's offenses now included grand theft auto. After this he was soon apprehended and rightfully thrown in prison. The list of charges he then faced was far greater than I had ever imagined, and he had over \$20,000 in restitution to pay. My brother was ashamed not of his actions but of being caught, and it was still another whole year before he reached out to us.

After two years in prison he was paroled in Idaho to live with us again, and he very quickly fell back into his old habits. He had promised he was going to change and be different just like many times before, but by this time I knew better and had stopped believing him. At sixteen I was far more knowledgeable in the way the world worked than my twenty one year old brother.

I believe that each of these arrests were handled the best that the law permitted, but that sadly my brother had become the stereotypical addict. His basic human assumptions had been entirely incorrect. The downfalls of others had become his own—he was a follower, and he was far from invincible. In the past nine years I have heard my brother use the phrase "It won't happen to me" so many times that if I had a dollar for every time he said it, I would never have to work a day in my life. Sadly, he was wrong. My brother is once again sitting in a six by six cell, where I'm sure—due to his past habits—he will spend the majority of his life. It is wrong to think that he could waste his life on such meaningless things; but it is, and has always been, his choice. ☹️

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Chelsea Salma is a senior at Century High School in Pocatello, ID. Alert Magazine congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We also encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.