

One Day At A Time

(400 words)

'Hello, everyone. My name is Elise, and I'm an addict.'

'Hi, Elise,' the group droned in chorus.

The woman who'd earlier introduced herself as Jayne smiled. 'It's a pleasure to have you, Elise. Your decision to come to us is the first, big step towards your recovery. You should feel very proud of yourself.'

I fiddled with my wedding ring. 'It wasn't my decision. My family gave me an ultimatum.'

'I see. Well, we've all been where you are.' Jayne clasped her hands and leant forward. 'Would you like to share your story?'

I glanced around at the other hapless souls seated around the cheerless, parish hall function room. Their eyes exhibited the same preoccupied expression I'd seen in my own reflection. Physically present, but the mind, elsewhere. 'Where should I start?'

'Anywhere you like.'

I drew a breath and exhaled slowly. 'I suppose I've always had the bug, so to speak. Ever since I was in school,' I began. 'But I wasn't hurting anyone, you know? It was *my* battle. *My* little secret.'

Jane nodded.

'I'd kept it under control when I was first married, and even stopped altogether when my children were small.'

'So, what changed?'

'The children grew up, and I felt... *redundant*, I guess,' I sighed. 'Anyway, I started dabbling again. *Experimenting* in small doses. But when my eldest left for university last autumn, I had more time on my hands, and I...'

'Relapsed.'

I hung my head. 'Yes. And it's worsened. I skip meals. I hardly sleep. I can't remember the last time I made love to my husband. I spend hours, entire days even, holed up in my room, submitting to... these *demons* that fill my head with ideas.' I wiped away a tear. 'I'm weak.'

Jayne stood and shuffled towards me. 'You are not weak,' she said, resting her hand on my shoulder. 'You're here. That took courage.'

'My life is in shambles. I've lost my job. My marriage is falling apart. My children despise me. And it's all my fault. Still... I can't stop.'

'You, like the rest of us, can't help who you are,' she said. 'You're a writer, Elise. And writing... it's not only an addiction. It's a calling... One you didn't ask for.' She patted my arm. 'We're here for you. The Writers Anonymous's twelve-step program works. You just have to keep at it. One day at a time.'