

**Excerpts from an Untitled Manuscript
Memoir – Work in Progress**

Excerpt from Chapter 1
What is happening?

What is happening? I'm terrified. Everything is threatening. I am crying most hours of every day. It's been a month. I'm afraid I'm going to lose everything. I'm afraid I'm going to lose my mind. I can't imagine getting better. I can't get over it. Get over what? What is *it*? I'm afraid of ending up in a rocking chair locked away somewhere unresponsive and useless. The thought terrifies me. I'm confused. Disengaged. When will this terror end?

I wake every morning with a sense of dread. I lay still for a moment to gauge my emotions. Is *it* still there? Is *it*, this terror I feel, still as bad? Yes. It is. Now what?

I need to get up and take care of my son. He needs me. I rise, put on my robe and slippers, and walk across the narrow hallway to his room. "Time to get up and get ready for school." He is usually up and getting dressed on his own. Only nine years old and so responsible. He says he doesn't want to miss a day, "I'll have too much work to make up." Plus, he enjoys it and is doing well.

I head downstairs to the kitchen and ready breakfast. Cereal mostly, or the flavored oatmeal he likes so much. We spend time together eating breakfast then, he's off to school.

I give him a kiss and a hug before he leaves and watch as he makes his way down the front steps to the sidewalk. Others join him on the way, and I watch until he's out of view. I love him more than words can say. My emotions well up and I start to cry - again. Sobbing I go upstairs lay across my bed and cry.

What possibly could be turning me into an emotional wreck? Everything in my life is going so well. There is nothing to which I can relate that could cause such an overwhelming sense of doom. What is happening?

I do my best to hide this all from my son, but the emotions lay constant just below the surface. I'm definitely not myself and don't doubt he can sense it. How is he dealing with seeing his mother out of sorts trying to hold it together? I don't know what to make of it. How can he? My god he's only nine years old. How is this affecting him? What affect will this have on him? I don't have the answers. I do sense he feels he needs to take care of mom.

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Our lives up until now were moving along reasonably well. I'm 29 years old, have been widowed for 10 years and raising my son. He's healthy and happy, has a lot of friends, does well in school, and is playing little league baseball. He's such a happy kid. His personality and good nature remind me of his father. My son's the light of my life and I can't imagine my life without him.

We live in a nice neighborhood in a comfortable home that sits on a cul-de-sac . The street lined with identical brick duplexes. Mostly young families here and a couple of retirees. I would prefer living in the town where I grew up, but this is what I can afford and feel fortunate to have found this location.

Excerpt from Chapter 2
Marilyn

Our life is going well all things considered. We're happy for the most part. Who's happy all the time? My son fills my heart with joy. He is the light of my life. He has been since he was born. He's what I live for.

Why, then, am I feeling sadness, this sense of doom, this black cloud overhead? Whatever is *it?* *It's* too much to bear. I don't know what's happening, and I don't know how to get around it.

My father calls to see how I'm doing. My answer is the same. I'm crying and I don't know why. What must he think? Maybe he knows what's wrong. Maybe some idea but doesn't say.

Today after we hang up the phone, I realize I cannot face another day in this condition. I call back. He's working. I know he has a lot on his plate, but I can't wait. Agnes, his secretary answers the phone.

"Can I talk to my dad?" I ask politely I hope but feel abrupt. There's concern in her voice, "Hold on Hun."

My dad: "Hi, Chris."

"I need to go somewhere," I blurt out.

"Go where?"

"I don't know." I don't know where I need to go or what I need to do. All I know is that I need help. I ask him to please find someone, somewhere for me to go. "Can you find someone I can talk to?"

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"Where do you want me to call?"

"I don't know. Just please get me some help."

We hang up and I hang on to what feels like an eternity but also feel like I have a hold on one end of a lifeline thrown out in hopes someone will find the other end and pull me in. I'm drowning; I need someone to save me.

A few minutes pass and my dad calls. He's found a place where I can go and made an appointment for me to talk to a counselor next Tuesday.

"Today is Thursday", runs through my mind. That's five days.

"I can't wait until next week. I need to get in right away." I feel the intensity. My dad does too.

There's silence for a moment before he says, "Maybe if you call..."

I get the feeling he thinks if someone hears the urgency in my voice, they might make room for me sooner. I ask my father for the number. As he recites each digit, I carefully write them down. I hang up the phone and punch in the numbers. A woman answers. "Merrimack Valley Counseling Associates. Can I help you?"

"My father just called..." Four words, and I'm interrupted.

"Can you be here at noon?" She asks.

"Yes," I answer without hesitation. "Yes."

I don't know what time it is. I don't know where I am supposed to be at noon, whether I am able to drive myself there, or if I can't drive how I will get to where I'm supposed to be. All I know is that, Yes, I will be there at noon.

It's apparent when I end the call that I cannot safely drive myself. The office is located downtown. Together with figuring out how to get there, where I may have to park and how far I might have to walk makes the task more complicated than I can navigate.

I call my dad back, "They said they can see me today at noon. Can you drive me there?" He does.

There is no one at the reception desk when we arrive, so I chose to sit and wait at the far side of the room. My dad sits next to me. There are 18 identical chairs in a

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U-shape that wraps along the wall. The chairs are burgundy with a printed blue diamond pattern. There's one other person in the room with us, a young man in his late teens early twenties wearing jeans, sneakers and a white t-shirt. His shoulder-length dark brown hides his face. He's holding a boom box on his right shoulder up to his ear and has the music up loud. Not appropriate for a waiting area. I think. I know I'm here because I have a problem and wonder what his might be. I remain quiet.

I don't know what is going to happen next but feel a tiny bit of relief. I don't have to face this alone any longer. Whatever *this* is. Someone here will be able to help me, tell me, hopefully, what is happening and that I will be okay. I sit and anxiously wait for someone to take hold of the lifeline I've thrown out.

Her name is Marilyn.

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