

## Drugs

There are a lot of drugs in this world. There's meth, cocaine, heroin, and countless others. But, then, there's those drugs that are addicting, and they're not physical. They're mental, and the only way to get that fix is to indulge within your mind things that you know should not be indulged in. Hannah found this out the hard way. To Hannah – meth, cocaine, heroin – those were drugs. She didn't understand that drugs existed outside of their powdery forms and liquid-injecting syringes. She didn't realize that some things were just as deadly, just as painful, and just as addictive as all those other drugs that schools taught against and police fought against. Hannah didn't know this; but once she did, the question that circled over and over again in her mind wasn't how or why. *Is an addiction a debilitating disease or is it a self-made choice*, she asked herself over and over. As Hannah eventually found out, an addiction is both.

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“I failed again,” he says with the most solemn expression on his face. His voice catches as he spoke.

For what feels like an eternity longer than a few seconds, Hannah's heart seems to stop dead in her chest. She freezes. She goes numb with his confession. Hannah doesn't hear when the waitress comes by and asks if she would like a refill; she doesn't respond when James tells the waitress to bring along something a little bit stronger for Hannah to drink. Choosing to just stare down at the baby-blue colored linen napkin in her lap, she remains silent as a flood of white noise surrounds her on all sides. She keeps silent as James goes on to say so many things that she doesn't really hear and can't really remember because she can't really focus on anything he has

to say. And, really, quite honestly, she doesn't care to. At some point, Hannah faintly realizes that she is clenching her fingernails so tightly into a fisted ball that she is almost drawing blood.

When Hannah decides that she can't keep silent anymore, her words abruptly break through the fog of her own mind and interrupt James' own pleas for her forgiveness. "Why did you do it?" She asks in a voice barely above a whisper.

James takes a deep breath. "I don't know." He tries to make eye contact with her from across the table, but she makes that impossible to do. "I was trying not to, and I came so close to resisting. Then, I couldn't stop, and before I knew it, I was doing it all over again, and I was regretting it. I'm so sorry."

Hannah chuckles bitterly. It is a terrible, dreadful sound. "*Right*. That's what you say every time this happens. For the last six months, it's been the same excuses over and over again. What made you do it?"

Again, James responds, "I don't know."

"That's not good enough!" She whispers to avoid being heard by those around them. Yet, her whisper is wrathful. "What were you thinking?" James jumps at the anger within her voice. She has never spoken to him in such a tone before. "What were you thinking that you could go ahead and do this to me again?" Without waiting for a response to her incredibly rhetorical questions, she continues, "I don't know what to do with you. I don't know how to help you! I don't know how to fix you! I can't handle this right now, and you know that. I haven't been sleeping, I'm overwhelmed, I am exhausted! I've been dealing with my family's crap. I've been

dealing with your crap. I don't even have time to deal with my own crap! And I have so much crap to deal with, and I can't deal with it anymore!"

She stops as the waitress returns with a shot glass of liquor. Hannah ignores her, and the woman just stares at the couple with curious eyes before walking away. Hannah opens her mouth to say more, but James stops her.

"Then, if that's how you feel, if you can't deal with it, then you should just leave," he says very quietly.

Hannah's angry words stop in her mouth and she swallows them back. "What?" She freezes and goes numb. James doesn't look like he's kidding at all.

"Go for it. Just walk away, Han. That's all you've got to do."

Her fingers shake slightly as she reaches out and grips the glass of something murky and brown between her hands. Her voice is quiet and hurt when she opens her mouth to speak. "That's it?" She asks. It seems as if all anger has flown away in that moment and has been replaced by the feeling of her heart plummeting to her stomach, and inexplicable fear.

"That's it," he responds in a matter-of-fact tone.

She shakes her head. "You say that as if you think it should be easy to let go and move on."

"It should be, Han. I'm making it easy for you. I'm letting you go. So, just go."

Her eyes leave his to stare once again at the baby-blue colored linen napkin in her lap. In an honest voice, she replies, “How can I go, James, when I don’t want to?”

“Easy,” James says as he leans forward, chest almost touching the table and palms curling around the top of the wooden two-seater. “You get up out of that seat and have your legs move that pretty little body of yours to the door. And then, you keep walking and never come back.”

She looks down at the glass in her hands, her nails clicking against its fragile surface. In that moment, she almost wishes that she could scratch it, break it, wound it, anything. “You talk as if you want that to happen, James.” Her hand lifts the drink up to her mouth, and she takes a large swig of the dark liquid. Smacking her lips together, she looks up and declares, “I really don’t think you want me to leave at all.”

His eyes widen. “Are you stupid?” He bites out in a scathing tone designed to hurt. “I’m letting you go, so leave. Now.”

“You’re the one who’s stupid, James. You don’t tell me what to do. You get up off *your* seat and have your legs walk *your* pretty little body to the door, and don’t come back.”

“Please, Han. I just don’t want to hurt you again.” His voice is suddenly soft again, and she realizes that he is trying very hard not to cry. He is practically begging her to leave.

She responds by raising an eyebrow and crossing her arms. “Then don’t hurt me again,” she challenges.

“It’s not as easy as that, and you know it. I don’t trust myself.”

“And I don’t trust you,” Hannah responds and takes another gulp of the murky liquid. It burns her throat as it goes down, but she finishes the very last drop.

James nods. “I know.” He takes a deep breath and makes his decision. “Bye, Han,” he says as he slides out of the booth and drops a twenty-dollar bill on the tabletop. “Thanks for the drink.”

That’s it. He doesn’t say anything else or even look at her. He just walks away, leaving her afraid to be alone.

“No, no, no,” she mumbles to herself as she completely forgets to leave the baby-blue linen napkin behind. She grabs it up in between her fingertips, leaps out of the booth, and runs through the door.

“James!” She calls.

But he’s not there.

Her eyes search the crowds for any sign of his blonde hair and dark-colored trench coat, but she cannot find him. He’s gone.

Hannah turns back around and enters the bar again. Sitting back down in the booth that they had inhabited minutes ago, she throws the napkin down on the table and calls over the waitress. Pointing at the empty shot glass, she says, “Bring out two more.”

The woman looks at her and then at the empty seat across from her. “He leave you?”

Hannah nods as she cradles the shot glass in between her fingertips. “Word of advice for you. Don’t get hooked on drugs. Addiction destroys you.”

The waitress walks away without saying anything else and returns with two full-to-the-brim glasses of the same dark and murky liquid. “Remember,” she says, echoing Hannah’s words of caution, “Addiction destroys you.”

But Hannah doesn’t listen. She just gulps back the alcohol and tries to forget James.

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