

Chapter 1

The day that changed my life

A friend wrote this and I thought it was really good, so I wanted to save it.

His footsteps became more and more thunderous as he stormed up the twisted staircase, the unscoured carpet quaking beneath me with every blood curdling footstep. My heart wrenched as, in an instant I was out of my chair and cowered in the corner of my room. I wrapped my arms around me for cover from this heartless beast. A blubber left my mouth and a teardrop pounded to the floor. So many times, I had been in this exact same spot, shivering in fear with my lips trembling. A whimper grew into a sob and then into a wail as all unleashed. I had nothing to lose, I sobbed to the world, I wept to God. He was here, I saw the glint of his belt buckle before anything else. Then I saw his psychotic face, nose flaring, eyebrows cocked like a blade, a tumbling flame that seemed to rush out of his eyes. The horror overcame me once again, I screamed. The demon came closer and closer. I put my head down and braced for the torture that was ahead.

A crash of thunder dragged me out of a world of my own creation. My typing coming to an abrupt stop. This story is about abuse. It was a dreary and dismal evening as I sat in my ill-lit bedroom at my desk typing. The thunder and

lightning wreaked havoc outside as I re-wrote my short story for the fifth time trying to add to it but failing. They always told me to write stories from experience, but I loved to try different things and loved to try and empathise with the main character. My fingers strained as they swept over the keyboard uploading my thoughts onto the screen. Each key, that synchronised with each patter of rain that pounded against my window, was more meaningful than the last. It all came together in harmony to make a masterpiece. I loved being able to escape from reality to a dream world and create a masterpiece in my bedroom and make something out of nothing. I loved the idea of having the power to change someone's emotions and even their outlook on life with a few words on a piece of paper. Not stopping for even a minute to think, the thoughts flowed into my mind and like a river unleashed and the blood rushed into my fingers, as they typed away as my brain entered the world of text and unleashed creativity. My mind was completely engulfed in my writing, forgetting everything for a moment until I reached the end of my paragraph. I stopped. The creativity drained away and I awoke to reality to the harsh shriek of thunder. I re-read the paragraph I had just written and was amazed by the wonder that was fabricated in front of me. I sighed in contentment, scratched my head, sat back into the grooves of my chair, closed my eyes, and dozed off.

I woke up around 20 minutes later, to the deep sound of rain reverberating around me as the clouds wept in anguish, my throat, as desiccated as a desert. I looked at the mug next to me that was once topped, empty with only the discolour of dried tea imprinted on the bottom. I got up, my whole-body cracking in synchrony as I did and headed downstairs, tiptoeing on the dusty hallway floorboards that sagged with each footstep and down the steep inclined stairs that rattled ferociously as I trotted down them. I stumbled into the kitchen to see my dad; eyes red; hair messy, sitting at the kitchen table staring at his computer screen. He'd just arrived back from work and was finishing off some tedious online paperwork that he'd been given stacks and stacks of with the threat of getting laid-off if it wasn't completed. Still in his work clothes, his beard stubbled and bleached, his hair ragged and ruffled, he

typed away as I did but at a lot slower pace as he inspected each key carefully before pressing it. He'd just arrived back from his fifth twelve hour shift this week, trying to pay off the accumulated debt of the past few years. My dad was my motivation, I wanted to become a writer, an author, and attempt to repay back all he had done for me.

I turned the kettle on, made my tea and started making my way back upstairs when my stomach thundered. I went back into the kitchen and opened the pantry. Empty. My stomach growled once again as I stood motionless in front of the empty cupboard almost mocking me. I quietly made my way back upstairs with my head hung low. My brother was in his room, either working or gaming and my mom had just left to work now on her night shift. I sat down at my desk and stopped. I pondered. I thought about my life and my dreams.

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An email appeared. My heart stopped as I clicked on it in an instant... It was a spam email, I twitched and sat back in my chair. But what I didn't realise was as I sat staring at the soiled ceiling, another email had come through. I looked up and saw in big bold letters, 'New Email From The University of Oxford's Writing association', I couldn't believe my eyes, they'd noticed me and replied, in a flash I was up and ready to open the email, finger on the trigger. I wasn't religious and never had been, but I admit, in that moment, I prayed to God before I opened that email, I knew the meaning behind this email, it could make or break me. What I read next changed my life.