

About the Book

Not Just US

CHAPTER ONE

There are some instances in life when we have no control over our own lives or destinations. However, the majority of the time, we write our own life story. Once the ball is in motion, only unbelievable faith will stop it from rolling.

Like most adults, we wait until our youth is gone to reflect on mistakes. It is a bittersweet transition. The bitter comes later after it is too late to change the past. Take dating for example. Dating is different as we get older. We become wiser and more reluctant to unprotected sex. A woman may contract Herpes in her youth but never pay attention to the consequences until she gets married and gives birth to a handicap child.

Another example of a bittersweet transition is body weight. As children, we may overeat for most of our lives. Finally when we reach adulthood, the fat cells have already developed. We then spend the remainder of our lives struggling to shed unwanted pounds. We think to ourselves, "If only I had known fat cells develop during childhood, I would have eaten more fruits and vegetables and less sweets."

You can be the strongest of individuals, but a day will come when problems enter your life, which cause “you to break”. This is serious. Have you ever found yourself holding a conversation with someone, and they appear to be weird or strange? This is a person who has either had a nervous breakdown or is on the verge of having a nervous breakdown.

One day the stress level may become so high, you have no other choice but to surrender all to a Higher Power. Once upon a time in my life, I would call on Jesus to rescue me. I soon realized I was only calling Him when I was down, needy, or in trouble. I am somewhat of a religious person. I am not a fanatic. I do not push my beliefs off on other people. I am a quiet type of believer.

My religion is not a loud, look at me form of religion. It is private. I get weak and angry if the wrong buttons are pushed. I must admit; I do have a problem with getting to occupied with my own daily lifestyle and ultimately letting my spiritual life get shaky.

Anyway, no matter what the cause of the choices I make today or have made yesterday, I am still here in this body mourning. I am too old to be innocent and too young to be senile. I am a woman floating around in this world waiting for something wonderful to finally happen to me. When I was a teenager, I set goals for myself. I thought I would someday meet a man, get married, have a big home, and have some kids. A career would come later.

Well, here's to dreams. None of those things came true for me. Instead, I have worked my butt off going to school all of my life with a small paycheck to show for all my efforts. People working on a sex hotline can make more money than I make in a week. It is a shame I tell you. These thoughts constantly cross my mind, which leads to my reason for being sick and tired of being sick and tired. No, this is not a play on words. I meant exactly what I said. Besides, why can't I throw some dirt in the game? Everyone else does, and they get away with it.

Tonight, tonight, tonight. I want to fly away tonight. I do not want to be in an airplane. My spirit is low, and I want to fly away home. This is a metaphor meaning I want to be anywhere else besides where I am right now.

I do believe I will go to heaven when I die. People are talking so much about Jesus returning soon. I pray He makes it back before I go insane.

If Jesus does not return soon, I will be forced to watch my sister, whose name is Desiree, die from the AIDS virus or AIDS-related complications. Every family will experience the AIDS epidemic, but not mine, so I thought.

As kids, my sister and I grew up playing together and enjoying nice gifts from our mother. The only difference between my sister and I was she got more gifts because she is older.

I never truly cared because she has always been my role model. I did not mind accepting her hand-me-downs. She had great taste in clothes. She also took really good care of her clothes. They looked almost new when I got them.

While the memories replay in my head, the days I spent watching my sister puzzle me. Mature and anxious are words to describe my sister as she became a curious teenager who wanted to date. The only problem was my mother felt it was way too soon. My mother expected my sister to wait until she was eighteen-years-old before dating just in case she got pregnant. My mother is from the Deep South. Parents raised in the Deep South have old-fashioned values.

My sister wanted to date. My mother refused to accept her decision. This caused the biggest war in all history. I call it war because things were never the same in our home after they started to argue about everything. My sister totally rebelled against my mother. My mother did everything she could to protect my sister from the world, but they never seemed to understand each other. I cannot remember a pleasant day shared between the two of them after my mother caught my sister skipping school to be with a boyfriend. They have been at war ever since that dreaded day.

Who is to blame? I really do hate to take sides. They both need to be more humble if you ask me. They are both quite hot-tempered and quick with words. My mother throws her opinions around, and my sister tends to retaliate. Although I

have tried to convince my sister to let go of her anger, she ignores me and walks away. Pride is a strong emotion, especially when it controls a person.

Sometimes, it does not make a difference if a child gets the best of everything from their parents. I have known kids who go astray regardless of what their parents give them. Who knows what their minds are telling them? Sadly enough, kids do not understand the consequences of their rebellion. Many learn their lesson to late.

Some kids are able to make it, and become productive citizens. Women, for example, who have lived troubled lives and become role models, cry in their hotel rooms late at night. The world admires them, but they hate or dislike themselves. They are unable to release the past. The past harasses them like a filthy secret. Memories of the past can cause a woman to kill herself. The mirror may display a well-dressed, successful woman. Through her eyes, she sees a worthless, abused, little girl with low self-esteem.

We all make mistakes while we are young. Most of us refuse to think about our past because it is way to painful for us. When we are young, we fail to take advice from adults because we think we know it all. We appoint ourselves to be adults when really we are still inexperienced about life.

The only problem with being a “self-appointed adult” is the decision to commit adult acts. Adults have considerable difficulties being an adult. There is no way a child can handle

the pressures of being an adult. Everything comes in due season. A child is not equipped mentally to handle adult situations.

I am not an expert on life. I have my skeletons to prove it. However, I can share a bit of knowledge every now and then, anticipating some young soul will listen and take heed. It is a nasty world we live in. People are for themselves and themselves only. If you get in their way, they will crush you! When you are young, you are innocent to these things, unless you cross over into the shoes of an adult.

Young ladies in particular must be ever so careful as to the decisions they make in life. One bad decision today can ruin your life forever! Good decisions will bring good results. Bad decisions will bring misery. My grandmother always told me, "Be sure your sins will find you out." There is nowhere to hide if you are stuck on being stupid, no way to hide, nowhere to hide. This is the reality of it all if you are determined to be rebellious. Do the right thing.

When her hormones started to flair, my sister went against all of the values she had learned at home. The heat was much too strong for her to say "no". During her ninth-grade year in high school, she gave her virginity to Glover, the most popular boy in school. All the young ladies wanted to be seen with Glover. He dressed nice. He could dance. He was on the football team. His mother bought him expensive sneakers to match all of his outfits. He had a cellular phone. He drove his

mother's car to school several days a week. He was voted as being the *Most Popular* boy in the entire school.

Today, seventeen years later, he is a bum! A friend of mine was gossiping about him a couple of days ago. Glover does not have a job; he still lives home with "mommy", and he has four children with four different women. "Mommy" never cut the umbilical cord.

Glover has managed to keep his good looks and his cocky attitude. He still thinks he is back in high school when all the young ladies had a crush on him. He better wake up. His fifteen minutes of fame is finished.

My sister went crazy over Glover whenever she saw him at school. Infatuation had its' way with my sister. Her secret is my secret. She does not realize I know the first time she had sex. I snuck and read about it in her diary. The diary read, "We did it on the P.E. field in the dug-out." She described the act as being painful. She even described how she cried. I was young when I read her diary. I got scared and threw the diary underneath her bed. I never told a soul.

That was the kind of relationship my sister and I had. I thought I was doing her a favor by keeping her promiscuous behavior a secret from our mother.

My sister and Glover did not date for very long after they had sex. He was a popular young man in school. He could have any girl in the school. He did not need my sister anymore. He had gotten what he wanted.

Glover never officially broke-up with Desiree. He just started avoiding her. Whenever she would see him in the hallways, he would go in the opposite direction or pretend as though he did not see her. She did confront him. Glover promised to meet her at lunchtime to talk about their relationship. Desiree waited by the big oak tree in front of the school for the entire lunch period. Glover did not keep his word. After the last bell rang, Desiree walked inside of the building heading to her third period class. Upstairs, near the Graphic Arts Class, she saw Glover with Sebrinna Walker. They were holding hands and giggling.

Desiree called Glover's name. He looked around, saw her, and then pressed through the crowd of students. Desiree was left standing there wanting Glover to return.

Glover promised Desiree he would not tell anyone about having sex with her. He lied. The next day after they "did it" when Desiree arrived to school, Carol approached her with a big grin on her face. She told my sister what Glover had told some of his friends. Carol was dating Glover's best friend. Desiree was going to go looking for Glover. She was hurt because he betrayed her trust.

She saw him after the first block. He was coming down the stairs by the Attendance Office wearing a pair of blue jeans and a t-shirt. He had his arms stretched in the air while yawning with his mouth wide open. Desiree pulled him to the side.

“You told them,” Desiree said.

“Not now, Desiree. I am tired. I got home late last night,”
Glover replied.

“I don’t care. Why did you tell them?”

“I only told Roy. He is my best friend.”

“You promised you wouldn’t tell anybody. I am so
embarrassed.”

“For what? You are my girlfriend.”

“You make me sick. That’s all you wanted from me.
Everybody will be talking about me.”

“The bell is about to ring. I will talk to you later.”

Glover walked away. His yawn turned into a big smile. He
had conquered. His friends were all congratulating him while
my sister was depressed. Her virginity was gone forever.

Desiree had a best friend whom she spent hours talking to
on the telephone. I would listen in on her phone
conversations. Desiree trusted me. She knew I would not tell
our mother anything.

I know so many secrets about my sister. After she and
Glover stopped dating, she dated other boys from school. She
wanted to make Glover jealous, not knowing he cared less
about anything she did.

In my heart, I take some responsibility for my sister’s
predicament. I could have protected her. The boys sneaking in
her window, the excuses to go to her friend’s house, reasons
for working late, all of her lies served their purpose. She was

giving it up more than a prostitute on the boulevard. Her lies have all come back to haunt her. She is now infected with HIV. I should have told my mother what I knew. Maybe my mother could have stopped Desiree.

My sister suspected she was sick even before the doctor told her about the positive HIV test results. She had contracted venereal disease after venereal disease. Why she trusted men so much I will never know. She had condoms. Her doctor gave her a bag of condoms. She just did not use them, silly girl. When pleasure pushed her buttons, she melted like cheese.

The finest man in town infected Desiree with HIV. When they met, he was dressed nice, smelling nice, and carrying a lot of cash. Not only was he driving a fancy car, he had on expensive jewelry. If I were Desiree, I would have checked his police record before getting involved with him.

Men have hurt me, and I do not trust them. These days, men do not come wrapped in shimmery packages unless they have won the lottery or are selling drugs. Oh yes, they may get lucky enough to find a decent paying job. If the truth must be told, then let me tell it. Women are making the dollars, and men are trying to compete.

All across America, men are playing games. Most of them have no jobs, play basketball at lunchtime, and scout the neighborhood for women walking to the bus stop. They lie about being on a professional sports team be it football or

basketball. When confronted about making money, they insist their manager is getting work for them. I have heard this stupid line from many men. One man told me he was going overseas to play basketball. Excuse me for laughing. The man was in his late twenties when I met him, and he was not in good shape. He wore his gold gym shorts hanging down on his big butt. His shirt could not hide his sloppy stomach. And his legs did not appear to be muscular. The only thing going for him was his cute face.

I have to tell the truth. I was attracted to him for some reason. He could make me laugh. His name is James.

I did give James my phone number. He called, and we went on a couple of dates. And I did have sex with him. I think both of us were looking for the same thing, friendship. Our friendship was unusual. We had sex everywhere. I recall us getting busy in an abandoned car parked in his neighborhood. I knew then our friendship was way to dangerous for me. I told him goodbye that night and did not accept another phone call from him again.

I am not worried. I always used protection with James. He could have had a girlfriend. I did not ask him if he was sleeping with anyone else. We had an understanding. We both understood our relationship would not go beyond being anything more than a “sexual friendship”.

The suave man who swept my sister off her feet had a cute face like James. He appeared to be nice, but he was really a

low-life drug dealer. I knew something was “stank in his tank”. He had too much money to be so young. He was not an entertainer because I had never seen his face on any billboard or any album.

I thought he would not be in her life for very long. Desiree has a history of indulging with many men. She once told me, “I want exactly what they want.”

Now, her tune has changed. She has kids to worry about. Who will get her kids after she is gone? I will gladly do whatever I can to raise them. I know it may be tough, but I will do it for my sister’s sake. It would not be right to give the kids to the state.

I sit and wonder when Desiree’s day will come to say goodbye to us all. Will it be in five years? Will she live as long as thirteen years? What will become of our family? We are all suffering along with Desiree. From the positive test results to the constant sick days, we have stood by her side. Family has to stick together.

My sister resented her family in the past. She thought we were only trying to get in her business, or tell her what to do. More than anything else, my mother was trying to prevent her from this terrible fate.

It is ripping me apart. Every glance into her eyes hurts me. I refuse to accept the fact she will not be around. She has always been here. Someday, she will be gone to another place. And I will not be able to call her on the telephone or go

shopping with her. My big sister will be in the cemetery. Her children will lose their mother, and I will lose a life-long friend.

Life is so unfair to us all. If Adam and Eve had not eaten from the Tree of Life, we could all live forever. Things would be better. I cannot bear the thought of Desiree leaving me. Who will I go to with my problems?

In the spur of the moment, I could race to a payphone to tell Desiree what was going on at my job. She never turned me away. She would listen, and tell me to calm down. Her not being around for me will place a void in my life.

Why do situations of our youth haunt us in adulthood even after we change our life? My sister did change. She even found a job. She got a new car and started taking care of her kids. She has struggled to become a better person. Even when she was down-and-out, I saw the good in her.

Death is promised to us all. It comes when we least expect it. When someone has AIDS, most of the guesswork is alleviated. When, and if, the virus finally destroys the immune system, the doctors can pretty much determine when the person will die.

Desiree is in the early stages of HIV. She appears to be normal on the outside. No one will ever know she is infected with HIV unless she tells them. She could even continue dating if she chooses to do so. My sister has a heart. At least I can give her credit for not intentionally dating men to spread the virus.

My sister has no intention of infecting anyone else with the virus. The man in her life, today, was infected by my sister. She did not know she had the virus when they started dating. She did not know her ex-boyfriend had given her HIV. Her new boyfriend has to pay the ultimate price for not wearing a condom. Ironically enough, he has learned to deal with his fate. He has vowed to stay with Desiree. He understands she was not aware the virus was in her system. She did not purposely infect him.

A woman at my job was talking about AIDS. She is not very educated, but her statement made a valid point. She said, "The smoothest talking men are carrying a bomb in their penis. When it explodes, don't let it be in you!"

We all have a choice. When having sex, it is best to use protection. Be safe rather than sorry. One minute of pleasure is not worth a lifetime of pain.