

Chapter 19

Homeless

**A Million Miles From Home
Now I feel so all alone
A million miles away from home
I have no where to lay my head
So I keep on moving someplace instead
Walking and walking with nowhere to go
Surrounded by people, still there's no one I know
Why don't you care about my distress?
You're just looking at my life saying, "What a mess"
I need your help, can't you see
Stop making excuses and laughing at me
At first I was only late on my rent
Then the bills piled up and all my money was spent
Before I knew it I had nowhere to go
And no one would talk to me except people I owe
This was the time when I needed a friend
Where are they now? Their concern was pretend
What is this life, merely a test?
I'm lucky to survive, and doing my best
Please don't forget me, I'm so all alone
A million miles away from home
-- Christine Michelle**

I called my long time friend Jane.

Me: Jane, I have nowhere to go, I am homeless.

Jane: You can stay in my dad's garage. It's not much, but you won't be on the street.

I took the offer and lived there for a month. Half of everything I owned became water damaged from the leaks in the roof of the garage. I cried every day, scared of where my life was going. There were so many fears in my mind, I'll never be able to do my internship. I'm not going to be able to live here for long. What am I going to do? I had never felt so helpless and embarrassed. I just laid there and cried for a few days, and did nothing but plead for God's help. Eventually I realized that I had to make a choice, either give up or get a hold of myself and deal with my situation. I chose not to throw my life away. I grabbed my work bag, and with whatever money I had left I filled my tank and drove to Club X.

Me: Ulue, I need to work. I have absolutely no money. Can I stay tonight?

Ulue: Sure. I thought you were going to quit this business and be in the medical field.

Me: Yes, well, things didn't work out as I had planned.

Ulue: All right. Get dressed.

And without hesitation he put me on the schedule. I danced there and also landed a job at Splash dancing for women, with no nudity. I danced on the bar in a bikini two times a week. It was good money on the side. There I

met a girl named Joan. She wrote her number on a \$20 bill and slipped it into my garter. She told me to get in touch with her, and so I did. I called her a couple days later. I told her about my situation, and she asked me to move in with her. I had no choice. Anything beat sleeping with bugs all around me. Shortly after I moved in, Joan and I joined a gay church, the Metropolitan Community Church in Miami. There I took Communion for the first time in 14 years. The church welcomed me with open arms. It was nice to be accepted into a church without my sexuality being an issue. And how could it be when the pastor himself was gay. Just about everyone was gay. I was so relieved that I finally found a church where I could go without being criticized or made to feel guilty. I felt so guilty for so long that I just cried the whole time I was in the church service. After the service, the pastor talked with me.

Pastor: What's wrong?

Me: I just don't know what to do.

Pastor: Your family doesn't accept your sexuality?

Me: No, I don't have a relationship with my family. It's God.

I don't think He can forgive me. I'm going to hell for being gay.

Pastor: How do you know God hasn't already forgiven you? You don't think He knows what you're going through? He made you the way you are.

Me: But Sodom and Gomorrah ... God destroyed an entire city because of homosexuality.

Pastor: Those were heterosexual people having sex with each other to appease the idols. They were not having sex out of love. What they were doing was unnatural. How do you feel when you have sex with a man?

Me: Unnatural.

Pastor: Do you love God?

Me: Of course.

Pastor: Then why are you comparing yourself to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? There were different circumstances. You have sex with women out of love, and you love God. You're comparing apples to oranges. Regardless of everything you believe, God loves you just the way you are. You're going to have to come to terms with who and what you are and live with it. You need to be comfortable in your own skin. I hope to see you next week. God bless you.

He shook my hand and walked away, but his words stayed with me. While I was with Joan, I decided to do my medical assisting internship at a homeless shelter. I knew how these people felt; I just went through this the previous month. But these people were literally sleeping in the streets of Miami. I couldn't begin to imagine how scary that would be. I was at least sleeping in a garage, but the streets would be a thousand times worse than what I'd been through. I always had a roof over my head. These people were exposed to the elements and to other dangerous people on the streets. They probably had to sleep with one eye open at all times. I asked one woman why she didn't sleep in a shelter. She said that she had no privacy there, and that they were always trying to shove God down her throat without truly helping her.

Woman: Why can't they find me a place to stay, and help me find a job? I don't need to find God. I know who He is. I need to find someone to help me. It's easy for them church people to preach at me, but when they're all done telling me what they've got to say, they go back home to their family,

and I'm still stuck out here all alone. Where are the church people when it's raining outside, or when someone attacks me in the middle of the night, taking what little I have? I'm good enough to preach at, but none of them have offered to have me over for dinner, if you know what I mean.

I got so attached to some of the homeless people at the shelter. I cared so much about these people, but I don't think God could ever use someone like me to help anyone. Look at me, I can barely help myself. When my time was almost up at the shelter I went to the director and asked if I could work there on a permanent basis. The answer was, "No. You are too personally involved." I even offered to work for minimum wage, but she still insisted that I was not cut out for that line of work.

Joan was so good to me. She told me that she would put me through school, all I had to do was stay with her. She took good care of me, I never had to pay the rent, I did what ever I wanted to do, which wasn't much I played pool all the time, I went to the pool or the beach, and hung out with friends. I had a pretty good life all I was asked to do was keep the apartment clean. She took me with her to work once in awhile she worked in a big six firm as a CPA, she let me drive her car and always gave me money for my pocket. I lived that way for about 10 months. After awhile I lost interest in everything, days just flew by and I didn't have any motivation to do anything. What a boring life I led, When Joan got off work I would take my frustration out on her, it wasn't her fault that I was so unhappy. But I treated her as if all of my problems where because of her. When I finally told her it was over it was a sad day but one that was inevitably coming. I would leave because I didn't want to deal with her, she was annoying me all of the time because my indifference was driving her crazy. I didn't want her to touch me though I expected her to cater to all my needs. It was un fair and I knew it. One time I was walking out of the apartment and she barricaded the front door, I took a knife into my right hand and put it to my left for arm "Step away from the door!" she kept asking why are you treating me like this, don't you love me? don't leave me like this, were are you going? She was driving me crazy, I said again, "Step away from the door or I will cut myself" She persisted and so I sliced my arm, blood oozed out dripping onto the floor. "See what you made me do? Damn it all to hell" But it wasn't her fault she was being a great lover, and was very supportive, I just wasn't in love, she took me to the doctor and he stitched me up. A couple months later Jane and I were in the bed room while a friend of mine was in the living room, Joan and I were fighting again as usual about me wanting to go out with my friend. "I don't know when I'll be back" I said as I reached to open the bed room door. Suddenly she grabbed my arm and pulled me onto the bed. I laid on top of her and wrapped my hands around her throat I don't remember a thing, I blacked out for the first time in my life, when I finally came to my senses I looked down and Joans face, was blue. I jumped off of her and ran into the living room I told my friend Jamie, "Lets go" I walked right out the front door. Jamie asked, "Is everything okay?" I was like, "Sure lets just go and relax" I never mentioned it to anyone and Joan and I never discussed what happened. I had so much guilt because I knew being with her was wrong, she needed to be with someone who could love her that person would never be me. We both sat on the sofa I started to cry she asked me what was wrong: I told her that this relationship had to end, she kept asking me why? I told her I didn't want to leave her she was the best thing I had found in years but I just could be with her anymore. She kept saying she would do more but that wasn't the

problem she did more for me than anyone had in years. I just had to let her go even if I didn't want to. When I moved out I took a place in Miami Beach it was an efficiency. It seemed like the living room was in the kitchen. Crazy small but it was home. I was so angry at God for allowing me to be in that situation. Finally I found someone who was good for me but I just couldn't fall in love with her. I was so bitter and sad I cried for days which turned into weeks, I had thoughts of suicide and resentment towards God. I was very sad that I had to let go of Joan. Here I was living in what seemed to be a box after living in a very nice apartment with her. Any God would give me someone to love. I have so much love to give. Gods not listening to me God doesn't love me, so I thought maybe I should worship another God. One that would give me what I want and would answer my prayers. I remember Joan told me one day she was so angry at Jesus Christ and so she decided to become Jewish, and another time I remember in the dressing room at work a girl said that there was no God because he had made her suffer so much in her life and never answered her prayers. So I finally took matters into my own hands if God wasn't going to answer my prayers then I would try and do it myself. I started hanging out in the book stores and reading up on new age literature and I performed witch craft. I would meditate at the moon when it was full sometimes for hours. I would talk and dance with spirits. After awhile I could feel them. I read tarot cards because I had so many unanswered questions as to where my life was heading. I would wear a big crystal around my neck and would cleanse semi precious stones in sea salt. I felt very lonely I was always drinking and would come home and cry myself to sleep. Finally I just had enough I came home one night crying. I took a shower and let the water keep running over my body while I lied face up on my back with my arms opened I cried screaming "Why? Why wont you help me God?" I could feel the pain in my heart so sharp that it felt like a knife was cutting through my very soul. Finally I stood up to look at myself in the mirror. I said to God

Me: I should give up on you. Any other God would have answered my prayers by now. You have let me be beaten, molested, raped, homeless, loveless, you don't love me. I should worship something else.

Of course I was referring to Satan.

I felt another entity enter the room I felt something to my right waiting for my answer. I stood there for a moment. So disappointed in God. I had loved him through all of this even though I was broken hearted over and over again.

Entity: So what is it going to be God or something else?

This entity was the something else though I couldn't see it I could feel it. So I really thought about it. What would it be like to worship something else, I had been faithful to God for so long. All of this time I had only trusted in God though it was obvious to me that my prayers weren't reaching heaven. I cried and the love I had for God shined though this situation. I said out loud,

Me: Even though things don't look right and even though you haven't answered my prayers still I will not abandon you even though everything in front of me looks grim

God didn't answer my prayers and I was heart broken, but I remained faithful even though I felt he would not make anything right.

~O~

I went right back to dancing.

Dancer: Shannon, Shannon! Damn it girl, what's up with you? You've been sitting there staring at yourself in the mirror for the longest time. Get it together! You're up on stage. The DJ's been calling for you!

Me: Thanks.

I pushed myself away from the table and grabbed my wrap-around skirt. As I rushed to the stage, I thought, "What the hell am I doing here? I don't even try to make money. I just don't have a rap for these guys anymore. I'm only here because I don't know what else to do."

I shook my head in order to take control of my thoughts, but they continued.

"Shut up and smile, God damn it! Shake that ass! Squeeze those tits together. Don't forget eye contact. Damn. I have two songs to dance to. I hope they're short. Oh, God, get me out of here!" I walked around the stage and collected my tips. "Did you like my dance?" I asked each customer as I walked around the stage. I couldn't believe I was still dancing. I had thought by now dancing would be a thing of the past. I tried to get a job in the medical field, but whenever I applied for a job, they all asked for my references, and other than dancing, I had none. So I was back to dancing. Didn't God want anything better for my life? I kept asking Him to help me get out of dancing, but every time I tried, nothing would pan out. I was stuck. The question kept surfacing: What else does God want from me? Why did He save me?

~O~

I went to a psychic for help she told me that the next person that I would be with had a grey bird. So I was on the hunt for a grey bird. Don't you know I created a self fulfilling prophecy. I was looking for a bird and not a woman, so when ever I met these girls in the clubs I would ask them if they had any pets, I wasn't looking to see if I liked them or if we had anything in common, I was only interested in the bird I was looking for. Finally I came to Nancy Victoria who was practically falling off of a bar stool. Drunk out of her mind, Me: Do you have a bird?

She laughed.

Nancy: What kind of question is that?

She paused for a moment

Nancy: As a matter of fact I do I have two grey birds.

That was the end of me for the next two years. I was living in my own apartment I was dancing and making my own money. And still I got involved with a woman that was absolutely no good for me, just because a psychic told me that a bird was coming into my life. I thought she was sent to me by God because I was praying to him to send someone I could love. I went from one extreme to the other, here I left a woman who wanted to help me in my life, someone who actually cared about me, to being with someone who would be one of the worst experiences of my life.

~O~

Nancy was a promoter for her own gig. She would throw lesbian parties in straight clubs. Keeping the door charge for herself. She introduced me to

everyone. It was nice meeting so many people, but all the while she would make comments like, "Now everyone will want to date you because your with me" She would drink every night all night long, at times she would wonder off and I would get a call at all hours in the morning to pick her up from some strange location. Sometimes it was hard to find her because she would put drunk people on the phone and they would give me lousy directions. Some of these people would hardly know where they were them self. I would have to sift through their slurred speech to figure out what they were saying. I thought something was supposed to come out of this because this is the woman with the birds. So I kept right on seeing her even though she was obviously no good for me and she added absolutely nothing positive to my life. Still I continued.

After seeing each other for about six months she asked me to move in.

Nancy: I have a house in Kendal I am renting out to a family I can't afford the mortgage but if we lived together I could pay it off.

Me: Kendal seems so far away.

Nancy: You give your money to your apartment manager why wont you give it to me? You sleeping with me.

Something inside of me said don't do it.

Me: You might kick me out.

Nancy: Why would I do that your my lover.

My heart said don't do it, but she sounded convincing. Little did I know that she would break every single promise to me but because I wanted to believe because I was so lonely in my own life I wanted to love and to be loved so bad that I went against my own intuition. I wanted someone some sort of security.

Nancy: The fear is all in your head nothings going to happen.

So a few weeks later I was packing and moving in with her.

~O~

One night around 2 am Nancy and I were in bed sleeping, all of the sudden we heard screaming and crying coming from out side, I looked out side and saw a man screaming into the telephone across the street. He kept saying I need help I need help please send the police here I am in pain I am bleeding, he had the most strange voice, almost as if he were screeching, I heard him say again Help me I need help I am not joking, and so I told Nancy we need to help that person, she said it's not our problem stay out of it, I continued to listen and look thought the window, I just couldn't lay there any longer so I got dressed and walked out side to where he was. He was a small man no bigger then me, and thin he had been beaten and his left eye was partially hanging out of the socket, he had some blood on his shirt. And he was still screaming into the receiver help me, I walked up to him and asked him for the phone, I heard a woman's voice the other end of the receiver,

Me: There is a man standing here that has been beaten his eye is practically falling out of it's socket. He needs help right now.

911: I thought it was a prank. Where are you?

I proceeded to give my address and telephone number.

Okay I am sending help right away.

Me: What happened?

Man: My friend and I were walking from a club and all of a sudden these five guys ran up to us and robbed us then they started to beat on us, my friend

ran to get help they proceeded to beat on me until finally I got away. I have been trying to get help on this phone ever since but they thought I was kidding. Can I have a hug?

I rapped my arms around him.

Me: You'll be okay.

Man: Why did you get involved?

Me: Because I could tell you were hurting.

Man: No one gets involved.

Soon the police came and I wished him well. I walked back into the apartment where Nancy lay sleeping, but I was changed his words stayed with me "no one gets involved"

~O~

One night I was watching a Christian TV program the preacher put his hand out and said if you have a prayer touch the TV screen and ask God for help. So I did I touched the TV screen and after a moment I yelled, "What the hell am I doing?" I looked up and screamed "God what the hell do you want from me?"

I went to bed that night and to my surprise I got my answer. At about 6 AM I had an incredible dream there were two angels that woke me up, "Write your testimony! Write your testimony!" The one angel was screaming. And they vanished as I opened my eyes. I can't believe what I just saw, they looked like ordinary people with the exception of their clothes they were wearing what looked to be like a white toga gown and a gold belt. I didn't see any wings. Why would God want my story? But I started writing it right away I grabbed a paper bag and a pencil and started scratching out my life.

~O~

Nancy told me she wanted me to stop dancing, and to start some sort of business with her. I was very reluctant, but agreed Lets sell clothing to Columbia my family does it all the time. They are coming up here in a couple months. And so I prepared the house for there arrival. Nancy's mother was a very dominant woman whose husband did exactly what she told him to do, just like a robot. "We are from Columbia" she said to me after a brief introduction. She spent every morning saying the rosary, I was impressed then she said to me that she asks spirits for favors, she said that if she forgets to pray to them and to offer them some sort of food or something as a sacrifice they turn the lights on and off until she said her prayers. I made a mental note, "Do not ask spirits for favors"

Nancy told her mother about all of us working together.

Nancy: Well buy cheap and sell everything for more. A pair of jeans well buy here for \$10 here well be able to sell there for \$50.

I was shocked and impressed.

Again my instincts said no but as last time Nancy convinced me.

We will send everything up there my mother will sell it and then send us money 50/50 When Nancy's family left. She kept talking about sending clothing to Columbia, she kept reassuring me that it was a good idea and how this was a sure thing because it was her family.

Me: What happens if your not fair with me? And I give it my all and you all screw me in the end?

Nancy: how can you think that? I am your lover how could you think I would do that to you? What kind of person do you think I am?

My feeling said do not do it. But I thought well maybe Nancy is right I am

just being paranoid. So I spent the next few months with Nancy picking up clothing at a cheap price and sometimes for free. I packaged them up and we both sent them we sent 8 huge boxes to Columbia in care of her mother and still had many boxes waiting to be sent as soon as her mother sends the money made from selling what we sent.

Months followed but no money came.

Me: Nancy what happened to the money we made on the clothes.

I was getting anxious fearing for the worst.

Nancy: You're being too pushy, it's coming.

She lied it wasn't coming. Her family showed up instead. And gave me nothing yet took the rest of the inventory and then asked me to leave.

Me: I left a job and put myself in your care

Nancy: You're a free loader.

She punched me right in the face, so hard that I fell backwards onto the floor I looked up at her.

Nancy: Get out of here.

Me: I have no where to go.

Nancy: That's your problem.

Me: I trusted you I have done everything you asked me too.

Nancy: That is also your problem.

Without me you will never get out of stripping, without me you will never amount to anything.

Me: That's were your wrong because there is always God.

I felt trapped I had walked away from my job and all my friends for Nancy, I trusted her with everything only based on her words and here I was without direction being treated terrible by her and her mother.

I was going through so much and all alone no one at my defense. I just couldn't take it any more I filled up the tub and cried asking God to save me from my situation. I cried and cried until my body turned into a prune I practically crawled across the carpeted floor and laid there in the middle of the room, I cried myself to sleep. Then I felt it a voice that spoke right through me I was dreaming but everything froze like a still frame when the voice spoke I could feel my ear drums vibrating, "Christine when you die you have a place here with us, and those who hurt you will be paid back seven times" I heard him continue to talk but the voice drifted as I awoke. I went right back to the only thing I knew. The strip club scene.

I was hired on the spot.

Bobby: When can you work?

Me: Right now.

Bobby: Jump on stage girl.

And so I did I worked day and night until I ran into an old friend.

Sam: Wow, Christine you look great, what have you been up to?

Me: trying to get out of a bad situation. Hey do you know of any apartments for rent?

Sam: You can live with me.

Me: I don't think that is such a good idea Sam.

Sam: It will be fine here let me walk you to your car when you get off work. When you get of work you can follow me to my place and decide for yourself. What do you say?

Me: Okay what do I have to loose.

When I got off work Sam was right behind me.

Sam: Christine what happened to your car?

Me: It's a long story.

My car was all mangled from the accident but I drove it to work like that anyway. I had no choice.

Sam: Please live with me till you get your feet on the ground. I care about you. I always have.

I could hear the concern in his voice. It felt good for someone to actually care about me, especially after being with people who were verbally abusing me. It's strange how just changing your mind or deciding to do something else can change your entire life. Any change in any direction changes the direction of this ride called life. It sets a path to different possibilities and different opportunities.

Me: Okay lets go to your place well talk.

After I saw the room and we caught up on all that had happened. He and I went to Nancy's house and grabbed my things. It was such a relief to say good bye to her forever.