

## The Demons Behind Me

“I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself. A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough without ever having felt sorry for itself.” - D. H. Lawrence

### Preface

So, ladies and gentlemen, this is it. After months of waiting to begin to write a book, I swallowed my fear of reliving my past and revealing it into words for all of you to read. As I sit here, adding chapters, with a dirty martini (blue cheese olives, a staple to this “had an incredibly awful day” drink garnish), along with a Benedryl chaser to help alleviate the swollen eyes from breaking down and crying earlier. Anyone out there NOT an ugly crier? If so, I envy you because I am, the epitome of an ugly crier. Post cry? I look like I got hit in the face or stung by a bee with an allergic reaction. My eyes swell up and I am a freaken mess. It’s November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 2122 hours and I have hit yet another all time low. I lost a potentially great K9 lead trainer gig, was number one in their process (allegedly) and received the good ole “unfortunately, after further review, we are unable to proceed with your interview process due to your previous situation with the MA State Police and (name of bar that I sadly worked at for a bit that I would rather not give any publicity to).” My new job? Second chance. BIG ONE ... until site workers see me, my name, google me and cause a tiff. Let’s just say I have endured a lot in my 37 years of life on this earth, but 2018 has been one hell of a slap to the face with a 2X4 -covered-in-nails-to-the-face. As I type this, I wonder if I will make the age of 40 with this depression, lack of money left in my bank account and emotional pain. Please know, I didn’t publish this book as a pity party. I don’t want anyone to feel bad for me, I never have nor ever will. Having the childhood I endured, dating a high profile marijuana dealer, getting into his business then moving on and making it to the absolutely best job and passion of a career in my entire life, all for it to be taken away, was all things that have made me who I am. I’d lie to you if I never thought about taking my life, there was days, weeks, hell even months that I didn’t think about suicide. But, I believe tenacity and survival are two words that can keep you breathing thru the trials and tribulations of anything life hands you. I’m not a religious woman, I do believe that there is something of a higher God, an entity. They say that God only gives you what you can handle, well why does he or she gave me so much to endure .... I guess I’ll never know. I’d be lying to you if I didn’t always ponder the idea that perhaps in another life? I was a really awful, shitty person and I am now paying for my sins in a past life. I don’t know.

Anyways, please no one feel bad for me, all I ask from you is this: I truly hope that you as readers can learn what NOT to do and what to do in life. To truly be there for your children and as adults, truly know that your mistakes in life will always haunt you. BUT, and I mean but, what you choose to do with the past and present, learning to overcome the scrutiny and most importantly always trying to be a better person is the most important message I am trying to send. No one said life was easy, however your decisions will always end up in either success or repercussions, so choose wisely. I’ve always believed that people make mistakes, people can learn from their mistakes and certainly change to make themselves better. Everyone on this planet deserves a second chance if

they are willing to change for the better. Does that mean that someone who killed multiple people should be allowed to walk free amongst society and given a new life? No. But, that person who may be serving a life sentence could become something of substance inside a prison by being a speaker to juveniles who are getting in the glue and going down the path of becoming a career life long criminal. A second chance, per say doesn't necessarily mean freedom but another chance in life to try and make some positive life choices to pay it forward. This life is a quick one and we all end up as dirt. Anyone can decide to just take up oxygen in the air and live without meaning, however we can all live our lives to try and be something of substance. Not saying you have to become a cop like I did or a brain surgeon, but just pay it forward. Donate to a charity, volunteer your hands and hearts into helping others or animals, reach your hand out to shake the hand of someone working in public safety and say thanks. Paying it forward doesn't have to be big things, it can be a bunch of simplistic and smaller ones.

I need to add that there are people in my life, amazing people who have stood by me, thru thick and thin. I dedicate this book to all of my friends who are my true family. Your love, your willingness to stick by me thru the good times and bad, this book is for you. You all know who you are and I love each and everyone of you dearly.

## Chapter 1: The Early Years

I've always pondered the possibility of writing a book. Today, as I type this after one of the worst days of my life, I decided to fire up the laptop, open a bottle and finally begin to type it. By the end, you'll understand why I began to at this very moment, type away. Up until now? I never went thru with doing so. Years ago, during the dark times of my life, a friend of mine gave me a journal and a pen and told me "get writing." I guess at that time, I never really took his words serious. Little did I know that that acquaintance would be someone who I would revert back to an old memory back in Worcester around the days of 2003. Well, here goes nothing. I guess its officially time.

When most people are asked about the first childhood memory they can recall, it usually consists of something positive, something family orientated, something of substance. I've been asked this question before and what I can recall isn't something of rainbows and unicorns. Let's rewind to my earliest recollection of my youngest childhood memory ... I will speculate its around the age of five years or so. I was living on Topsfield Circle, In Shrewsbury Massachusetts, at the time where my alcoholic father who I was informed by my mother sold cocaine and dabbled in the Italian mafia, was physically striking my mother in the kitchen. While he was striking her and both were yelling, I recollect my youngest childhood memory of me being at my fathers pant leg, pulling at his jeans and screaming "stop hurting mommy." So much for rainbows and unicorns.

As I grew older, I believe it was around 7 or 8 years old when my mother finally asked me who I would want to live with if they moved into their own places. Of course, I said mom. Why wouldn't I? My father, Mario Genduso, had become just someone who breathed air and was around only sometimes. He always smelled of a weird smell (to a kid, alcohol smells funny - my Uncle always smelled like beer (which was nauseating to me) and cigarettes. He would smoke like a chimney in the living room and pass out with lite cigarettes, leaving my mother to always stay awake in concern for the house to not catch on fire. Mario (who I prefer to call rather than "Dad" seeing he was never of substance in my life) would be viciously brutal to my half brother (mothers former husbands kid - that's a whole other story - that man is a peach, and yes I am being extremely sarcastic) and would treat him awfully. One day, I decided as a young 7 year old to play hide and go seek on Mario. I hid in the spare bedroom and planned to jump out on him seeing he was arriving at home. I was in the room and he came home with a leather bag (cash, drugs, who knows) and came into the bedroom. I jumped out and said "BOO!" not knowing the repercussions to follow. Now, I'm not sure if he accidentally discharged the gun or shot at me out of pure fear due to probably being high on cocaine and drunk (or both), but that .22 caliber bullet fired right at me, nearly striking me to the

left side of my head and leaving a bullet hole in the wall. My mother (Linda) came in and FREAKED, understandably so. My own father, god only knows on what drugs and how drunk, almost shot and killed his only child on accident. My mom ended up calling my great uncle Joe, who was someone she not only trusted but was also in the law enforcement world, and had him come to the house at Topsfield to take Mario's firearms that he illegally "owned." After that, I always would look at that bullet hole in the wall, never really understanding how in fact it could have stuck me in the head if it was 5 inches to the right, but just how damn weird the hole was in the wall. Guess that's the beauty of being a kid - you really don't know the pure reality of life at that time. Mom was spending most of her days in nursing school, taking cash from my fathers hiding spots in the basement ceiling just in order to be able to care for her two kids. To say that there was a struggle in our lives at that time is an understatement.

Fast forward to just before my mother finally moved us out. Derek, my half brother who is 14 years older than me, moved out on his own. Derek has always resented me for taking my mothers undivided attention from me. And you know what? I don't blame him. I was a sick, sick kid. I had the worst possible asthma diagnosis possible, in and out of the hospital, constantly on machines and medicine and it sucked. The ambulance rides and the IV's that the doctors told me where "my shadow" while in the hospital were something I always remember. Mario could never drive us while I was having an attack, he was too drunk on cheap vodka, stoned and god only knows what else to do so. That man always made it home. ALWAYS. Not sure who or what type of angel was watching over him - my mother always said he would be crawling at the door and not able to even turn the key in the keyhole but for crying out loud yet he would drive home in one piece. Anyways, prior to moving out of Topsfield Circle, my mother and I were at a red light once at an intersection. She looked over at the car next to us ... well, guess who it was. It was Mario with a woman in his passenger seat. My mother beeped the horn and told me to waive at Daddy. Naturally, I did - I had no idea that he wasn't supposed to be driving with some woman with black hair (named Sherry - that's a WHOLE other chapter in itself). Mom always told me about how unfaithful Mario was. He was tall, Sicilian and the guy that my childhood friends later on in life always had a crush on. Mario worked for an environmental company that was actually lucrative in business back then and would fly to countries all over the world. Those countries also had a vast amount of women who worked for Airlines that he would sleep with. My father was the exact opposite of a faithful husband and everyone knew it. He also would never be accredited for the father of the year, either.

So my mother and I move to some rental place in Shrewsbury near Lake Quinsigamond. She moved me here so I can continue to go to school in Shrewsbury, which was near and dear to me due to having established friends in the school and nearby neighborhoods. One of the friends I can say who has always been by my side is my friend Erin. We go way back, all the way to kindergarten. That girl has seen the crazy in my family, been by my side for the shenanigans and knows me better than anyone. Anyways, my mother and I resided there for a short amount of time then were able to rent out a place on Grove Street in Shrewsbury almost adjacent to my grandparents. My grandparents .... well, let's just say they were the most important family members I ever had. Gram (my grandmother's nickname from me) and Papa (grandfather's nickname) were the most accepting and loving two people I could have ever asked for. Gram would let me drink coffee with her (xtra cream and sugar of course) at a very young age and Papa never, ever got mad. Never raised his voice and was someone who I would classify as a saint. He worked harder than anyone I have ever met for his family and although he and Gram had separate bedrooms, made sure to take care of her and their other son (my uncle) who had psychological issues from his umbilical cord wrapped around his neck when he was born, leaving him lacking the oxygen being able to sustain his brain for the time being. Their other son never left their home and from what I hear still lives at the house they once owned with furniture untouched and walls/flooring kept the same. I spent the afternoons after school with my grandparents - dinner at 4:30 PM every day, Grams cooking was to die for and Papa worked on a farm allowing

me to visit all the time. Side note: I LOVE animals. I never played with dolls, always had stuffed animals. I guess there is something out there for everyone to relate to happiness to ... mine was with animals. Animals will love you unconditionally. They harp no ill will, they don't judge and are so therapeutic to people (which is what got me into volunteer work down the road ... I'll explain later). I would fall asleep each and every night at my grandparents and my mother would come home from working the hospital around 11/12 at night and bring me home. This became the normal for me - school, grandparents, wake up and go to sleep across the street at my duplex rental later on my mom had. Now, my mother always stated she did NOT have the mother my grandmother was to me - I don't know the exact details nor did I ever care to ask, but I do know she stated Gram was nasty to her growing up. This was not the person I knew to be as my grandmother. She was always great to me! We spoke about everything while I sipped my over sugared caffeine drink, she smoked her cigarettes in her own bedroom with the door closed and we laughed and watched shows like Johnny Carson late night or Dallas. Papa always had the awful WrestleMania on or Peoples Court while their son stayed in his room watching Mash or throwing floppy disks in to play video games on his Texas Instruments computer (yes ... I am showing my age. I am okay with it!). My mother worked constantly and bought animals that eventually she would get rid of by adopting out to others or send to the farm. I recall my first bunny, Pogo. He bled out from some disease on our kitchen floor. I cried and said I wanted to die like him. She placed him in the freezer and we buried him a few days later. After Pogo, we had more bunnies, a whole slew of parrots and a guinea pig. A few of the bunnies went to my grandfathers farm when my mother said she couldn't care for them any longer. The owner of the farm (now passed on) decided to release them one day and used them for shooting practice. SHOOTING PRACTICE. I was told about this at a young age and the idea of it haunted my nightmares for years on end. During my pre-teen era, I rescued several animals, both wild and domesticated, from an injured morning dove with a BB pellet under his wing that had to be surgically removed to baby bunnies found after their mom was seen dead in the road to a turtle and a stray cat, who became my first cat, Puzzles (later to be dumped by my stepmother on Route 20 to die and then observed dead on the road). I had a knack for saving animals - it made me happy to do it and like I said before, Barbies were lame. ;)

## Chapter 2 - Being a kid, as a kid but not a kid

My mother was a tough cookie and even tougher on me. She has an obsession with OCD and cleanliness. Granted, that's not a bad thing normally but when you're a ten year old and have the occasional spill of a drink or move the Capidomonte (for those of you who don't know - that's Italian porcelain that was big back in the day .. thanks QVC for my mom's obsession), it's a struggle as a child. My friends would come over to see my mother literally with a hair comb straightening out the oriental rug fringes to all be the same. The couches looked like they were never sat on and the areas always seemingly spotless. Being a clutz like I am wasn't the easiest of times growing up! But, my mother was constantly trying to find a soulmate and began dating my fathers half brothers wives brother (hopefully you can figure that out, I know its hard). They broke up and one day my grandfather hadn't heard from my mother at the house while watching me. He went over and saw her car at the duplex, no sign of my mom. After several phone calls, he broke in in concern to find my mother, unconscious with a bottle of pills and I believe alcohol present. She had tried to commit suicide. Tried to take her own life while her ten year old daughter (me) was at her grandparents. Thankfully, the ambulance arrived and she did not die. Me, however? I blamed myself. I wondered how on earth someone who has a kid would really want to die. I officially told my Gram that I don't think my mother truly loved me. Now lets get back to my father.

My father was living at the Imperial apartments in Shrewsbury, off Route 9. Now, remember when I mentioned a black haired lady at the intersection that my mom made me wave to, before? Well ladies and gentlemen ... meet Sherry. Sherry went from my father's last mistress, to his girlfriend and eventually, wife. Sherry was absolutely

scary as hell to a young kid. She had the blackest hair you could ever see, long and witchy like. Matter of fact, Erin (my bff) and I would assume she WAS a witch and were constantly worried that she was casting spells on me. Sherry from the get go was an odd duck - big, over the top exuding eyes, a big drinker and trying way to damn hard to win me over. At the ripe old age of 10? Maybe 11? I was mortified of this woman. I learned from a young age to trust your gut instincts. Well, my gut instinct was spot on. This woman was the devil and although not an actual, real Salem witch, witch ... she was damn close to it. I spent weekends with my "father" and his scary girlfriend and the weekdays with my mom who was more concerned with finding a soulmate and working. Pets and my grandparents on my mothers side were really all I had for actual comfort. My father's father had passed before I was born. His dad (my great grandfather) came off the boat from Sicily and from what I have been told my whole life was that my father's father was an amazing person who died when Mario was 18. Mario was going to college in Arizona back then, was an alleged kick ass baseball player who was being viewed by professional teams to someday be apart of. My grandfather on my dads side (also named Mario) was a correctional officer who also knew a whole slew of people allegedly, in the mafia. My "grandmother" on my fathers side (I used the term loosely because she was never in my life) married multiple times, never was there for my father and resided in Florida, known as "Mimi." At the age of 18, Mario lost his dad. The one person who kept him in check, the one person who was good to him. He flew home at that age from college and obtained a destructive behavior after that. Mario took all his money he obtained from my grandfather dying of cancer and blew it all. Went to Vegas eventually with mafia guys who claimed to be his friends and blew his whole savings. Eventually, I am told the Topsfield house deed was also lost in gambling. You see, my father had an extreme compulsive behavior - nothing was ever in moderation, he was either at a hundred or nothing. His extreme addictive personality would later take his life as an alcoholic ... coincidentally back in the area of Arizona(ish), New Mexico. But that's for a later story.

### Chapter 3: Back and Forth

So, as the months passed, the years went by ... I began to digress in what we call being responsible as a kid. Years prior, my mother was SUPER strict of me, even at my grandparents. She wouldn't let me do many sleepovers, hell I couldn't even cross the damn street. I would play on my uncle's Texas Instruments computer, call my friends on the phone and eat at the "blue hairs time" of 4:30 every night at my grandparents. Papa would bring me ice skating, let me hike with my dog and him thru the forests nearby and be outdoors a lot. But, at around the age of 12 to 13 years old, I became more of a rebellion and my pre-teen era became an absolute disaster for my mother and my relationship. She would constantly argue with me, I became more rebellious and at that time realized I had the option to move in with my father and the she-witch, who now lived at a rental house in Edgemere (the "ghetto" area of the town of Shrewsbury). Let me make note, Shrewsbury was a GREAT town. Rich, prosper and back then, more woods than homes. I lived on the "other half" of Shrewsbury my whole life, the area that was older houses, smaller, more affordable and the people who worked their asses off in order to be able to be in Shrewsbury at the Worcester line, for their children to go and get the education of the town if and when possible. My father had rented an older colonial at the corner of two streets in the mean streets of Edgemere and after fighting with my mother each and every day of my life, listening to her threaten "go move to your fathers then" ... well, one day I did just that. I moved in. I moved in with the full knowledge of what consequences I may face with the lady witch he ended up marrying (Sherry) and also knowing even in my young brain how chemical dependent he was. I figured, what is the lesser of evils? At the time? I was willing to take the risk. Screw it.

So, I moved into my father, Mario's house. At first, I was shocked at the amount of freedom I had. They gave me my own phone number to my bedroom, little to any crazy curfews, I could sleep over friends houses without issue and have multiple friends over my house. This seemed like heaven had sent me a slice of pie from above. Until, well until reality hit me in my young adolescent face. A rude awakening was about to set into my naïve mind.

## Chapter 4: Reality at its finest

A month passed of living at my fathers and all seemed to be relatively okay. Sherry was decent, Mario was laid back, it all seemed to be copacetic. Once the newness died down, I began to see the reality of it all: my father was a legit, hardcore alcoholic. He lost his job at the environmental company and turned to the car sales industry at a local dealership. I would wake up in the mornings to find him at 0900 hours in the kitchen. Making breakfast and coffee for the family, you ask? Nope. Try pouring a half of glass of orange juice into a glass followed by filling the rest of it with the cheapest vodka possible at your local liquor store. He would light a cigarette at the immediate point of waking up to start his day, hacking up a lung while Sherry would come downstairs all disheveled from the booze fest the night before and make a coffee. Then, then I began to see the fights. You see, I get it. Most couples fight. Many yell. These two human beings would get absolutely shit faced and scream at the top of their lungs. Eventually? They would begin to fight about me. Sherry would begin to complain about my presence at the house, followed by continuously mentioning my mother. The hatred and jealousy this woman began to build up inside her absolutely psychotic mind became worse as the weeks went by. She began to attack me, first psychologically before physically. You see, Sherry would get as drunk as possible downstairs with my father after dinner, begin to fight viciously with him and then, more and more include me into the fights. I would sit upstairs at the age of thirteen and hear her begin to focus more and more on me during their fights. Ever have the feeling that someone was watching you when you sleep? Imagine waking up to that feeling and seeing that happen. Real life, folks. I woke once to seeing her at the edge of the end of my bed ... staring at me in the darkness. When I awoke and stirred, she ran out. This was NOT a dream, I promise you.

So, it became worse as the weeks and months proceeded. Sherry no longer was worried about being vocal with how she felt about me to my face. She began telling me I was a piece of shit, how much of a scumbag little girl I am to the point where I was literally woken up in the middle of the night by this intoxicated witch of a woman to have her tell me that I am a little douchebag and that my mom is a cuntface douchbag, then making sure to tell me my father will always love her more than me.

Ok lady, I get it. You are an absolute PSYCHO. Message received.

The more time I stayed there, the more I acted out, the more I hated where I lived and my life. I recall one night, Sherry and Mario were in their typical state of absolute alcohol annihilation and began to fight about me, yet again. They had ordered Chinese food to be delivered and Sherry brought her plate upstairs to eat in her bedroom. My father went up there to yell at her about god knows what when he left the room, began going down the stairs and suddenly "SMASH"! I heard a loud bang. I ran out of my room to see a huge portion of Chinese food stuck on the wall with ceramic plate pieces scattered all over the stairs. It turns out she threw a full plate of good ole Chinese food at his head but missed. They began fighting downstairs when I went down to find out what the hell was going on and if they had killed each other. Sherry looked at me, infuriated with rage and began screaming at how much she hates me. She ran after me when my father grabbed her. Bad idea, Mario. That evil being ended up taking his hand and literally BREAKING his finger while he was holding her back. What did I do? I ran. I ran for dear god. I ran to my neighbors and was in absolute fear. They let me stay of course, they were my friends parents and knew how much of an absolute disaster my household was.

The very next day, I went home knowing she was at work. I saw my father, who always told me the night of her psycho rants he would divorce her, act like nothing happened ... as always. He would try and diminish any act of

emotion the next day. Sorry Mario, I wasn't drunk ... I am an absolutely mortified child. I am nervous, I am scared and for the love of god, your wife is going to kill me. I looked at my father, opened a drawer, took out the biggest butcher knife and held it to my heart while trying to hold back tears. I looked Mario dead in the eyes and asked him, "is this what you want me to do?" His bloodshot, hungover beady eyes looked at me and asked me what I'm doing in a dramatic fashion. I began to cry, I asked him again "is this what you want? I would prefer putting this knife into my heart and dying rather than face this torture anymore, Dad. She is going to kill me, I may as well just do it myself."

I don't think my father realized how sincere I was. Little did I know that the topic of suicide would make a full circle and I would be saving the life of the person I hated the most sooner than later.

The next drunken fight between these two became the last straw for my tenure (at the time) of my life in Edgemere. Courtney was staying with us - one of Sherry's daughters and the youngest of the two. Both of her daughters lived with their father in California (smart choice, ladies) and would visit during the summer usually. The dining room would be made into a bedroom for which ever daughter was staying with us during the time. I believe I was 13 as of now, Courtney being 17. We went to the local grocery store in Sherry's Geo Tracker. Courtney was leaving the parking lot after we went to the Blockbuster next door when she hit a vehicle. She hit the damn car and took off....went home. Looked at me and said "please, please don't tell my mom." I shook my head in acknowledgment, I wouldn't say a word. An hour goes by and a loud knock at the door. Guess who? Shrewsbury Police requesting to speak to Mrs. Sherry Genduso. They advised the witch of the crash, which she immediately turned around with a fit of rage. Her daughter (who I always got along with and is to this day, an amazing person) looked at her and gave full CONFESSION to what had happened. She said she hit the person. She said she panicked. Guess who got the punishment? Yes folks, it was me. She lost her cool on me. In a rage, went off at me. Blamed it all, it ALL on me. Does that make sense? Nope. I still can't wrap my head around it, but it happened. She blew up on me so much so that her own daughter was crying in absolute fear. My dad was drunk and barely speaking English on the couch. I began to pack my suitcases, called my mom and said I can't stay there anymore. I packed EVERYTHING and left it in my room. Then, I went to my neighbors, yet again. They let me in with open arms, saying they heard the yelling. Not much later, Courtney showed up too. She, she too was afraid of her mom. She said she has never seen her like this. I wanted to laugh. I've seen the evil in her mother for far too long. We stayed overnight and my mother agreed to grab me and my stuff in the am.

The am came and I was officially scared shitless. I knew sober Sherry wasn't AS psycho, but psycho none the less. We went back to the house with extreme anxiety and I noticed the Geo Tracker wasn't there. I grabbed all my crap, threw it into my moms car and left. My father sat there in the doorway with crocodile tears. I didn't feel a thing, I was numb and honestly at this point didn't think he truly gave damn. How could you sit back and let your daughter be treated day in and day out the way I was? The verbal, the almost physical, the consistent drunken fights about me and my mother? HOW? So, I left, back to Grove Street to my mom's duplex. I didn't acknowledge his dramatic episode and drove off. My mother and I got to her house and I began to attempt to unpack when I was suddenly slapped in the face by what I was seeing.

Everything. Every piece of clothing I had with the exception of what I was wearing. Every thing, from shoes, to underwear to pants and tops ... everything was cut in half. My stuffed animals? Slit at the throat. Each and every one. I stared at my luggage bags, sifted thru what I could see and began to cry. I lost it. My mother came in with pure horror. She picked up one of my favorite stuffed animals that's head fell off and began to shake. I recall a

phone call was made to my father with screaming but I don't recall what was said. I just sat there in pure shock. Who does this to a kid? Who cuts up someone's clothes and SLITS their stuffed animals all at the throat? Who????

I realized, at that time, that instant moment that I was living a nightmare.

New clothes were bought, new stuffed animals were given to me, yet the horror continued. We began to get daily 0400 doorbell rings. That's right, doorbell rings. EVERY NIGHT. My mom began setting her alarm and visually saw Sherry running back to her car, her long black ponytail with her thick rear end, running to her Geo Tracker. We began getting prank calls, daily ... the phone would ring and a "pffft" sound (like a fart) would be made then the caller would hang up. Back then, ladies and gents, there was no caller ID, no way to call the person back and no way to establish who was doing it. Granted, it was pure speculation but WHO ELSE WOULD IT BE?

One night, my next door neighbor friend, Lori and I were watching movie when suddenly the doorbell rang. I opened the door with a woman there in a pantsuit explaining who she was. She stated she worked for the Department of Children and Services and was there to do a well being check ... on ME! She said an anonymous female tip came in that my mother was physically beating me up on a daily basis and they had to follow up with the report.

COME ON SHERRY. REALLY?

I get it, DYS is checking and I was glad. I wish they checked on me at my fathers, however they are doing their job. When I was younger, I fell on my bike, straight on my left arm on the pavement. I recall telling my grandfather it was painful as all hell. He threw it into a cloth sling and called it a day. A few weeks later, with a lung X-ray (because again, I was a sick disaster of a human being a kid) they observed a healing BROKEN left arm in the X-ray. So, my arm was broke. So, I have a high pain tolerance and didn't mind the good ole old fashion cloth sling to make it better. DYS was called then due to the break not being reported. Sigh. It was ended as fast as it was reported. Anyways, my mother/daughter happy time relationship didn't last long. She was dating a guy who wasn't a big fan of kids still and I was a pain in the ass. Now I'm not making excuses of the reasoning for being a punk as a kid, but I certainly didn't have much guidance to be anything other than just that. We fought, constantly and I ended up thinking what the hell, I'll try my dad's again (bad move, Leigha. Bad move). So, I moved back .... I moved back knowing I would have more freedom and who knows, maybe people change? Maybe.

Chapter 5: Decisions versus Agony

So, I moved back. I was 14, almost 15 and figured what the hell. The issues of who is worse became a non stop debate in my head. Do I stay with my mother, who did nothing but yell at me and tell me I am nothing and not let me to be a kid EVER or go to my fathers who allowed me to whatever I want and deal with the wicked witch of the west?

Yup, I choose Mario's house like a dummy. Check mate. At first? Again .... no issues. Sherry tried to pretend to be a born again Christian and my father was the saint. That Academy Award stint didn't last more than a week. I recall it was the summer and Carrie, Sherry's older daughter, was living with us for a substantial amount of time. Here's the thing about Carrie - she attempted to suck up to me and be a "sister friend" because I hung out with older people, her age. I introduced that girl to all my friends and to all my friends, she attempted to out them on being friends with ME. She began telling MY friends, "why are you friends with her? She is so much younger, fuck her" ...



yada yada yada. Sorry, sister from another mister, you began dating one of my friends. You were shown all the people I am friends and am close with yet they advised me of your back stabbing. In conclusion, I was on high alert with the spawn of satan (Sherry). You want to play that game? Game on, ma'am. These people were MY friends ... take a step back and digest the definition of Karma.

Soon enough, Carrie's true colors came out as the girlfriend of my friend and we all forgot and moved on. One day, during the summer, Carrie was still dwelling downstairs in our once dining room as her bedroom when her mother and my father got into a very heated, very intoxicated argument. I was already in bed and recollect hearing them scream at the top of their lungs when Sherry came into my room. I took a deep breath, assuming she was creepishly going to do her stare down at me while I am sleeping stint, but I was wrong. Instead, she came in, placed something on my desk and walked out. For a moment, I chuckled and wondered what the crazy drunkard decided to do tonight. I thought about looking in the am, however my curiosity was at full peak and I turned my bedroom light on to see what the hell she just pulled. I looked and saw a "Chili's" waitress checkbook (the place she was waitressing at the time). Wondering WTF she was up to this time, I opened the checkbook. Inside I found jewelry, money and a TON of notes, most addressed to her loved ones, stating "see you on the other side," "I loved you and I'm sorry", etc, etc, etc. I shut the checkbook and took a hard look out the window. WHAT DO I DO. Do I: A) go back to sleep and pretend I never saw this, knowing the person who tried to destroy my life multiple times may not be present tomorrow or do I: B) advise my father or public safety that she was attempting to commit suicide??????

I couldn't do A), you guys. I couldn't. I knew I would have to live with my decision at this time. God dammit, I couldn't do it. I'm sure many of you are sitting here yelling at this book and telling me I should have. Perhaps, perhaps you are right. BUT, I have always tried to believe that the world of Karma has extreme substance in our lives. For crying out loud, simply stated.

I closed that checkbook, went downstairs and saw Mario. He was passed out on the couch in typical drunken slop fashion. I took a right into Carrie's bedroom and walked in to find Carrie, also sleeping on her futon. I woke her up, told her that her mother may need an ambulance, passed her the checkbook which screamed suicide and went back upstairs. Not long after, an ambulance came, ripped Sherry out of her bed and brought her to the hospital. I was told back then she coded (aka, stopped breathing enroute to the hospital) and they had to resuscitate her multiple times. I was also told, if I didn't help advising anyone what she was attempting to do, her alcohol and drug consumption would of had her dead by the morning. Sherry spent the three days at the hospital, never said a word of thanks to me but instead, became worse to me. I honestly pondered after that if she hated me more for saving her. That is something my mind will always battle with. That is something I will always wonder about .... but you know what? God dammit. I was a kid. I was a kid who saved a life, regardless of how much I hated her.

Chapter 6: Enter Bill Murray and Punxsutawney, anyone?

If I told you guys my life was a legit groundhog day, you would probably roll your eyes. Well, roll your eyes. This WAS my life. The abuse didn't stop and my carelessness for life got worse. I recall my drunk ass father and drunker crazy stepmom falling asleep, early. I would creep downstairs, grab my fathers keys to his brand new dealership car of choice he brought home and take off. I picked up all my friends at 3 AM and we would drive around like rebels. Why would I get the guts to do this, may you ask? Well, if you had two "parents" at your house who would be blacked out drunk at 10 PM .. then why not? (cue shoulder shrug emoji).

So, Sherry never gave up on her drunk and nasty "domestics." After several involvements in her craziness, I yet again moved back to my moms. This time, she lived in Worcester in the apartments off Lake Ave. Shrewsbury High School actually advised us to keep my grandparents address so I could continue to go to school there, one of the former vice principal's at the time advised me personally I wouldn't last at North High School (Worcester). Looking back now and seeing what a firecracker little shit I was? I probably could have. I was a little shit who didn't care about fighting, even if I may or may have not won. The quote of "zero fucks given" these days would have been my M.O. back then, as stupid and ridiculous as it may have been. But, I digress.

So, I stayed at Shrewsbury High School. I continued to drive my mom crazy, I continued to be a pain in the ass. It wasn't until one day I came home and my mom attempted to loose her shit when I decided I legit cannot live with her anymore. Again, exact time frames are a bit of a blur, but I do recall it was when I was almost 16. I came home with my friend Courtney with me and my mom lost her shit on me for God only knows what reason. Words were said and next thing I know, I look up in my room to see my mom coming at me to strike me.

Yea ... negative, mom.

I moved, grabbed her arms and swept her off her feet to the ground. She continued to try and fight me. I wouldn't let her hit me and didn't want to hit her so I put her hands up next to her ears, pinning her to the ground and just looked at her. Once she stopped trying to fight, I let her arms go. She got up, ran out of my room and told me to "get the fuck out." I granted her request and left asap. We didn't speak about that much after until my 16th birthday. Most people spend their birthdays celebrating, right? Yea, not for me. We ended up in Westborough Massachusetts Court. My own mother had brought me to court on my birthday in attempt to place a "CHINS" (Children In Need of Services) on me. My mother documented everything, if I was late for my curfew at 6pm and came home at 6:10? Noted. Everything ... noted. Well, the court system with juveniles of the CHINS program advised her I was not in fact applicable for the program due to NOT being incompetent enough. Once that was signed? I was done. I was dating the same guy for years, he was two years older than me and was accepted to Salem (Massachusetts) State college. I loved that kid, we were a good combo. One day while I was skiing with him, I fell, hard on my chest. It hurt more than anything. I was worried. I ended up taking a pregnancy test. Then two ... three. Turns out? Each one said positive. POSITIVE! 16 years old, I couldn't hardly take care of myself! Immediately, I knew what I had to do. I went to Planned Parenthood, which advised me to go to a judge if I didn't want my parents to know. I went to court, went to the judge and advised him that I am not fit enough to take care of myself at this time never a child and requested he approve an abortion. He did, and let me just clarify ... that was, by far, one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make. I remember sitting in the recovery room, balling my eyes out. Some chick next to me is yapping about how excited she is to see the new "Titanic" movie, going on and on and on. I finally looked at her and snapped. I couldn't help it. I glared at her, interrupted her while shew as being a weird ass movie critic and asked her ..."do you know you just took a life? IS THIS REALLY OKAY TO YOU?"

She became silent. The whole room did. I'm sorry, but I was in mourning. I am in mourning every February 28th ... the day I had the abortion. I was supposed to have a son. I know what I did was awful and I will always, forever, be in sadness about what I did. BUT, but I will say that I honestly, truly don't think I was competent or ready to deliver a baby at the age of 16. I do, however promise you that after that I promised myself I would never want a child nor put myself OR another potential human being into that situation, ever again. I honestly never really wanted children. Never when I was young, never halfway as an adult and still to this day, I stick to that message. Some people are destined to be parents ... I was not one of them. I never wanted to procreate, I always if anything wanted to make sure that my genetics stopped with me. My parents were simply too tainted theoretically to be justified in even attempting to have their genes continue on. I'm sorry, I'm a realist, not an optimist.

So, back to my high school ex boyfriend. He was moving there and I thought WHAT THE HELL. If allowed? I'll move there. I'll finish high school there. Anything is better than what I am dealing with, right? So I asked my mother. She agreed. I will NEVER forget the day we went to Salem High School to sign me up. She signed the paperwork, looked me dead in the eye and told me I would drop out.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

Matt and I made the perfect little home in a tiny loft condo. We adopted two cats from the local shelter, both had jobs, both went to school during the day. I would make dinners at home and I felt what it was like a bit to have some sort of family. I drove down to my hometown of Shrewsbury often and visited my grandparents as much as I could. During my beginning portion of my Salem, MA life, finished high school in Salem, and with good grades none the less! I did it. I worked two jobs on the afternoons, forced myself to go to school and finished. Initially I planned and hoped to graduate in Shrewsbury with my friends and classmates, however due to not having enough stupid gym credits they told me it was a no go. But, god dammit, I finished. I graduated and to not because of anyone other than myself. My mother, my family ... no one. I was able to take that degree that was given to me and knew I obtained that due to no one else than me. My boyfriend Matt at the time and I were going strong with being together for three years, we had a cute little loft condo that his mom payed for us, and we were happy. Life was hard, but life was decent.

Chapter 7: Adulthood ...ish?

So, after high school came instant responsibilities. My thoughts became to scatter ... should I go to college? Find a good job for money? Well, attempted the college degree. I began to dabble in the college financial aspect when I was called one day. The phone call came and made me sick. I was advised that I not only didn't have any credit as the typical post graduate high school, pre-college financial tuition advisers to alert me that my credit was the worst it could possible be. Further inquiry determined that my credit was destroyed, not by me but by my father of the century and his awesome wife (Sherry) in California who decided to place every bill in their name with my social security number. I wish I could be acting dramatic, but it took me literally years to fight these transactions and prove to the credit companies that I never in fact lived in California and ascertained these bills. My first brand new car, a 2002 Malibu LS, cost me 18.25% interest rate at 400 dollars a month because of my credit, but I didn't care. It was new, it was mine and I was happy, even if I had to work my ass off to pay for it.

The summer of when I was eighteen was unforgettable. Papa, my grandfather was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. He never smoked a cigarette in his life, never drank, hell he never even ever raised his voice. Papa was by far the strongest, loving and best person I have ever had in my life or the opportunity to call my family. He built houses for a long time as a career and the asbestos was absolutely awful back then. The doctors told us he wouldn't have much time left, the cancer spread too fast and it devastated us all. Fast forward to August of 1999. It was my grandfathers birthday and my mother, my uncle, my half brother and my grandparents were planning to all go to their house for dinner and cake. I recall pulling into the driveway of my grandparents, only to find no one home. "What the hell is going on?" I thought to myself. I pulled out my flip phone and noticed there was a message on there. Getting that pit of your stomach bad feeling, I listened only to hear my mother in a stressed out tone. "Leigha, it's mom. You need to get to Umass hospital as soon as possible. Gram is in a coma."

.... I dropped the phone and began to shake. How could this be happening? What the hell is going on? I flew to the hospital, ran into the room only to see my Gram with a tube down her throat, plugged into a life support machine. Her legs would sometimes move slightly and although my mother was trying to explain she is brain dead, between the tears and shaking, I couldn't believe it. How could this be? How could one of the most important people in my life be in a hospital bed, hooked up to a machine that was keeping her alive??? It turns out, my grandmother had blood clots that she was previously aware of and just let be. She had a funny headache earlier in the day, went to take a nap and never woke up. Gram had a brain aneurysm, and there was no coming back from it – she was gone. As the paperwork was signed for a DNR to have her removed off life support, I just sat there, crying, holding her hand and begging God to not let this happen to her. The doctors eventually came in, shut the machine off and I sat there, holding her hand, barely being able to breath ... watching her take her last breaths right before my eyes. I was devastated beyond belief. Prior to her wake, I wrote a 7 page letter to her. I begged her to please look out for me, to please watch over me and how much I would miss her. I walked up to the casket that day, gently placed it under her hand and put on my strong face, as strong as I could anyway, for the wake. I still to this day think Gram died because she couldn't handle watching her husband die in front of her. She said to me once she wouldn't be able to handle it. She was right.

The night that Gram passed, I called my father and left a voicemail on his house landline in California. I hadn't spoken to my father for months – he flew down from CA to MA for my high school graduation and never showed. My father (who I prefer to call Mario seeing he was never an actual father to me) ended up getting shitfaced at a bar in Worcester the day he was supposed to drive the hour trip to Salem and never showed. He made some excuse that his rental car broke down, however I knew what the reality of it all was. But, the night that Gram passed, I felt the need to call him and let him know. I don't know why, I just needed to vent I guess. So I left a voicemail telling him she was dead, barely being able to speak thru the tears. The next day, I noticed a voicemail on my house phone. I pressed play only to hear Sherry. It was from the night before, Matt and I must of missed the call from stepping out. Sherry sounded hammered and with anger in her voice, I heard her say these words:

“Hi Leigha, this is Sherry. I wanted to let you know that I deleted your voicemail, your father will not find out. I on the other hand wanted to make sure to call you back and let you know I will be celebrating tonight that your cuntface grandmother is dead, I only hope you die sooner than later as well. Buh bye!”

I sat there with more anger in my blood than I ever felt in my life. I played it multiple times. My best friend Erin since high school and I actually contemplated flying out to California and jumping her with baseball bats. For someone to say that to a person who just lost their loved one, to tell them they are going to celebrate ... I can't even comprehend how you could, as a human being be that evil. I guess I never will.

I finally was able to reach Mario, screamed and told him to stay out of my life. He choose her, he can lie in his bed. I vowed to stay away.

A month later, Papa's cancer progressed rapidly. He asked us to please let him stay at home for hospice and not go into a home, we complied. My brother, my mother and I would take shifts at the house (my uncle wasn't capable of it due to his medical issues) with my grandfather. I would drive down almost daily from Salem MA to Shrewsbury MA to take care of him, cook dinners, make pies, whatever he wanted and however I could help his time left in this world be better. One day I was with Matt when I had a bad feeling. At this time, Papa's health was declined to the point where we knew he didn't have much time left. I told Matt I needed to drive down to see him. That night, my grandfather also took his last breath in front of me. We knew he was breathing extremely difficult and suddenly, he was gone. The other most important person in my world had left me. Papa was cremated and I will never forget the song,

“Angel” by Sarah McLachlan being played at his funeral. That summer, apart of me died with them. Things were never the same, things never will be.

A month or maybe more later would be the end of my relationship with my mother and I. My mother was the executor of my grandfathers will and he had left a reasonable amount of money for his family. I was not allowed the money he had left me until I was 21, until then my mom was supposed to hold onto the money. My brothers girlfriend at the time who also was friends with my mom (they worked together at the hospital) told me she thought she heard that my mother had taken my money out and it was gone. Unfortunately, I wasn't shocked or in disbelief. My mother was horrible with money and had already filed for bankruptcy before. I casually one day asked her – not in a mean or mad tone, just asking her to find out. Linda FLIPPED. Screamed at me and hung up. She called back and instead of fighting with her again, I didn't answer. She left me a voicemail that I not only saved back then, I saved on a tape to make sure if I ever wanted to talk to her, I could play that and remember why we don't speak. My mother told me to “stay the fuck out of my life and you'll get the money when I die” along with other extremely nasty things. So? I did just that. I granted her wish. I stayed away and pretended like she was dead. As I sit here writing this, I look at the irony of it all .... I lived at the age of 18 without family. I am now 37 and am writing this without family. Point of the matter is? Guys, if you have loving, amazing family members? Please cherish them. Please realize how important they are and please, please realize how fortunate and blessed you are to have them. Many people in this world don't realize what they have until its gone, it's human nature and no one is to blame for it. All I'm asking of you is to please hold them tighter in hugs, call more and plan more time together, because you are all blessed to have them if you do.

## Chapter 8: Change

Matt and I became a bit rocky, and it wasn't his fault at all, it was all me. I applied for a waitress position at a watering hole down the street from our place, called Scuttlebutts. I never waitressed before and this place I knew for sure was a busy place. The owner interviewed me and I knew instantly that I didn't like him. He had this Italian, “need to pretend to be a bad ass” over the top trying too hard macho attitude like he was apart of the mafia. Regardless of his arrogance, I was hired and took the job. And this ladies and gentlemen, was the end of my relationship with Matt.

For the record, Matt was the kindest, nicest person I probably ever dated. My mom loved him, he took me away from my father's and the witch and he loved me with all his heart. But, as I got older, I changed and lost my attraction to him. I blame myself entirely for breaking his heart and pray to god at this very moment he is happy with someone. I did NOT deserve someone like him. Scuttlebutts introduced me to the bar scene and being eighteen years old, it was like a kid in a candy store! All these people, all this attention as a waitress, the scene, alcohol and the newness of all this was a lot for me to take in. The owner would always take his goombas into the handicap bathroom along with some retired sports players (I will leave specific names out, but they know who they are if they are reading this). I eventually learned that they would all pile into the handicap bathroom to blow bags of cocaine up their noses. I never got into hard drugs, pot was my drug of choice and just seeing people with their wide eyed eyes and grinding their jaws like typewriters made me sick. I wanted to just grab their chins and tell them to STOP. Drove me nuts to see. There was an African American State Trooper there who I always saw ... every weekend. Always had his pullover jacket on, always drinking and I would always hit his side where his service weapon was to give him a little shit for having a gun on him. That bar was a melting pot of cops, firefighters, Hell's Angels, professional sports players, college kids and all the in between. The staff consisted of gorgeous men and women and if you didn't look like you weren't shoving a needle of steroids into your ass constantly and couldn't bench over 400 pounds, you weren't a bouncer (example: “Quadzilla” - google him. RIP, Paul). Cocktail waitresses like me were all super young, 18-20 years old and we drank like professionals while working. Shots were prevalent, the money was good and I decided to leave

Matt. I moved into an apartment in Salem with two other of my coworkers, a guy and a girl and hit my first low. The bar scene had me drinking every night I worked, I had a shitty little bedroom I was renting and no family. Matt moved home eventually back to the Shrewsbury area, met a new girl, married her, had two kids and she decided to become a lesbian. She left her two sons and Matt and moved away, never to see her kids again. Remember how I said Matt is amazing? Well, he raised two amazing kids, on his own. Later on in life, while with my ex Danny Risteen, he would reach out constantly on Facebook to meet for coffee. I never did, knew he wanted to see me and reconnect more than just friends so I kindly declined. Anyways, let me explain to you my first "court" experience. One day at work, there was an extremely intoxicated local firefighter at the bar. One of the waitresses, Jaime was 18, super sweet and defenseless when it came to dealing with guys who were giving her shit (side note: something I did not lack, I have always been a sarcastic asshole I guess?). Well, she went to grab drinks from the bartender at the bar for her table when this dude decided to lick her shoulder. She came over to me, crying and horrified. We immediately advised the bouncers, two of the biggest guys in there who could have been WWE wrestlers they were so juiced up, grabbed this certain firefighter and told him he has to go. He told then I believe to fuck off and in a matter of seconds, he was picked up like a rag doll and was being carried out by our bouncers when he tripped and they fell on top of them. HARD. I witnessed it, saw him be picked up, thrown into the elevator and the door shut. Something happened to that firefighter that night – his face was literally broken by the time he was outside. Now, did this happen on the floor when he fell? Probably not, let's be honest. There were no cameras in that elevator. BUT, the man sued (as expected, he was in awful, terrible shape) and I was summonsed to court as a witness. I was nervous as hell but excited too. Jaime was a wreck – I'm told she cried, stuttered and messed up her words on the stand. Then it was my turn. I got on stand, shaking on the inside but my poker face was on point. I'll never forget the attorney try to jam me up and ask the same question in a different sentence, over and over and over again. I finally looked at the judge and asked him if I need to answer this for the 8<sup>th</sup> time, he said no and told the attorney to move on. This, this was when I became interested in this courtroom business. I actually ENJOYED being on stand and the challenge of going against someone who is trying to mentally play the game of chess so to speak in a battle of wits was fun! Perhaps this was when I realized the judicial / court / law enforcement world became appealing to me. Cue in Gary Zerola ....

Gary Zerola has one hell of a google search story. When I met him, he was a gorgeous, assistant district attorney who constantly asked me out when I was still with Matt. Gary and I became friends, and later on you'll see how he plays a part in the second part of my life. But, the ADA aspect of him was super attractive to me. I'll come back to that name in a later chapter. Scuttlebutts also introduced me to another bartender who became one of my best friends, Jess. Jess was older than me (8 years maybe?) and I looked up to her. She was jacked, gorgeous and a bad ass. Her father was a state trooper who tragically passed away on his motorcycle out of work. She was friends with everyone, was feared by most chicks and had an ex boyfriend who was a Hells Angel (at the time, before he got kicked out a few years later). Her roommate was a tall, muscular, covered in tattoos biker dude who I was totally intrigued in. Let's just say, we had a bit of a fling. I think I liked him because he was a bad boy, I was young, stupid and extremely vulnerable to the good and the bad of all these new friends. I believe mister tattooed bad ass is in prison serving some big sentence for dealing weed now, however I could be wrong. Anyways, cue in 911 Productions. 911 Productions was 4 guys who were DJ's, and they killed it at Scuttlebutts. Chris was a dopey, homely looking dude with a gut, baggy eyes and swore more than anyone I've ever heard. Eric was a shorter fella, definitely had a cocaine issue with the good ole typewriter teeth grinding look with constant halitosis, Jay loved his oxycotin pills and cocaine and Sean was the quiet, casual drinker, non drug consuming guy that may not have been the best looking guy in the room, but everyone LOVED him. Folks at that bar would rant and rave how Sean Bucci is the nicest guy they know, how he would give the shirt off his back to anyone, blah blah blah. I fell for it, I was intrigued. One day, Sean started to flirt with me and I engaged back. We began to date and things moved fast. He told me he flipped houses as well as his DJ business and we went to one of his houses he was flipping that if I recall correctly was in Topsfield, MA. Sean owned a beautiful house in North Reading where he had his four DJ coworkers live with him. That house was the place to go for after

parties, we always had people over, always entertaining. A couple of months into dating him, we were at his house with the guys when he said he was going to get something to show me. Sean came down with a pound of a green leafy substance in a gallon bag. Weed. A LOT of weed. I looked around the room to everyone extremely non-nonchalant about this extremely big ass bag of weed. No one cared! I was shocked, also shocked how no one cared. Sean then told me his big secret: "I deal weed." Ok? I guess? If everyone is okay with it, how bad could it be? I mean everyone smoked, what the hell, right? That night was the night of the opening of Pandora's Box. That night began a segment of my life I wish I could erase. If anyone knows how to get in touch with Marty McFly, Doc Brown and that dam DeLorean car to bring me back into time, please DM me. Thanks.

## Chapter 9: The beginning of the worst choices of my life

I ended up leaving my tiny bedroom apartment in Salem with my roommates to move in with Sean. The owner of Scuttlebutts ended up getting in a huge fight with the guys and he in turn became a nasty POS against me because he knew I was with Sean, so I left Scuttlebutts and began working at other clubs and bars. As the months went by, Sean became more trusting with me and I began to witness more, more than I ever imagined I would see. You see, Sean didn't sell half ounces or dime bags of marijuana – he sold POUNDS. His drop off guy – Anthony was in his forties, good looking George Clooney type of guy with a great taste in clothes. Anthony would bring a U haul or rental truck with hundreds of pounds of weed – all perfectly saran wrapped up, sometimes with dryer sheets around them. Once they came in marble furniture which was insane. I couldn't believe my eyes at first. I ended up helping him break bails up, put money in the money counter and see hundreds of thousands of dollars be handed over and given out. I met a guy through my aunt and her ex husband who wanted to buy and sold him probably a total of ten pounds, maybe a little more to him in Worcester. The amount of money you could make for something so simplistic was mind blowing. All of Sean's friends who came to pick up weed picked up large quantities, a pound or more. And for the most part, all of them were decent people. This lifestyle began to seem not as big of a deal as I thought it was at first. Sean would ask me to grab lunch at a sub shop, then hand me nine thousand dollars to drop off at his drive thru bank in Middleton. \*Side note: if you didn't know and I'm not sure what the discrepancies are in other states, but in Mass, if you deposit ten thousand dollars or more at a bank, the IRS and other agencies (such as law enforcement) will flat that deposit and ask you where you got the money from. Under ten grand? Good to go, all day ... well usually unless it was a drug trafficking case such as so. Most people knew, no one ever spoke about it and Sean was still known to be one of the nicest people around. Sean had his demons though, trust me. He had to take psychiatric pills for his anxiety and would throw up constantly due to anxiety. He would have to lay down a lot saying he was "woozy" from his medicine and I couldn't ever understand what the real medical issue really was. The longer we stayed together, Sean became a bit nasty at times, telling me I am too masculine, not girly enough and would really effect my insecurity.

With the money coming in came vacations and fun times. I never thought about him getting caught, I didn't think anyone would ever rat him out nor did any of us every assume it would happen. All of the roommates would deal a little here and there, obviously not at the quantity or weight Sean was. I met a kid in Worcester thru a friend who wanted to grab some one time. I, like a complete moron, decided to do it. Why not make a few quick thousand dollars like everyone else? So, I did it, I sold a few times. It was during the Christmas season and I decided to wrap the pounds up in boxes like Christmas presents. The drive to Worcester was extremely stressful, but also the adrenaline aspect of it was pleasurable. I realized, I love adrenaline. Love danger. And for god sakes, if I only had someone in my life when I was eighteen to tell me to go into the military as I was probably destined to, I would still be a Massachusetts State Trooper. Again, cue in that damn Back to the Future DeLorean. To be frank, I know its no one elses fault but my own. I know I made my own choices in life and I am not blaming anyone or anything other

than my own careless, immature decisions. I just will say time and time again, that good family and good surroundings are something that you need to always be thankful for.

Sean and I were together for probably two years when things started to change. His psychological issues always were something that wasn't easy to deal with, however he also became more distant. We went to Aruba a couple of times when he decided that he wanted to open up a strip club in Aruba and get out of the business due to others in his profession being busted. I agreed – although I wasn't a fan of his strip club idea, I wanted nothing more than for him to take his money that he had made and move on to a legal, lucrative profession and move out of the illegal crap. Sean NEVER smoked weed, never did drugs and I will always respect him for that. Unfortunately though, human nature makes us all want more of everything, if obtainable. Sean was making money, business was good and he began to request larger quantities for larger buys. And, with larger buys comes bigger potential consequences. For every customer he had (all “reputable” people, if he had any opinion), there was the potential of those people or their customers, or their customers getting busted and diming anyone else up the totem pole. Sean began to frequent Aruba more to look for potential building prospects for his stupid strip club and I stayed home babysitting the kiddos aka his friends who lived with him and leached off him as much as they could. The more he got into trying to get out of the business, at the same time the more we also were growing apart. I was realizing that this lifestyle was getting to be too much and began contemplating the option to go home. During the duration of my relationship with Bucci, my great grandmother passed away – she was the mother of my Gram. I knew I would have to face my mom at the funeral and it gave me extreme anxiety. Long story short, my mom apologized and I forgave her. Not long after that, she gave me the good ole, same story “stay the fuck out of my life” and so it was dejavu over again. My father had left the wicked witch of the west at the time and moved back home, then met another alcoholic who he ended up moving in with. This new woman meant well but had the same typical issues that Mario was obviously attracted to .... crazy. She had a severe drinking problem, a child who was a huge pothead and the other one was just a tad sociably awkward. Mario, being the extreme alcoholic that he was ended up like moth to a flame and jumped into the relationship immediately. I forgave him, yet again and we began to speak. I met his new lady, who ended up becoming his third wife and we got along as well as we could. They lived in Worcester and had a basement apartment that was getting renovated and advised me I could move in. One of the last nails into my relationship coffin, so to speak was when Sean accused me of cheating on him with a Hells Angel. He accused me, after I told him what really happened prior. You see, I worked at a bar in Saugus next to The Palace called The Vogue. The Vogue was basically a divorcee bar, cougar bar, whatever you want to call it with a melting pot of people. A mob's kid was the deejay, we had all the types in the world, and a few Hells Angels would come in. One of them, being a fairly decent looking, muscular dude, ended up becoming a bit of a hang around creeper with me. (Word on the street is he was kicked out of the gang a few years later. #karma). Well, Sean showed serious interest in me when I bar tended there and would do that good ole “lets stare you down like you're a piece of meat so you know I want to sleep with you” look. He didn't care who I was with and said I should be with him. I was friendly to him being a bartender, but I was also secretly petrified of him. He knew he had power, was the typical sociopath (something I clearly attract to this day, sadly) and was used to getting what he wanted. One day, I went into the liquor room to grab some booze when I heard someone shut the door behind me. I froze. I froze and froze in an “oh fuck” kind of way, not the way I happily would. Sean came up to me, pinned me up against the wall of booze and tried to kiss me. He was forcing himself on me and I wanted to scream. Thankfully, I was able to squirm my way out saying I have to get back, the other bartender is coming in and ran out. I panicked. Never in my entire life have I ever felt like I was about to be forced sexually as I did that night. I told Sean about it and he actually accused me of sleeping with that scumbag. That was the icing on my cake with this kid. I began to plan my exit from Sean, I needed to leave and was officially ready to break up with him ....

.... then the day came.



I slept in late because I bar tended the night before. Got up to shower and if I recall correctly, was going to go to the gym. Suddenly, Sean comes into the bedroom, states "Anthony got pulled over down the street" and that he is filling his truck up with whats in the house to get out of dodge. I began to panic inside. I knew for a fact if Anthony was going to go down, that he would take everyone else with him. But why? Who was the culprit of this? Sean's old Danvers buddy Mitzy or Mugsy or what ever that little fella liked to call himself was arrested a couple of months before ... was it him? I got dressed, got my dog ready and was going to leave. Sean came back in and told me he placed a box of money in my trunk to take out of there for him. Wait ... what? I didn't tell him I would do this! He already placed the damn box in my car. I shook my head, told him okay and in a quick minute he was gone. Then the phone rang. Why I picked it up, I still don't know. Perhaps I wanted to hear that everything was okay and it was a false alarm ... but that wasn't the case. On the other end of the line was Anthony. ANTHONY! He who was allegedly being arrested down the street, who was more likely than not in handcuffs and being detained with probably 400 pounds of marijuana in his vehicle, was calling??? I tried to play it off being cool and said "hey? Whats up?" He asked for Sean. I could hear the tension in his voice. I knew this wasn't normal. I told him Sean was in the shower and couldn't come to the phone but was expecting him ... he said okay, see you soon and I couldn't hang the phone up quick enough. God dammit, I thought. This was happening. Anthony was pulled over, was busted and now Sean was about to be next. I was in the house alone – all of the "Bucci kids" were out of the house by this time in our life and had moved on to be grown ups (thank god). I grabbed my Pomeranian, a bag of clothes and ran to my car in the driveway. I opened the trunk to see if he had left a box in there or if I was dreaming, saw a box that was sealed and drove away. I was scared shirtless.

#### Chapter 10: RUN.

My mind raced into a million different thoughts. What the hell is in my trunk? How much money if its money? Where do I go? Holy shit, am I going to get arrested? I decided on my move as far as where to drive .... I knew Anthony was on Lowell Street closer to Peabody by the information that (somehow) Sean obtained. I assumed Sean would take Haverhill Street in North Reading to get to the highway the fastest to the rotary and tried and think about how many other DEA agents or whoever the hell was making this bust, would be. My twisted way of thinking thought ... what better route to take then take Haverhill Street towards downtown North Reading and by the police station, where they would least suspect any potential suspects to flee. So I did. I left and took Route 62 past the NRPD and continued to march. So far? No police sirens, no lights, no tails. Holy shit, did I make it? I tried calling Sean on his cell. No response. Not good. "Hes pulled over," I mumbled out loud. This is the end. I need to figure things out and fast.

I believe I was 22 at the time. I could look back at the transcripts from the trial to see exactly when, however I will be completely honest with you guys .... I haven't ever reread them. I can't. I simply can't. When my whole world came to an end February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and the scumbag "blogger" who claims to be a news reporter that has more skeletons in his closet than I do uploaded my testimony, I didn't read them. I didn't read them prior to my internal affairs investigation (slash interrogation) with the Massachusetts State Police. I simply can't. I know it sounds silly perhaps, but I can honestly say I blocked most of the shitty portions of my life out. Call it what you want, I call it survival. I know during this time and other times in my past previously before I was a trooper or dispatcher for that matter I made mistakes that I am not happy about. I am NOT perfect, I am a seriously flawed, scarred human being and I will never, ever try and pretend I am better than anyone. But, some things in my life I want to keep in the past and not go over time and time again ... that is one of them. Anyways, I digress. Let's get back to this shitty segment of my life.

So, I wondered where I should go and who to call. I picked up the phone and called one of Sean's friends who I knew was a solid, good kid and was loyal. I'll call him by his initial on here because I still respect him to this day (although I haven't heard from him since I parted ways with the almighty Bucci years ago). E owned a coffee shop in Beverly, so I called him, advised him of what was happening and said I would be enroute. When I got here, E was happy to help and I asked what the hell I do next. E told me Sean would need an attorney, so I thought long and hard. HOLY SHIT! I know one! One I've known for years and can trust – Gary Zerola. Gary went to the dark side after working in the District Attorneys office like most do and became a defense attorney. He helped me in a case years before when my car was stolen from a Honey Farms in Salem MA thanks to Matt walking into the damn store and leaving my keys in the ignition. Another story and off topic for a second, but I'll never forget this gem. Two junkies and a hooker ended up stealing my car that day. I had to WALK to Salem PD after Matt called me to give me this outstanding news to file report. My Chevy Cavalier at the time, was found in Lynn with the three occupants arrested. The police officer, Officer Courtney (I'll never forget that name) called me to tell me the vehicle can be picked up at the tow yard. I asked him if it was searched thoroughly seeing that there were heroin addicts in the vehicle at the time of the stop who were arrested. He immediately says "yea, twice." "Ok, sir" I replied, "thanks."

I picked my car up to find a missing stereo, trash everywhere and immediately brought the nasty HepC ridden thing to the car wash. I see a CVS bag under the seat. Nope, never put a bag never mind anything under my seats. I pull it out, look inside and find what appears to be a brown, powdery substance in a plastic baggie, along with several needles. May I add that one of those needles was uncapped and appeared to be used with brown fluid contained inside of it???? I could have been stabbed by a junkies needle just pulling the bag out. I called Salem police instantly and an officer came to the scene who then questioned me asking "are you sure this wasn't there before?" Saying I lost my shit a tad is an understatement. Needless to say, he took the drugs and left.

Officer Courtney conveniently never returned my calls after that and was always oddly out of the station when I attempted to reach him to discuss his "we checked the vehicle twice" response when I asked. After being a state trooper for four years, I can tell you that you need to be seriously blind if you are actually, allegedly searching a vehicle after three subjects are arrested in a stolen vehicle with past 94C (aka narcotics) history on their criminal board of probation record and not notice a damn CVS bag under the seat. I'm sorry, sir .... you, my friend suck as a cop and I hope you never got anyone hurt due to your extreme laziness. Ok, off the soap box and back to the doomsday arrest day story.

Anyways, I made it to E's coffee shop where one other of Sean's friends was. I was high off adrenaline, but actually functioning like a normal human being. It seemed to me I was good at these situations and being over the top calm from having such a crazy ass life before certainly helped. I called Gary Zerola and in as little words as possible, advised him I need to see him asap for a situation that occurred with Sean. Gary complied and offered to meet immediately. And so, we met and Gary as well as another attorney became Sean Bucci's defense attorneys.

Now let's talk about the cash. E took the money for a night, or two (I don't recall the exact) then Gary assisted. Gary was given the attorney fees and began dealing with Sean, who was at the time detained at Old Colony Correction Facility in MA. I'll never forget the first time going to meet him in jail – I was absolutely horrified. The people there, the feeling of hate, resentment, shame, despair, sadness and guilt are all mixed into one extra large concrete building. For the record, I will state that the correctional facility employees were always extremely reasonable and kind there. I'm not saying that because my ex husband is a screw nor am I saying that because I was a cop, I'm saying that because it was the legit feeling I had at that time.

I would go to visit Sean with feelings that I explained I felt in that jail – I resented him, I felt shame, sadness, fear, the whole nine yards. Although I was about to leave him, I couldn't leave him like this. You may ask why? Why. Because everyone in my life could or would leave in a drop of a hat, my entire life. When times get tough in my life, people run. I have and always will make that my ultimate goal in life that I can take some sort of measly substantial pride in. If you are in a tough time? I will promise to try and be there. I've always been a better listener than a talker and will try and help anyone that deserves it. Perhaps that is one of my ultimate flaws in life – to always try and be there for everyone and to try and always look for the best in people, however I'll be damned if my life tenures change me any way then the way I've always been (for the good anyways!). With Sean? I saw so many of his friends drop like flies. Everyone ran. No one wanted to potentially be involved in a federal drug trafficking case .... so I stayed. I paid his bills, I made sure his canteen money (aka prison food and things you need in jail) and made sure to take his phone calls as well as visit as much as I could. I continued to bartend and was worried sick that the feds may begin to look at my accounts and ask how I was paying for this house on my own. I needed a job that made good money and lots of it, legally. So, I went to Centerfold's (a gentleman's club aka strip club) in Boston and applied as a bartender/cocktail waitress. I got the job right when I walked in thankfully however those seven months or however long I was there for however they were a long, painful seven months. I saw so much sadness there – the dancers would begin drinking at ten am, blowing lines of cocaine in their dressing areas and have some rather disgusting individuals drool over their bodies. This was yet another dark time for me, I was really working in a strip club? This is what my life has come to? I recall once I was invited to a party after work from another bartender. I walked in to see every single person in this place consuming large amounts of cocaine. It was offered to me by the bartender when I quickly declined. I wasn't a fan of these drugs and refused to be that person who did it just because everyone else was. I remember Lilly looking at me in the face, totally strung out on cocaine and telling me how much respect she has for me that I can be at this party and see everyone doing lines and still not want to. I think I lasted another five minutes there before I snuck out and went home. This was not my scene. I saw many bartenders and waitress in that place go from "I would never dance" to the pole in a quick minute. We could make \$700-\$1000 a day just making drinks and serving them, but the amount of money the dancers made was too enticing to many so they would end up on stage. Now if you want to take your clothes off to make a living, I am NOT bashing that, it's a job and many actually truly were in college or supporting their kids as single moms. You do what you need to do in order to survive, and that is exactly why I was there as well. One day, the manager asked me to go to his office upstairs. He shut the door as I walked in and told me that a DEA agent had come in earlier to speak with him about me. I froze. The manager then told me everything was okay, that he wasn't judging me for what was going on and they would have my back. I finally exhaled and couldn't thank him enough. I guess if you are going to have DEA agents following you, you may as well be in an establishment where its more of a judgment free zone, right? Not even a month later, Anthony Belmonte who was and should have still been in prison was sitting at one of the tables on the floor. WHAT? Why is he here and not in jail? My muscles tensed and I wondered what this was about. Anthony gave me a warm yet fake smile. He asked me how I was, what I've been up to, then began to ask questions that I knew were red flags. Anthony asked about money missing and I just threw on my poker face and said I have no idea what hes talking about. Once that 4 minute conversation was over, I couldn't get away from that area of the club quick enough. I was convinced Anthony had become an important informant for the DEA, was most likely bugged and expected to obtain information, if any of substance from me. I began to worry that this was going to get worse. Ever since Sean went to jail, I feared for my life. I knew someone had lost a LOT of money in this bust and they could come looking for it. Who would they first come to? Me. Sleep was never good for the months I was alone in that house in North Reading. I would leave the house to my car and always look around for someone to come out and jump me. I was in constant fear for my life and I swear it took years off of it.

Fast forward a few months and Sean fired Gary Zerola and his team of attorneys. He claimed they had taken too much of his money and were not giving him the representation as he so deserved. You see, in jail ... they have

nothing but time. Time to think, time to read legal books, time to memorize case law, time for everything but real world stuff. Sean obsessed with case law and concluded he could obtain a better lawyer than what he had. Eventually he obtained new legal representation, eventually he was allowed house arrest and eventually, he went to his uncles where I knew I could finally say goodbye and run away from that life, leaving it where I thought was in my past. You'll learn in the next few chapters how wrong I truly was. During Sean's time in jail, I began to try and give back to the world as much as I could in my capacity as a person. I've always loved animals (yes I was that girl who played with stuffed animals as a kid, not barbies) and bought a Pomeranian puppy from a pet store about a year or so before. I went onto the good ole old AOL Pomeranian board and began to pour my heart out at the adorable puppy I had when I got pelted with nasty responses. Apparently, pet store puppies come from puppy mills. I had NO idea about any of this and after doing research on it, I was horrified. What the hell did I just do? I helped a puppy mill by buying this dog? I called the number on Bear's certificate, did a little background and yep, my dog came from a puppy mill. After that day, I began working a lot with dog rescues and saving them as much as I could, when possible. The least I could do was make up for it by helping save others. One of my favorite rescues was Little Louie (he still has a myspace! [www.myspace.com/littlelouie1](http://www.myspace.com/littlelouie1)) was by far the best dog I ever had. He was a whopping 4lbs, looked like a teddy bear and not only brought love into my life, I ended up making him a registry therapy dog with Caring Canines. Louie and I would visit the children's ward of hospitals and a ton of senior citizen nursing homes. He was locally famous at our therapy appointments, from having kids who normally are petrified of dogs to giving him love in their hospital beds to elderly men and women, whose families do not come around anymore, would be ecstatic to be able to have Louie visit. That dog brought so much happiness into so many people's lives. He ended up having severe collapsing trachea issues and at the age of 13, Louie began to stop breathing one day. I had my mother over my old house on Cortland St in Worcester when I grabbed him, my inhaler and got to Tufts Veterinary Hospital as fast as a cruiser would (my mother always said she thought we were going to die in that emergency car ride there. Not sure if I even stopped for any red lights). Louie's trachea was officially collapsed and I had to make the awful decision of helping him cross over to the other side.

## Chapter 11: There's no better time than now

My stuff was already packed in boxes and there was no time than the present to make the emergency move of getting out of Sean's house in North Reading and moving back home to Worcester. I was subpoenaed to the federal grand jury with my attorney and had plead the fifth, without an issue. I memorized my statement and said it to every question: "I respectfully decline to answer the question and invoke my rights and privileges to the fifth amendment to the United States Constitution." I recall making the jury chuckle when the prosecutor asked me something along the lines of "so is it safe to say that any question I ask you, you are going to invoke your fifth amendment right?" I answered with the same statement instead of saying yes or no. I didn't want to make a mistake and say something that would take the fifth away from me, so I guess I became a repeating robot. Once it was done, I thought that my trial time on Bucci's case was over and done with and I could finally lay that nightmare to rest for once and for all. My father's wife owned a house in Worcester and offered the basement apartment to me, which I agreed on immediately. I went to a bar in Worcester called Funky Murphy's where one of the (drug free had his shit together) bartenders ended up getting a job at who said he could probably get me a job there as well. I went down, talked to the owners and got the job. This was the number one Irish bar in Worcester, a new establishment where the college kids came to flock to, great music, food and just overall a great atmosphere. I made new friends quickly and reconnected with old ones. I met one of my best friends there, Sylvia. She ended up being my bridesmaid in my wedding and is one of the people in this world who I will always love and adore. I began to think my past life was finally in my past and I was finally beginning to feel like a normal, young 20's female again. I began to focus my off time with dog rescues and in turn, it made me feel good to give back to the world after being such a screw up with the biggest mistake of my life ex-boyfriend. Funky Murphy's was very much a cop bar as well. Sunday nights, the

Worcester Sharks hockey team and the Worcester Police boys would all come down to listen to the (locally) famous Terry Brennan sing his acoustic songs, drink shots and sometimes, the Sharks versus the local popo would end up in a few fists thrown. Needless to say there was never a dull moment during my tenure bar tending here and little did I know yet another big mistake of my life would begin here as well.

One of the doorman, Jay, was a cocky, always had a toothpick in his mouth, arrogant kind of fellow. And of course, being the mistake maker I had become in my early twenties, I was attracted to him. Jay and I began to flirt occasionally while at work and eventually started to date. Side note: when sometime seems to good to be true, usually its because it IS too good to be true. Jay was a total sweetheart to me, alleviating his over the top trying to hard to be a bad boy correctional officer persona. Three months into our relationship and we were extremely serious, to the point where Jay one day told me he's in love with me. Things were going great until one day prior to my works weekly coed softball games on Monday nights. Jay was finishing smoking his cigarette outside of Funkys when he suddenly looked up down the street, threw his butt and ran into the restaurant with the blood gone from his face. I had no clue what was going on, looked up and saw a girl next door looking younger female walking toward me, totally focused on me. Suddenly, this girl opens her mouth and asks "are you Leigha?" I froze. Ever get that bad feeling in the pit of your stomach where you know shits about to go down but you don't know what? Yea, enter that feeling in my belly. The girl finally walks up to me with full angry intent in her face saying "Hi, I'm Kara .... Jay's girlfriend."

I nearly spit out my gum. "I, um ... I'm sorry?" She said it again. "I'm Kara, Jays girlfriend. I've been studying abroad in Australia and just got home. You mean to tell me you have no idea who I am?" I looked around the sidewalks and behind me, waiting for Ashton Kutcher to jump out telling me I was getting Punked, however to no such luck. I began to tremble in anger. How could he do this to me? More importantly, how dumb was I to fall in love with someone who was cheating on his girlfriend who was studying in another country and actually believed he loved me? I apologized wholeheartedly to Kara, I felt absolutely sickened by this whole incident. Once we spoke and she left, Jay came outside while I was asking friends for a ride home. He begged, cried and begged some more to forgive him and let me let him drive me home to explain. Again, I was never one to be intelligent with my decision making in my younger years. I let him drive me home and eventually, I forgave him. I believed he loved me more than anything or anyone. Long story short? He moved in with me, got down on one knee in Aruba while we were on vacation at a beautiful sunset, we secretly got married by a justice of the peace (shocker to all my friends – yes this was a secret up until now), bought a house when the market was down to shit back in 2006 (anyone and literally everyone got a mortgage in that catastrophe back in the day) and planned our small, 110 person wedding in an old hotel in Grafton, MA. I will never forget when my mother met him – she hated Jay from day one. The night we met her at Funky's, my mother swore he was checking every single other human that walked into that bar with a vagina and had zero focus on me. I didn't notice at the time, I was dumb, in love and oh so god damn naive. Now my mother and I may have never really gotten along for more than a solid six months during my 37 years on this earth, however I will gladly admit she was right about Jay. A couple of years later when I announced I was leaving him, I learned that when I would go to the bathroom at work, he would begin to try and flirt with the waitresses (WHO WERE MY FRIENDS) saying "god if I wasn't married, the things I would do to you." How in the hell was I so dumb to not see this? Anyways, the night before my "wedding" (I use that term loosely because we were already married) my mother offered her honest opinion by looking me in the eyes and saying "you can still back out, you know. You don't have to get married tomorrow." .... sorry, ma. Too late. I was already married and now my insides were screaming pure regret. What did I do?

The time came where I was yet again surprisingly subpoenaed to testify in the grand jury for Bucci's case. I was bar-tending at the Melting Pot restaurant in Framingham, MA when a man dressed in Civilian clothing came in, showed

me his DEA credentials and passed me a piece of paper, then walking out the door. I had been served, yet again. The nightmare is reoccurring. I contacted my attorney, Elliot Weinstein and was told I need to meet with Peter Levitt, the federal prosecutor in charge of Bucci's case. I was once again a mess even remotely thinking about the fact that this dark time in my life was biting me in the ass yet again. I had the appointment to meet Peter Levitt and a few of the DEA agents in charge of the case. Peter advised me that if I plea the fifth again, I could be possibly held in contempt in court. Another date was arranged to go back to the federal courthouse in Boston and this time, I needed to contact Sean. I arranged to stop by his uncles house where he was still on house arrest and Jay offered to drive me. I was nervous but overall more pissed off that this was happening yet again. Sean was there along with his co-conspirator in the case, Darren Martin and I asked Jay to stay in the car and wait. The three of us walked into Sean's bedroom and he turned on some sort of ridiculous device that made a loud static noise which was meant to block out any wire taps I may have on my body. I just glared at the device, chuckled and began the conversation. "Sean, they want me to testify. They said I cannot take the fifth again or else I could go to jail." Sean glared at me, he was not the guy I knew years prior to. His response made me want to kick him in the face. "So, whats a few years in jail? Just plea the fifth, Leigha."

A FEW YEARS IN JAIL? After everything I already did for him? Keeping his house together, bills paid, lawyers in check. Who else visited him in jail every week? Who else could have already been in prison if they got caught with his cash box in the back of their car the day he was arrested? Who else kept his family updated while he was in jail, made sure he had plenty of canteen cash, spoke to him on the phone twice a day prior to? And this is the thanks I get? A couple years in jail when he clearly could just plea out and considering all of the freaken evidence they had against him ..... WHY NOT? His mom was getting subpoenaed, I was, his friends and he could soften the blow on everyone else around him, however he chose to bring everyone else down around him due to his narcissistic outlook on the case. Sean's poor mom was already submerged with insane crazy anxiety issues and to make her have to go on stand and testify was horrid. I glared at Sean and told him I am not pleading the fifth. "Either plea out or I'll see you in court. Your decision." I said holding back tears. A few years in jail. Not going to happen.

I had to meet with Levitt and the crew at the courthouse two more times before D day came. The day of my testimony was yet another day I try not to remember. Even after my testimony became public on the white trash troll's "sports page" aka shitty blog, I never read thru them again. I haven't to this day and refuse to. I can't, mentally I simply can't. You guys can all read it, it's a LOT. I recall what I can and try to black out what I can. I recall not sleeping the night before the testimony and was a mess. After a large amount of puffy eye cream and coffee, I was in the parking lot, meeting attorney Weinstein. Jay offered to come but I felt the need to go alone. This was my pile of shit, I don't need others to come and lay in it with me. I knew what I needed to do and hopefully once done, I would never need to remember this nightmare ever again. I was told by an agent that the case would be sealed and not public record. As I sat on stand, I placed my hands in my lap to prevent any possible shaking. I kept a poker face on and had the appearance of a confident, cool, calm and collected mid twenties female. I spoke when spoken too, said my sirs and ma'ams and although I messed up once or twice with answering questions incorrectly, although I was screaming inside and wanting to vomit, after hours and hours of testimony, I was done. Done! I thanked everyone for their time and was escorted out to my car by a female agent in case someone was waiting for me there. "Wonderful, they think I'm going to get jumped" I thought. While walking to my car, I asked her a question I couldn't keep inside. "Is this my clean slate? Is this chapter officially behind me?" "She looked at me and said "yes, this is now apart of your past." I then asked her with all seriousness, if I could ever maybe go into law enforcement or become an agent. She told me anything is worth a try and to go for it. Now, I'm not sure if she was just pulling my chain like when we were all in kindergarten telling teachers we wanted to be astronauts and millionaires with the teacher shaking her head up and down like its going to actually happen when deep down inside they knew we wouldn't, but she made me believe that I had the chance. Whats the worst that could happen? I get jealous coworkers as a cop, a vengeful, spiteful

shitbag ex boyfriend who gets out of jail and submits the testimony to a blogger after he was able to access them all post appeal? My life to be turned upside down and everything I worked hard for to be ripped out from underneath me in a quick second, years later? Yea, so perhaps I didn't think about the repercussions and "what ifs" at the time. The only thing I could think on and focus on was moving on to becoming a better human.

After Jay and I were married, I began looking into potential 911 dispatching jobs. I knew with my background in being a complete effing idiot with my ex Bucci that I probably didn't stand a chance in law enforcement, however it was what I wanted to do. I wanted to give back, more than rescue work and to people instead. I began to make friends with a vast amount of people in law enforcement and the thrill of the stories, the rescues and the work enticed me more than anything. You see, some people are born with addictive personalities, its in our blood. My father was such an extreme case that I knew I had to have it also instilled in my DNA. I can safely say I never became addicted to drugs, however I did become addicted to adrenaline. It was my drug of choice and the reason why Bucci's lifestyle ended up becoming so appealing – the thrill of what he did while I was young ... poof. Adrenaline. Driving fast cars? Adrenaline. Jumping out of planes? Adrenaline. So, law enforcement was of course appealing to me in that sense as well. I applied at local police departments when one day online I noticed a hiring ad for the Massachusetts State Police, in what was often called "cell hell" at their General Headquarters in Framingham, MA. I figured, screw it ... what do I have to loose? Nothing. Could I attempt the background and get it? Sure, why not. I never was arrested, never detained. So, I applied for the job a couple times, got an interview, nailed the computer dispatch assessment test and was placed on standby to standby. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts works at a snails pace with everything, so in plain Mass fashion, this wasn't any different. Then, one day at one of the difficult times in life, I received the best call on one of the worst days.

I'll never forget my cousin Matt calling me on my cell with despair in his voice one day while I was sitting at home prior to a bartending shift. He immediately began to tell me he's sorry for my loss. I paused, knowing exactly where this was probably going but still in a state of confusion and asked what he means. He stopped and there was about ten seconds of silence in the phone. "Leigha, you mean you don't know? Everyone knows here. Oh my god I am so sorry I have to tell you this personally. Your father has died."

I didn't scream. I didn't begin to cry. I felt honestly nothing but pure emptiness. Since I was young, I prepped myself mentally for this day and the day had come. What killed me was that I didn't get to say bye. I may have never had the father/daughter love for my dad like most people did, there was too much hostility and resentment to have ever been able to say I truly loved my dad. But, to know the fact that after all these years I would see him next in a coffin made me nauseous. Word spread fast and Fran (his most recent wife) had to pay for his funeral expenses. She asked me if I could pay. Me? I just bought a house, I didn't have a pot to piss in. The day of his wake, my cell phone rang as I was getting ready. It was Gary McGlaughlin, the director of communications for the Massachusetts State Police. Gary asked me if I wanted the job still. I couldn't say yes quick enough. Was this a sign? Did this mean some of the worst days of my life were slowly beginning to take a turn for the best? Honestly, that phone call is what got me through that wake. The next day, my grandmother aka his mother aka the wicked witch of the west flew down from Florida and I did not partake in the limo or mercy meal for that reason. Ultimately, my biggest fear was that Sherry would show, which she did not, however my "grandmother" tried blaming me for not talking to my father when he passed. I walked out. I did not want to fight nor did I want to be in her nasty soul. Instead my husband, my awesome cousins Matt and Anthony and I decided to go to a local dive bar and have a drink or two over dealing with fake family at a mercy meal we did not want to attend. Matt and Anthony – thank you. You guys have always been good to me and I will never, ever forget that.

March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 was my first day of training as a dispatcher for MSP. I was proud, prouder than I can even begin to describe on here in words. I did it. I finally did it. Not only did I have an admirable job, I loved it! The people were tough in the beginning as far as on a scale of friendliness in that small room, the drama caused by some of the few who were miserable was as thick as smoke in a room, however I loved helping people, I felt I had substance in this world and I was good at what I did. During my six years as a state police dispatcher, I was accredited numerous awards, both by the agency and the governor and one of my calls regarding a female kidnapped and held hostage in a vehicle which in turn ended as a rolling roadblock and her jumping out of the car, ended up on Discovery ID (Dates from Hell: Highway Horror – check it out on youtube still!). Pursuits and the radio traffic to the troopers was my favorite, however I longed for more. I wanted to be on the other side of the radio, IN the pursuit, in the cruiser and in the chaos. Don't get me wrong, there were some completely crazy calls in dispatch. Let's just say there is a reason for the high turnover rate as a 911 dispatcher. Civilian dispatchers do NOT get the credit they deserve. You get hundreds of calls a day (in a busy call center) of people, who are in extreme state of panic, frightened, dying or in different mental state of mind. You get screamed at by morons who will berate you like you are some sort of piece of shit on the end of a phone. You even get the "I pay your salary" wealthy assholes who think they are entitled to treat you like a piece of shit because they pay their taxes. You are the FIRST point of contact in dispatch and at that very moment, most people are in such a state of mind that you have to do everything in your power at the end of a telephone to be able to try and calm that caller down. I can say it's safe to say, going on scene as a police officer after the victims of an incident call are two totally different scenarios. When they call, they are always hard to hear, harder to calm down, harder to work with. I dealt with calls from children being killed in motor vehicle crashes to people saying they were going to kill themselves and either had a gun with them or had already taken / obtained drugs, drinking anti-freeze, you name it. I'll never forget some calls that won't ever leave my mind – from a father come home to find his 14 year old son hanging in the bedroom, a female who was a gun collector find her boyfriend in the middle of the night take a .22 caliber gun and shoot himself in the head, (meanwhile while I'm trying to get her address, I can hear the gurgling of the boyfriend dying as she's holding him near the phone) to severe domestics, bad fires, drownings, you name it. After the Marathon bombings, we all worked doubles each and every day with the chaos of radio traffic and calls from all over regarding the potential terrorists. Please make it very clear, dispatch is a very thankless job. So, to each and every one of you out there who are reading this book at this very minute and work in public safety dispatch? Thank you for everything you do. And for crying out loud guys, if you ever call 911, please try and be respectful to these folks. It is NOT an easy job. I've My longing for more adrenaline continued as did my dreams of becoming more of something than I was. During my first year in dispatch, it was also the last year of my marriage. Now I'm not sure if you Massholes remember around the state that in 2008 was the year Governor Deval Patrick pulled the plug on state overtime due to the crisis we were enduring in this state. Jay lost all of his overtime, while mine was still being fulfilled by the state 911 board funding. I was working back to back to back to back 16 hour shifts (aka blood money) while my husband decided to go out drinking with his buddies almost every night. (Side note: ever know what its like to wake up cold and wet? Try sleeping next to someone who cant hold his bladder when he is shitfaced. Nice, huh? WHO EVEN DOES THAT!?!?). One night I was so mad at him for being so drunk, I went and got a cup of warm water and poured it on his crotch. He woke up, thinking he pissed the bed for the umteenth time and I chuckled to myself.

Jay started getting more and more distant (red flag number one) and I had to keep working just as much to pay our bills. I began to check his cell phone at times – back then there were no cell phone locks, no facial recognition, no thumb prints, hell I think we just began texting not long before. Remember how I've mentioned that feeling you can get, the intuition that something isn't right? Well, I had it with Jay. I began to get the feeling he was cheating on me and when I checked his texts, they would all be erased (red flag number two). One day we went out for his friends thirtieth birthday party and Jay decided to yet again get white girl wasted, this time passing out in a snoring coma before his unintelligent ass could remember to delete his texts, which of course I immediately went to read. Then



there it was ... the last straw. It was a text from his old pal Chrissy O, who used to dispatch with him back in his Worcester Police dispatch days. The texts were extremely flirty, to the tune of "baby, I can't wait to see you tomorrow night! Seven PM? Parking lot?" "Yes baby, I will see you then, miss you so much!" Seven pm. Tomorrow. When I would be working. I FREAKED. Called my (at the time) best friend Kristen, called his (at the time) best friend Oakie and begged them in a crying panic to come and get me. I had been drinking and knew being this upset, plus alcohol plus a vehicle would be nothing but disastrous. When they were both enroute, I woke him up. I screamed, I screamed between trying to breath in tears. Due to my past, my lack of substance in family life, I had developed this fascinating defense mechanism of being able to shut it down, shut it all down. My emotions can be flipped off at someone like a switch if they push me to that limit. Well folks, at that very moment on that very night, my switch flipped for Jay. Some say there is a fine line between love and hate, perhaps that is true, I really don't know. My friends came and got me and I went to my moms. The next morning I woke, called Chrissy with no answer. I then shot her a text: "Hey Chrissy, its Leigha ... Jay's wife. You have two options, either you call me back within the next five minutes or I'll be at your house in 15. You choose."

.... Let's just say my phone rang in under two. I tried to stay calm, she tried to throw the blame on him. I recall her stating "do you know who my father is, Leigha? He's a sergeant on the Worcester Police" which I in turn replied "I don't give a fuck if your dad is judge fucking Wapner, I will still hunt you down."

Long story short? Jay apologized. We tried marriage counseling. I recall one day just looking up at the incredibly sweet therapist and just thinking "what the fuck am I doing." I had already checked out. I didn't want to end up in a divorce bar with two kids I didn't really want to have but got pregnant because he wanted them, older and miserable. I began sleeping on the couch and fooling around with a trooper I knew (another mistake. Dave, if you're reading this, we were better as friends and I wish we stayed friends. You were someone I will always miss AS a friend and I hate that we ruined that by being intimate). Anyways, long story short, I asked him if he wanted the house, he said yes, I said take the damn thing. I wanted out. I wanted freedom and Jay couldn't buy me out because the real estate market sucked so badly and I didn't give a damn. My freedom superseded any materialistic thing by far. I didn't want to be vindictive. I didn't want to feel needy or trying to take it all away because of pure revenge or grudges. I just wanted to wash my hands of Jay and run for the hills. Materialistic stuff, the house .... that can all be replaced over time with hard work. My mental health and stability (or lack of, should I say) in a marriage, something I always fantasized about – being happy in a relationship for life, meant more to me than the silly house or furniture that I didn't take. I had over ten thousand dollars in that house even initially on the sale and could have cared less. Take it all, just let me keep what pieces of sanity I had left at the age of 27 and let me move on with life.

## Chapter 12: Age Ain't Nothing But a Number

To make a long story short, I met a local cop who was a roommate of one of my (still to this day) best friends in dispatch. We hit it off almost instantly, the sex was amazing and he had zero baggage. And that ended up the issue. This gorgeous, perfect bodied, six foot, tan, six pack and tattooed man wanted marriage and kids. Me? I was a broken soul. Marriage? Yea, no. Kids? God no. Then it all clicked. I had to let him go before I broke his heart. My best friend / his roommate was also having issues with both of us being with each other for reasons that are not worthy of explaining, however I thought long and hard and though I will always be friends with my friend. His roommate? Well, I didn't deserve him. He deserved the best girl, best wife and also just as important best mom for his future kid(s). I finished that relationship off. For the first few years I would social media creep on him. I learned he met a gorgeous Indian doctor, who came from a great family. I learned he had an adorable kid and got that white picket fence, happy ending he wanted and so deserves. I sometime am very adamant to believe I am a black cloud and if I let go of

someone, they're better off. So ... you know who you are, if you're reading this. I'm glad you are happy, I am sincere about that and mean it from my heart.

I ended up finding a super cute townhouse in Worcester for cheap and had one of my close friends Jodi move in with me. Jodi and I were broken souls – she just left her fiance and me being in the midst of a divorce, well the term “hot mess” was an understatement, but we had a BLAST. I began to focus on dog rescue work again which kept me busy enough to not get in trouble and stayed a bit grounded. My mom and I were hot and cold as usual with the typical 9 months of no talking and then forgiving her, then we would be fighting again.

Anyways, it was about a year into dispatching was when we obtained a handful of Captains that were banished to GHQ (general headquarters) communications room like we were the land of misfits. Every Captain had a story of why they were banished to cell hell for a “TBD” status, each miserable to be there but some tried to be as kind and nice to us dispatch civilians as possible knowing it sure as shit wasn't our fault that they were there. The ones on the overnights were more sociable. One of them, a guy who screamed “I'm a cop” with the flat top, high and tight, handsome older fellow was quiet at first then sociable as you got to know him. His name was Captain Daniel Risteen. Captain Risteen would turn on MTV to watch Jackass and we would have conversations and laughs on the 11-7 overnight shift. He was shipped out to GHQ from Troop F (aka Logan Airport in Boston) due to running CJIS queries on people such as Tom Brady of the Patriots and others when he was audited and cast out to sea. (Side note: hundreds of guys and girls, both uniform side and civilian did this, I EVEN got in trouble for this, I'll explain later.) Anyways, one day a bunch of us in dispatch planned a Bruins game in a great section of seating and had a few tickets left to spare, so I asked a couple of the Captains who seemed cool and would come hang out. Only one said they would, and would take the other two to bring two friends – Captain Daniel Risteen. Danny (as I will call him from here on out) brought now as I type this Major Ricky Ball and Trooper (who I am no longer friends with because close friends don't turn their back on you when you need them as I did this year) Keith Segee. The night of the game came and Danny and I hung out alone for a while, going up to the suites to see a few of my Worcester PD friends when he kissed me in the hall. The kiss blew my mind and the chemistry was instant. I was 28 years old, Danny was 45 and I didn't even give a damn. Danny left his friends there that night and drove back to Worcester with me. After that night at the Bruins, we never left each others sides.

We fell in love and fell fast. We just cliqued and were so easy to be with each other, constantly and all the time. He got along with my friends as I did his. His family was amazing and eventually I got to meet his two daughters who were certainly older for kids to meet when you are also young. I won't mention their names, however when you meet a 16 and 18 year old and you're 28, it's a bit rough. They I'm sure resented me for being “that younger chick” that their dad was dating. I'm sure his ex wife also gave her opinion on me and what she thought about me because to be freaken honest? If I was in her shoes, I would be judging the hell out of the extremely, almost too young girlfriend as well. So, I can't throw stones at glass houses .... I totally get it. But with Danny's girls? I tried, man I tried. For years I tried to be close to them, however I never was allowed into their emotional realm. And that's fine, I get that too! If you don't clique with someone, you don't clique. Perhaps it was because we were like water and oil – these two kids got whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted by their parents. I believe Danny's ex-wife was very bitter due to their extremely rough break up and past. I also believe that she did nothing but shit on him to those girls for their entire upbringing. I also believe that she told them to milk that man for every cent and possible thing he could do for them. Danny, if you are reading this, I hope you know how much of an amazing father you are. I watched you do ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING for those two girls during our eight year relationship, even still see now that we are still friends. You never gave yourself the credit you deserve and my dear god, you deserve it. Folks, those girls could and would ask him for anything and literally everything and he would do it. One day I recall him saying the younger of the two had a toothache and couldn't sleep. We lived in Peabody, they lived north on the

almost border of New Hampshire, a solid 25-30 minutes away, obviously more with crappy weather. Well, Danny went to the store, bought Tylenol PM and drove the bottle, the bottle you can get if you drive to any drug store in a local town near you, to her. They live with their mother. The mother could have drove down the street, but clearly didn't or wouldn't .. who knows. Point of the matter is ..... Daniel Risteen? You're an amazing dad. Divorced, ridiculed by your ex, been thru hell and back ... you're a great dad. Don't ever forget that. Actually, every guy I know named Daniel who has existed in my life at some point or another has been a great person. Perhaps its the name and their born with it. Oh, and they're also all great dads (who I know personally). Fact.

ANYWAYS ... back to the story here. Danny and I flourished and he was not only my boyfriend but my best friend. He opened up to me about things he had trouble saying in his life as did I. We were frick and frack. The couple people admired, were jealous of and out of anything else? TALKED ABOUT. You see, the world of law enforcement loves gossip. The world of law enforcement loves negativity, loves to talk about others, to make others sound like shit in order to boost their own egos. Now, let me clarify something .... I am NOT talking about all members of law enforcement. There's a WHOLE lot of absolutely amazing people in this field who are loving, caring, positive people. Unfortunately, however there are also just as many negative, hateful, egotistical fucking jealous assholes as well. So, imagine a Civilian dispatcher dating a Captain. Oh? Weird? Nope. No, no no. There was a Civilian dispatcher, AT General Headquarters, retired, who was married to a Captain of the MA State Police. Think anyone really gave a damn? Nope. No one. Me on the other hand? I was ready to see it in the god damn local papers. We were the talk of the town. But? Let em talk. Why should or would I ever back away from being happy in a relationship? People want to judge? Judge away. Many of those judgy judgertons were also in miserable, loveless marriages and sleeping with girls on the side as much as Donald Trump was sending tweets. Misery loves company. Why else do you think the news stations report so much doom and gloom? That's society these days, as a whole. The world consumes sadness and negativity these days more than positivity and happiness. Disaster and chaos supersede success and pleasure. We are, literally our own worst enemies. And amongst one of the biggest and hands down evil factors in life, is jealousy. I for one will be damned if I can't exist as a human without complimenting, giving acknowledgment or telling someone they did a good job or are a good person. Life is too short and we will all be an insects source of nutrients someday, unless you of course are cremated, which in turn is less room needed in the ground for a body you will never see or be looked at as again. (Side note: friends, please make sure I am cremated. Plant a tree with my ashes, use them some way that is somehow beneficial to give back to the earth.)

### Chapter 13: New Beginnings

So it was about a year into our relationship or less is when we decided we need to live together. I say need, because we were commuting an hour to either my townhouse or his condo and never were without one another for the most part. So, I moved into his condo that he was renting from his classmate and good friend. You see, when I met Danny, we were both in bad places. I was a single, independent and social shitshow while he was being a seriously depressed, single loner coming out of a relationship of 14 years with a super insecure, nasty Italian woman who had the personality of a 17 year old when it came to maturity. She took everything from him in their long term relationship break up, including the house and all assets. Danny, as did I in my past relationship, just packed up and left. Back to square one sucks. It hurts, it's cold and it's fucking hard. Will I ever regret ever leaving any relationship I have been in to feel that for a temporary portion of existence? No. No, no, no. Guys, one of my biggest fears in life is regret. It always has been, it will always effect me for my poor choices I've made along the way, however it also inspires me and keeps me sane. If you are unhappy, then please .... TRY TO CHANGE. Change can be good. Change can be bad. Change can be as uncomfortable as fuck but in the end, CHANGE CAN BE GOOD. I worked in law enforcement where so many people HATE change. They want their regularity. Their schedules. Their life commodities and dinner at 1700 hours, on the dot. Then throw a ripple of mixture into the life pattern and HOLY FUCK ... CALL

911. Cops mostly hate change, hence why so many cops will live in their miserable existence of life with their wives who hate them and instead of saying "you know what? Maybe I should leave. Maybe the kids seeing us separated and happy will help them flourish in future relationships as opposed to separate bedrooms and being roomies. Maybe instead of sleeping with our side pieces and feeling a smidge of happiness for a few hours, we do the right thing and ask for a divorce, take the hit of the materialistic bullshit cuts you may take and go live what little time we have left on this life is."

I'll step down from the soapbox. But, for real ... the amount of affairs in the world of law enforcement would make you never believe that monogamy is a thing. And why am I explaining this so much, you may ask? Because I dealt with it. I have seen it. I have been apart of it. I was in love with a married man (former coworker) for almost a year. I became that asshole female to succumb to the lies and the things I wanted to hear by the man I fell in love with. Yes, chalk another mark in the category for things I have done that will repulse society. I get it. I will not sit here and dispute it. I will say this now and will say it time and time again .... I am NOT PROUD OF SOME OF THE DECISIONS I HAVE MADE IN LIFE. It's the choices we make to take the right path after the ones we didn't before who should make us ultimately who we are today.

Ok, obviously I am venturing off yet again from the story at hand. My bad. So, Danny and I lived in the condo happily until one day when I was at work during one of those months were it was negative temps for over a week, electricity wires were down across the Commonwealth like wildfire and peoples pipes were bursting in their homes like you wouldn't believe. I was in dispatch one day when I took a 911 call. "State Police, this lines recorded, whats the location of your emergency" was my prerecorded voice every time I hit on a call. Caller: "Yes, hi, I'm at my sisters condo right now and it's flooding, bad. She had the pipes turned off in the kitchen when the pipe burst but I think most of the hot water is going into the other unit next to her." Me: "Okay sir, whats the address?" Caller: "8 Evergreen Way, Peabody." Me: "What? I mean, sir? 8 Evergreen Ave? I live in 6." Caller: "Umm, ok well you need to get over here asap."

I transferred the call and called Danny's cell. He was upstairs in a big meeting with the big wigs of the civilain side of budgeting. I told him I had a bad feeling and cant leave due to lack of bodies on the shift in dispatch and he couldn't leave the meeting right away, so I called Peabody Fire Department. The Captain on scene called me back and advised we need to get there sooner than later due to water coming out of our garage which was misfiring the garage door to go up and down. Danny went there and told me I need to come home asap. I knew it was bad. I got there and began to cry. Everything but the third floor bedroom stuff was water logged. This was the second time in five years that I dealt with flooding. Previously in my basement apartment, that flooded about a half of foot water when the subpumps had an electrical shortage during a storm from hell and I lost a ton of things from it. Floods are fires but the can still be devastating none the less. We ended up salvaging what we could and living in a hotel for three months. THREE MONTHS. A residential long term stay hotel. Remember how I've mentioned I think I'm cursed? Well, the first week we moved in there and everyone knew our new six, I received a call (yea, me again) of a man holding a girl hostage with a knife and ended up running out of the hotel room into the woods. Guess where? Yep, you guessed right. My new "home." MSP K9 tracked the moron into the muddied side bank near Route 1 and arrested the suspect. Glad I found the right hotel to live at. FML. Danny and I lived there until we found the perfect home in while being in a tight jam, however the house in Peabody made it all worth while once we were out of hotel hell.

I began to become friends with several Troopers as well as locals while being in a relationship with Danny and had seen some crazy moments during that time. Many police officers have taken the "do as I say, not as I do" to the next level. We would arrest civilians for operating their vehicles under the influence of alcohol with a .08 percent on a breathalyzer, yet I would see cops time and time again at parties, grab their keys to their car and drive home

absolutely legless. I would be lying to you if I said I wasn't one of those people, however I used my wrong doings in the past of driving when I probably shouldn't have to my discretion of giving people brakes on the road at work. Sometimes by giving someone a huge break on their first OUI, by telling them I am here to give them another chance, to place their car on a 12 hour hold with the tow truck company, report the car having "unknown mechanical" issues and letting them go is a pay it forward move. Remember, we all make mistakes and I sure as shit was no angel. I did not take the job as a State Trooper to ruin lives, I wanted to help others more than anything and just pray to god the ones I did will always remember me for it.

Road sodas in unmarked cruisers are not a thing of the past either and many take their company cars to sporting events or other alcohol infused situations without thinking twice about it. I recall one time after a promotional party Danny and I held for his friend who had made Captain. We were driving home when he received the call from a (now retired) Lieutenant in a specialty unit. "Danny, I am fucked, I need you here asap, I just got in a bad crash."

The crash occurred on a rotary in Revere, the major problem was this Lt was shitfaced and driving his unmarked pickup truck that was his work cruiser. He had struck a twenty year old's sedan and hard, leaving both vehicles needing a tow truck. Thankfully no one was hurt and I was mortified, yelling at our friend to get in Danny's car as we began to try and figure out what the hell to do. No locals arrived on scene surprisingly and Danny made a few phone calls to his tow truck friends who may not have the best of records however would keep their lips sealed. The young kid was spoken to by Danny and he made sure to convince him that his car would be fixed at the shop and paid for by the guy who hit him (the lieutenant). Both cars were fixed eventually, the job never got word of the crash and this Lt had to pay about twenty thousand dollars in expenses to fix both vehicles (aka got stuck doing a TON of details) while he used a spare cruiser. To this day, I cannot believe he got away with it. I never told a soul until writing about it now and am only disclosing due to the fact that he has happily retired and moved on to the next chapter of his life.

#### Chapter 14: Prepare for the worst but hope and pray for the best

Danny and I made the Peabody house into a great home. He mentioned that if I wanted a child, we could have one, however I was never one to want to reproduce. I hate to say it, but after years and years of struggling, I wanted to focus on me, be selfish and hope to someday be able to enjoy life, not fight it constantly. I've been told not wanting to be a parent is selfish, but why? Why is it so cliché to not want to procreate and make a potentially disastrous mini me? My family genes were tainted with addictive personality, alcoholism, depression and god knows what else. People assume that if you don't choose to have children, you can't handle the responsibility of a child. Fun fact: I have a Bengal cat that is seventeen years old, older than most of my friends children. It's not a responsibility issue that I have to not want kids, its just that I don't think I would have ever been a good mom. Most women are born with that intense drive to want to raise a family. I never really truly knew what a family was, I lack the substance of having a family to love a child and feel as if it was never a part of my destiny. Thankfully, I chose the path of not having children considering if I had a daughter or son at this moment who had to endure the mess I have created, if they had to see their mothers name in the paper time and time again being spoken about as the worst person on this earth, I would never be able to forgive myself.

I became super focused on dog rescuing, now primarily working with K-9 potentials that were in shelters deemed aggressive or just regular people who purchased a Belgian Malinois or a German Shepherd and had no business of buying that breed, never mind the fact that the particular dog they had was WAY too high drive. One of my rescues while I was a dispatcher made it onto our K-9 Unit before I even became a Trooper, one went to the Worcester House of Corrections (where she failed out during drug class) and another, one of my favorite rescues of all time, Sultan aka Satan, had a love for bite work more than any dog I ever saw. I remember being in West Palm beach and meeting him

from a “trainer” in the area who had him, couldn’t keep him and couldn’t find anyone to be able work with him. Sultan was a Dutch Shepherd who was found by the Miami Dolphins stadium as a pup with a broken leg. He was adopted to a security company owner who abused him on the collar and was returned to the “trainer” about nine months later, emaciated and defeated looking. Sultan was nursed back to health and became the devil. This dog smelled fear from a mile away, his videos that were produced by the trainer as I asked were extremely impressive and I wanted him. I went and met him and we walked next to each other when I felt comfortable enough to take the leash on my own. I remember just thinking “jesus christ, don’t look this thing in the eyes.” Sultan was shipped back home to me a couple weeks later and we bonded almost immediately. I worked him as many times as I can with my good friend Steve Roberts of K9 Top Performance in Reading (shameless plug – Josh Knowlton and Steve are THE BEST Civilian trainers around!). Sultan got good and fast. His bite work became more focused and less angry, he learned all commands in German and I had him unleashed with recalls and outs. Long story short, he failed our MSP K-9 tests but the Department of Corrections fell in love at first site. I’ll never forget the day I brought him there to have them test. It was a training day for the DOC and several of their “LEC” teams as well as local K9s were there. I got out of my truck, looked around and thought “holy shit, I didn’t know this was going to be a damn show.” All eyes were on me and I was thankful it was Satan that I was bringing to test. We did some obedience, brought him into the rundown old buildings of the jail for environmentals and back outside for bitework. The CO who was putting the suit on gave me the good ole “don’t worry, I’ve been doing this for years, I can take him.” The Sergeant advised the decoy to run away and wanted me to send Sultan from about 15 yards away. “Are you sure, Sarge?” Hey, I asked. He shook his head and I relaxed the beast. Sultan hit that damn decoy like a fucking train, grabbing him perfectly in his tricep and knocking him over, leaving the decoy to get caught and roll ON TOP of my dog. I immediately began to sprint to them. Sultan was never in such a compromising position after a hit and my fear was he would regrip on a part of him that wasn’t his bite suit ... like his face. I grabbed the leash and holy shit ... he NEVER LET GO of where his initial contact was made. I recall hearing someone in the crowd mumble “there’s no fucking way that dog is going to out for her.” I let out a confident “OUT!” and Satan released perfectly on cue. Walking back, I saw expressions of surprise on these guys. Something tells me they assumed I was going to bring a beagle out and it would have been the laughing joke of the day. We completed their last test of gunfire by the dog to make sure he wouldn’t stress and turn the leash back to bite me (which he did not). By the end, the Sergeant was smiling and the other guys were asking if I can get more of him. Sultan went to an amazing new handler, who got his first bite by Satan as I was handing him over. Sultan’s handler and him ended up being a great team and unfortunately although I don’t talk to him anymore, I hope he is doing well and think about him and good ole Satan often. Rescue was good, things were good, work was work until one day word of the 81<sup>st</sup> RTT would be working its way into the academy in the next year. The 80<sup>th</sup> RTT class came thru the last test, which was the test I had taken and gotten a 97 on. The first class went down to low 98s and I never made the cut, however for the 81<sup>st</sup> I remember the day the letter came in saying I was being considered as a trainee and could begin the process. It was happening! Were the stars finally aligning for my life to become what I wanted to be? I stayed realistic, I kept on the idea that I wasn’t going to get a spot, but hoped and prayed for it to happen. I had been working in dispatch for the state police for over five years, made friends with many on the job and met new people all the time thru Danny. Danny knew some of my past but not all of it. I asked him if it was worth giving it a try and we agreed it was. To put my dispatch job on the line and the state police, to put it all on the line and attempt to get the job of my dreams? Yea, it was worth it. And you know what? As I sit here, without the job anymore, working as a glorified babysitter (aka security manager), worried about when I will run out of money, potentially lose my house, I could go on and on. Fact of the matter is, I wouldn’t give back the four best years of my life as a Massachusetts State Trooper. Since time traveling is not a thing yet, I can’t change my past mistakes. I can’t go back to the age of eighteen and enlist into the Marines. I can’t take back the worst years of my life and ever taking that cocktail waitressing job at Scuttlebutts where I made the mistake of dating the man that destroyed so many years of my life. But I can keep what memories I have left of being a K9 State Trooper and absolutely loving my job more than anything in this world. Helping people and potentially saving others are two things I am prouder of having

the opportunity to be apart of other than anything else in my life. Being a police officer wasn't just a job to me. I didn't clock out and forget about what I am. I would take my K9 to my friends K9 facility on the weekend to work on bite work and tracks. My job was my life and all I had left when Danny and I broke up, but I'll explain about that later on.

Anyways, as I began the hiring process for the academy, I began working out like a spaz. I was never a strong runner so I began to run ..... every .... single ... day. I ordered a 25 pound weighted vest and began using that on my runs when I noticed a sharp pain in my right shin. The pain was pain, but after the first mile or so, it would subside and turn numb so I didn't think much of it. One day, I finished a quick 5K and noticed the pain was so bad, I couldn't hardly put any weight on it even when walking. A doctors office visit and an X-ray showed that I had a hairline fracture in my tibia from over training with a shin splint. Up until then, I had no clue what shin splints were and just assumed I had weird runner pains that would eventually go numb! So, a walking boot for a month and a half became a thing. Good times.

So the background, physical, psych eval, physical testing and oral boards came and went. I passed everything, got my knees injected with cortisone to keep training with less pain and the day came that I received the letter of acceptance. December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 would be Day 1 at the "SPA" (state police academy). I did it. I somehow made it, I was going to be a trainee for the Massachusetts State Police! Fall came, doubles in dispatch were almost a daily thing so I could pay off all my debt and prepare to make a whopping \$200 dollars a week as a trainee. Seeing as most of you probably have no idea of how the academy goes, here it is:

The 81<sup>st</sup> RTT was a 23 week, live in, 0530-2100 (16 ½ hour days) academy which is located in New Braintree (aka the middle of fucking no where) Massachusetts. You would leave to go home on Fridays and back for Mondays at 0700. All towels and uniforms would have to be washed on the weekend and rolled back to SOP orders. Homework on the weekend was insane and Sundays you would have the worst anxiety about knowing that tomorrow morning you would be back in hell for another week (many never would come back to the SPA after a "rotten civilian weekend."

Training and work were taking up all of my time in the months before Day One commenced. The MSP academy on day one would be a scary day for any female going in. They have you sit in a barber chair and allow "hairdressers" (I use that term loosely) cut off all of your hair to a boys regular. YES, they cut the females hair. Up until the 83RD RTT, however rumor has it is Colonel Kerry Gilpin is changing that rule, WHICH IS RIDICULOUS. That tradition has been in the MSP academy since the start. Every female gets their hair cut, every female can grow it back out. If you do not go into this damn academy because you don't your hair cut?!? You don't deserve to be a trooper. There are hundreds of thousands of people in this world who don't have hair because of medical reasons, cancer/chemo, you name it. You don't want to have the opportunity to become a State Trooper, a dream job and have the potential to make six figures because you are vane? Then you don't deserve the job. And now, with the millennial/2018/safe space/snow flake era we are sadly in, the female colonel is pushing to have the females keep their hair. Now, let's be honest here .... having a boys regular and having to grow it out in those insanely awkward stages SUCKS. But you know what else would suck? Keeping your hair out of your face when you're getting your ass handed to you in the academy. Thirty second showers (yes we would count down from 30 to 1) with long hair??? I could barely wash my body in 30 seconds, you think I can throw some shampoo and deep conditioner in long locks and have the time to blow dry it? Less than 10 minutes from showering, you are changed up and if you have a winter class like we did, out on rear company street with a wet head. I'll take looking like a 14 year old boy on the show "To Catch a Predator" waiting for Chris Hanson to jump out of the bushes. We are all healthy as trainees. Ladies ... your hair GROWS BACK. In life, we all have to succumb to things we don't want to do in order to eventually have a gain from it. Some people go to college, I was going to get my hair chopped for my dream job. A week prior to Day One, I went out with a bunch of

friends and after a few shots of Patron, went to my friend's hair salon and had one of my other best friends Dan P cut my pony tail right off to be donated. This allowed me to donate the ponytail and have a solid week to weep softly to sleep as I got used to looking like Peter Pan.

#### Chapter 15: 23 Weeks, Hell At a SPA

Prior to going into week one, many people on the job would say "Don't quit." Don't quit? Do these people have poor opinions of me? I worked in dispatch and would have to be brought out of that god damn academy in a body bag rather than have to go back to the ill-willed, gossip central, miserable crowd of dispatch at GHQ with a boys regular haircut. I was getting thru this, no matter what. I was aware of the shit I was going to get from Danny being a Major in charge of Troop C – I knew everyone knew I was "the majors girlfriend" and despite the reality of Danny not getting me any breaks or making any calls, many assumed I would be getting the special treatment. Me, personally? I knew I was going to get smoked. The drill instructors will more likely than not put a bulls eye on me to get me to quit. Let me make something clear in case anyone is wondering .... the process of getting into the state police was the same as every other trainee who was accepted. I took the same civil service test as thousands of others, sat in the same room, same number two pencil, same questions. I got the score of 97. I passed all of the PT tests, the psychological exam, I didn't sit with my hand being held by anyone during the oral boards (which was a captain, lieutenant and sergeant from western Mass who I did not know). And as far as my background goes? I filled out the same paperwork as everyone else. Gave references as everyone else, had the same type of interview with background Trooper. Danny told me he never told anyone to put me thru the process and as far as anyone knowing about my shitty past? I didn't let anyone know. When the media frenzy happened the day of my suspension back in February 2018, many of my friends who I consider my best friends had no idea about my past. I wasn't proud of it, I never spoke of it and wanted it to be buried with nothing more to look forward to then the future. So if anyone knew and allowed me to pass through? I was not aware. I was aware though, that I had a rude awakening of how much torture my mind and body can endure and would endure.

#### December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013: Day One.

I heard previously about what the deal is with Day One from friends who already went thru the academy. You go into the gym with your seabag full of all your shirts, sweats, toiletry, everything and in a good ole pantsuit. You sign in, throw your bag into a pile in the gym after you change into your "greys" (grey sweats with your name stenciled in, which always is interesting to see how others did them and if the measurements were off) and march to the chow hall. Once sitting down, the Colonel comes in (at the time, Colonel Albin who I always had the utmost respect for until he tried getting his paycheck in the media with giving his two cents about me, thanks a lot, sir) and gives his speech. I sat there, looking around knowing whats next and decided to focus on some of the trainees in there who looked absolutely mortified just being there. Knowing I should keep my eyes directly on them for whats to come, the Colonel walked out of the room and it became eerily quiet. "Five, four, three, two..." I began to count in my head knowing we were standing by for the shit storm about to occur. Suddenly, just like a movie, every door in the chow hall smashed open with drill instructors, all with campaign covers, all screaming at the top of their lungs, some standing on the cafeteria tables, most focusing in on the trainees in the room who had zero poker face and looked absolutely horrified. In the wild, animals have the fight or flight natural reaction. Prey will be killed and predators will hunt for the weak or the injured over the ones who look strong and could fight. The DI to trainee scenario is exactly like a National Geographic – cheetahs to antelopes. And the cheetahs were already working their hunting skills out on the antelope. Not even out of the chow hall, not even a couple hours into Day one and we already had one quit. There is a large hook area in the chow hall, one where our trainee hats would be hung if we quit. Every day, during chow, a drill instructor would ask "Trainees! Whats the count on deck, trainees?" "Sir! The count on deck is 229 highly motivated, truly dedicated Massachusetts State Police Trainees, sir!" Drill Instructor: "NEGATIVE!" <places a sweat stained, trainee hat on the hook> "Trainees! What's the count on deck, trainees?" "Sir! The count on deck is,



228 ... “ and so on and so fourth. Sometimes this would go on for five hats, depending on the day. We began my RTT with 229 people, 19 girls. The craziest part of this was the female trainees who got their hair cut that afternoon THEN left later on in the day or the next day. Years of hair growth, gone and going home to seeing people you haven’t seen for them to give you the “oh! Wow, you eh, cut your hair?” How do you answer that? “Yea, I dropped out of the state police academy and all I have left is this shitty hair cut.”

We got slaughtered with PT in the gym with bag drills. Bag drills consisted of holding your bag over your head, out in front of you, ripping thru the bag to grab whatever they are barking at you to grab, throwing your belongings out, over and over and over for hours. I remember there was this kid in front of me who was a VERY large kid, there’s no way in hell he would survive and god only knows how the heck he got so fat when we had the PT pre-academy testing probably six months before, but this dude clearly was a stress eater of some sort. He was about 6’2 and in front of me doing the Mortal Combat “finish him” move, teetering back and fourth like a tree in the wind that’s about to topple over. My prayers at that moment weren’t over the PT to end, that was doable and I wasn’t having an issue. My prayers were that this large, nerdy kid in front of me fell forward if he hit the deck and not backward on top of me where I would definitely be injured. Big trees fall hard! The kid didn’t end up falling, however ended up having some sort of seizure from physical exhaustion later on in the evening, his sweat lined hat was posted up on the trainee wall of fame later on at evening chow.

Once PT bag drills were done, we went to our “holes.” Holes are our freezing cold rooms. Most of us would have a holemate and my first holemate was AWESOME. We hit it off quick and made a pact that we would stick it out with each other and to NOT QUIT. I knew I wasn’t going anywhere and she seemed pretty confident/laid back as well. The next am, during breakfast chow, while doing the “ready, SEATS!” drill where the DI would make you slam your food tray down (many times not much food would be left on the tray to eat), smash your chair out and sit as fast as you can until they yelled “UP” and you fly up on your feet again, pushing your chair in and grabbing your tray, looking forward into the space, not moving unless instructed too. Apparently the ready seats was and is always an issue due to people smashing the back of their chairs into others next to them and many knees suffered bruises or worst ailments because of it. Well, Merrana (I think that was her last name! If you are reading this, please get in touch!) apparently got a chair to the knee cap and it bruised bad. Later on that day when I went to my hole, dehydrated, exhausted and counting down the hours until reveille, I walked in to see the other cot completely sheet-less with her drawers empty. She was gone and I was bummed. I think if I remember correctly, we were down 5 out of the 19 females in the first two days, graduating with 10.

The two female drill instructors clearly had their minds set on getting me to quit. One of my classmates was married to a trooper – he coincidentally was classmates with 70 percent of the drill instructors that we had and I would be lying if I told you that chick didn’t have it easy. She was always wound up, stressed out and I could never understand why as the coddled kid. The two female DI’s were Pincince and Fowler. May I add that these two were the only two females who put in for the drill instructor openings, so let’s just say, the slim pickings equaled the two superstars (cue sarcasm) that we got to have. Pincince was an extremely insecure, obsessed with being skinny, “look at me, I was in crime scene and am a badass” trooper who worshiped having the ability to make others (trainees) feel like shit as she would walk back in forth on the female deck talking about how great she is. The irony of it all? I was told she was the overweight, medical muffin bag in her academy days, nicknamed “Princess.” And now? Now was her chance to get her look at me spotlight shine. Fowler was an overweight, miserable and super jealous female with the voice of a large man who possessed zero ability to be able to run with our class. She would drop out in the back, jump into the ambulance that followed us on our long runs and jump back out at the end to pretend like she finished with us, but trainees talked and we all knew she couldn’t make a run. Fowler possessed an incredible hatred for me and I was told from other DI’s post graduation that she had previously said her goal was to get me kicked out or to

quit. Now may I add, I never met either of these two characters previously. I know Fowler asked around about me and got good feedback which pissed her off even more. Week 1 made this all obvious. I was getting to/from left and right by these two and once "Gigs" two/froms that stayed on your "trainee record" became official, I was getting them for things such as sneaker laces not being left over right when no one else would even get looked at for something like that. During one of the runs, I felt something go wrong, badly in my left knee. The pain was excruciating and although I didn't drop out of a run, I wobbled into the shower after and began to cry. Everyone could see the pain in my face and knew something wasn't right. For the remainder of the week, I sucked it up, iced and ate Motrin 800 like it was candy (side note: if you take a Motrin 800 on an empty stomach in the am then PT for 23 weeks straight, you WILL destroy your stomach for the rest of your life. Not a day goes by that I don't take Lansoprazole once a day to deter heartburn). Friday came and we were finally allowed to go to our vehicles and leave. I would meet Danny in Sturbridge at a park and ride, leave my car there and drive home with him in his cruiser every Friday. When I got out with my hair cut shorter than it was cut the week before, emaciated and the look of defeat across my face, his mouth opened wide in shock. Apparently I looked like hell and he actually thought of concern that I wouldn't make it. My leg was throbbing and I could barely walk. I spent the entire first Saturday of my first "dirty rotten civilian weekend" as the DI's would say, in 3 different hospitals trying to get an MRI on my what I thought was good knee. Finally, 9pm at night at a place in Waltham, I was able to get one. Danny and I were waiting in the office for the cd copy that I would have to get to my sports medicine doctor (shot out to Dr Brian Buscone of Umass Memorial – best out there!). The nurse finally came out and apologized however we could not get a copy because the machine to copy them onto cd's wasn't working. That was that. I held in tears ... held them in until then. I immediately just opened the flood gates and began to loose it. And Danny felt awful. Thankfully we were able to get a copy the next day. I spent my first Sunday trying to cram in studying while Danny helped me roll my clothes. My knee was still awful but I had to make the appointment at some point during the week for Friday afternoon. I never knew how bad anxiety can be until my first Sunday night before week two of the academy. I wouldn't want that feeling wished on anyone.

## Week 2.

Negative 10 degrees and standing in formation on Front Company Street of the academy grounds with an 70lb sea bag would wake you up quicker than any cup of joe. Our class had already dropped down in count significantly, from I would say 229 to under 200 already, many of them being local cops who had the opportunity to go back to their town as a cop, even some kick ass military guys resigned because having to go thru another long academy after being in military ones prior too just wasn't worth it to them. ANY military veteran who has gone thru their own academy and goes through ours, you have my ultimate respect. I can't imagine doing that several times. I would say the same for the local academies but they aren't in comparison (sorry to all my local police friends ... love you but I also know what your academies entail). Halfway through the week I asked permission to go down to the liasons office to use the phone for my urgent appointment request with my doctor for my knee. Fowler summoned me into an empty room on the female deck. Ugh, here we go .. what could she want now? Fowler, made me look at her in the eyes and tried playing the nice card. She told me that I am already family being a dispatcher, and "don't fuck that knee up of yours, just defer medically to the next class." WOW. Really, wow. I would much rather take the reality of someones real feelings versus fake kindness. You want to be an asshole to me, try and make me quit, be REAL? Fine, I'll respect that. What I don't respect? Fake kindness. Fake, disingenuous people who will be kind to you then sling the knives in your back as you walk away. Fowler (notice I will not acknowledge either of these clowns as troopers, you'll find out why later) ended up loosing her shit on me when I came back and advised her "maam, I made the appointment for Friday, maam" by screaming "You're pissing me off, Genduso!" and storming away. Long story short? I bit the bullet for the week, made every run with not dropping out, even going by the gate "theres the gate, resignate!" as they made us yell. I laid in bed and something dawned on me. Remember how I said many people on the job told me "don't quit"? Well, I get it now. It all made sense. They say don't quit because that is all you think about when you're

getting massacred. You will lay in bed and think about how many weeks left, how many days and wonder, actually wonder if you can make it. I made it thru the days by meals and PT. I'd set my watch fifteen minutes before the trumpets went off and we were getting screamed to get out of our holes, take off my sweatsuit (it was freezing and I changed every night. F that), wrap my knees up and take my motrin 800. If I made it thru PT with my knees hating me, the rest of the day would go by quick. Make it to breakfast? Lunch and dinner left to get destroyed by the drill instructors. Make it to showers? Almost time to hit the rack. At the end of week two, come Friday, I was given permission to leave early to go to my doctors appointment. The MRI was read and thankfully, my IT band wasn't as bad as I thought. Dr. Busconi stuck the 18 gauge needle in, sucked out all of the fluid in my knee and filled it back up with cortisone. A day or two of rest and I would be patched up and good to go.

The weeks were slow and time felt like it was moving at a snails pace in that god forsaken hellhole. The other DI's were actually not bad for the most part, our senior drill, my first platoon leader and a few others are people who I will forever be thankful for. They gave me shit but when they did, I deserved it, not because of personal reasons as our female friends were doing. Fowler and Princess continued to gig me for anything and everything. I'll be the first to admit I did fuck up a lot, but I didn't deserve the ones out of pure hatred. One night it was snowing out and between 2000 and 2100 was our personal time. Personal time was basically the time to get to/from/gig letters done. This particular night, I had I think four to do that were supposed to be turned in in the am without ANY time to do them. Fowler knew and asked me how many to confirm. She then told me that I would need to go shovel the walkways and she would call me back in before 2100. She called me in alright ... at 2050. I had TEN minutes to try and do four letters to the academy on moving in formation, shoelaces, etc. In the am, prior to PT formation, Fowler told us to get our to/froms to hand in. I, did not have any. Could I have stayed up in the bathroom and do them all night? Sure, but she would of sure as shit known I did them when I wasn't supposed to. Fowler screamed GENDUSO! And beckoned me over to her, then asking me where my to/froms are with a smirk. I advised "maam, I did not finish them, maam" and she gave me another .... fucking ... gig. With the state police academy, you are allowed 24 gigs/demerits, at 25 you get kicked out of the academy. For every gig, you loose seniority due to it lowering your overall score. A couple of weeks in and I was already over ten gigs. I could see what the big picture was. If I was going to survive this craziness, I was going to be one of the junior people in the class, never getting seniority. And you know what? I was okay with that. Put me as the junior kid, I'll still be wearing the same uniform as you and work just as hard if not harder.

#### Chapter 16: This too, shall pass

If any of you ever go into the military or a police academy, my best advice is to remember, this too shall pass. The pain, the mental fuck fuck games and the repetition of bullshit will eventually be a memory. Holding up two sheets and a blanket for what felt like days, having your racks and rooms destroyed as "trainee hurricanes" as they called them, the sounding off with your vocal chords as loud as you possibly can, all goes away in time. The physical pain, the knots in my stomach waking up to reveille every am and praying to be lying in bed and the drill instructors to scream "ready .... SLEEP!" just became a long, slow countdown to the light at the end of the tunnel. May 9<sup>th</sup> felt like a decade away, weeks felt like months and weekends home felt like minutes. I had two very impressionable women from the state police I called and vented to every weekend: Marian McGovern, former Colonel of the MA State Police and Carol Mansi, a Trooper on the job who got massacred in her academy by another past insecure, super nasty female drill instructor in her RTT. Her best line to me on a weekly basis "don't give them rent free space in your head. Don't let them win." Marian always wanted to mention the on goings to her best friend and at the time Colonel of Standards and Training Sharon Costine, aka known on the job as the Ice Queen. I begged Marion not to say anything to her and she gave me her word she wouldn't. You see, Sharon Costine had a huge issue with my boyfriend due to her being friends with Danny's ex wife. Danny had some dark times in his past and Sharon's issues with him, trickled

onto me for simply guilty by association. I still to this day wonder if she ever gave a little incentive to Fowler to go hard on me, or Princess ... who knows. Anyways, I became good at writing To-Froms, other trainees began to wonder who the hell I was and why I was getting shit on consistently by the DI staff and my body felt like it was breaking down seeing I was 34 with bad knees. Fowler the fat bag of a DI continued to try her hardest to get me to quit and as the weeks went by, her aggressiveness got worse. One of my classmates was basically forced to resign. The names made for her were one thing, the dislike for her from the DI's? Ok, that's fine. The icing on the cake for this girl was being placed on a chair with the DI's making two trainees hold both of her arms so she wouldn't fall, playing an old video on her now husband's YouTube and trying to force her to redo the video while on the chair to the class. During Christmas, someone's parents sent them holiday cards. That certain Trainee was brought up to the head of the chow hall and was forced to read all the cards from his mother which had a lot of lovey, cute sayings and thoughts (poor kid, I felt awful!). Most fellow Trainees had no clue why the DI's hated me so much, however I was a target and I accepted that I would be the black cloud who no one really wanted to be known with. I kept telling myself that at least with the DI's focusing on me, I'm helping others not get the heat. The SPA has this old high school like game that was played, called "Top 3, Bottom 3." Each platoon would have to write who they thought was the best, second best and third best Trainee in the academy, explain why and then have to pick the worst, second worst and third, along with explanation. As if you didn't already think you were shit, getting placed on the Bottom 3 kicked you even more. I KNEW for a fact I would be on the bottom with the most gigs, so I encouraged people to put me on and even made sure to write myself in on my very own. Did I make the Bottom 3? Of course. I expected it and dealt with it, how could I not? I didn't have a choice. On the day of OC Spray training, well that was a doozie. So the drill was that you would get sprayed in the face by your trainee partner, three defensive tactic instructors would take the bags and begin hitting you, you would have to defend yourself followed by find the radio in the snow, call out your six (location) then go and handcuff another trainee. If you think this is an easy challenge, you are very wrong. I watched my female classmates go before me and was mortified. After their round was over, you would assist in bringing your fellow trainee to the decontamination area, where the medical troopers would take large bags of saline and pour them over your eyes while you're sitting in a chair. This, to some of my classmates was basically the equivalent to being waterboarded. Some of them began having panic attacks as if they were being tortured and drowning. After the decon, you would have to grab the arm of the basically blind trainee and guide them to the showers. I was one of three female trainees in my group and last to get sprayed. The first female (who I will keep unnamed but has NO business wearing that uniform as a cop) kept muttering "I can't see, I can't see" thru tears and panic. The next was so fucked up that I had to literally help her get undressed and guide her to the shower. Suddenly, I hear "Gendusio! It's so cold. It's so cold." I ran back over to find her with the water on, but on cold and panicking. "Jesus christ, these two girls are a disaster now, and I HAVE TO GO?" I knew Fowler was waiting for my turn, she was standing out there and made sure to be at this particular group which was mine. I went out there and got called. My trainee partner got both eyes perfectly across my face and the fight ensued, with my mind just thinking STAY STANDING. FIGHT. DO NOT FALL TO THE GROUND. Once the battle was over, I ran, got the radio and cuffed the trainee. After, I got the waterboarding without freaking out and went to the locker room, grabbed my clothes and went to the shower without assistance. Did it hurt? KILLED. Just think, poker face. I pretended like I was okay on the outside but holy hell, that was rough. Afterwards, one of my classmates pulled me aside saying he had to tell me something. He was the kid I made the arrest to after sprayed and stated he saw Fowler recording my whole spraying and chuckling the whole time. He also stated another classmate saw as well. Eventually the word got out and Fowler was reprimanded. The time came where we had to train for our boxing matches against one another and the big joke at the academy was that 'Trainee Gendusio should fight Trp. Fowler.' Senior Drill would ask me "Gendusio! Do you want to fight Trooper Fowler?" .. "SIR YES SIR" with a smirk on my face. God, I wish they had us fight. I had a whole lot of anger to release because of this woman. We would have DT week and a lot of boxing training which I enjoyed. Hitting the bags that other trainees were holding in the air, sparring and even doing kicks would put me into that world. I would

see Fowlers face in the bags and just release SO MUCH tension and anger. Times like those were times in the academy days.

So after a concussion, a scared cheek with a severely bruised cheekbone, two cortisone shots and one knee drainage along with a hand sprain at the end of phase three, graduation was coming near and it felt so surreal.

## Chapter 17 : A Dream Come True

Week 23 of the 81<sup>st</sup> RTT had finally come. This was it, this was my dream coming true. The day of graduation, and I mean this from the bottom of my heart, was THE greatest day in my entire life. Putting my Class A's on, being pinned by Colonel Albin (which made the news on NECN – I still have the video on my phone!) and raising my right hand to the at the time Governor, Deval Patrick (even though the anti law enforcement guy was almost an hour late having everyone who came to our graduation sitting and waiting, thanks Deval) to speak the oath, the two and a half hours of standing at position of attention or being nervous for our rifle drills, it all became the best moments of my life. I did it. Like Drake says ... started from the bottom now we here. I came from nothing, from abuse, sadness, lack of stability, AWFUL decisions and life paths I wish I could redo. I did it. Going from a dark road that seemed to be the route of disaster to an awakening to the path of having something meaningful as a career, to be able to have the ability to help people and get drugs actually OFF the streets now. To make my mother and friends finally proud of me, to finally be proud of myself and to finish a live in academy from hell was all so surreal. I was on a life high that I will never probably feel again. Someone in a higher power was giving me a second chance. "I promise," I thought in my head. "I promise I will do the right thing and be the best Trooper I can." I was hoping my grandparents somehow were watching and proud. I was glad I finally felt like I made my mother, although she told me maybe I should quit during the academy on the weekends when I was breaking down, finally be proud of me and got to go into work bragging about her daughter. My great Uncle Joe Genduso, the only family member who was also a cop (Worcester Police Detective for 30 years) was prouder than ever. Danny and I were good. My career as a Massachusetts State Trooper was beginning and life for the first time in 34 years felt more right to me than ever.

My graduation party came and went and I remember falling asleep that night in the hotel in Worcester with tears of joy in my eyes. I began Day 1 as a State Trooper out of the Andover barracks that following Monday, and reporting to Troop A Headquarters with the rest of my classmates who were meeting their new Lieutenants then driving to the barracks for the day. My new Lieutenant, (now retired) Lieutenant Steve Walsh, was an older gentlemen who was in fantastic shape and had the command presence that scared the shit out of me. He looked like he could be mean as hell and I was a smidge nervous that he may be a tough Lt for a boot. Oh, by the way ... new troopers for the first few years are called "boots." Back in the day, the boots would have to wash the FTO's (field training officers) cruisers, eat in separate rooms and not in the kitchen at the barracks with the senior guys and much more. Now a days, if you're a boot, you don't speak unless spoken too, don't look like you're relaxed and don't be confident or else you'll be categorized as a "salty fuck." If you're too good in training you'll be called cocky. If you're sociable, you're salty and need to be brought back to the ground. Anyways, Lt. Walsh ended up being an extremely amazing boss with the heart of gold. He was always looking to do the right thing for everyone and I ended up being so thankful to have him as a Lt, especially as the new boot who everyone knew had the Major of C Troop as their boyfriend. No one cared that we were together for over 5 years, people just wanted to point the finger at me like I didn't deserve to wear the French and Electric Blue. People speculated that I got the Andover barracks because of Danny. True? Negative. False. Danny was told by (now retired) Colonel Edward Amadaeo, that prior to graduation, they were going over the lists of who was going where. Already, there were three son's of MSP going local to where they lived – two of them were deputies kids, the other the previous colonel's kid also were in or next to the barracks they lived in and was being chosen during a meeting with Colonel Costine. My name came up for the next to be placed and Costine immediately

noted I can't go to C troop due to Danny being in charge so she opted for B troop (Western MA – about a good hour and 40 mins drive, mostly where the C Troop Worcester boots go) or D troop which is the Cape Cod. Colonel Amadaeo disagreed and stated due to the fact that I had 6 years of service already endowed to the job in dispatch, and the sons of colonels staying local, I should be given some sort of seniority to time with them and go to A1 (the Andover barracks). A1 was Amadaeo's bread and butter seeing he was the Lt of that barracks for years and years. Basically, it was always known that if you could survive A1 as a boot, you could eventually transfer to any other barracks with the ability to handle it with ease if you could handle Andover. This barracks had the most crashes, most calls over Aptl-1 radio, best arrests thanks to the mean ole town of Lawrence (where heroin flourishes on every street corner sadly enough) and just overall a good place to break in as a new boot. Costine contested it but seeing she wasn't in charge technically, had no choice than to take the orders given. So there I was, at the Andover barracks as a new boot and a whole lot to prove to people that I was capable of being the Trooper I knew I could be, not the one many assumed I will be. Obtaining the respect from my classmates as well as the barracks guys that were already stationed there wouldn't be easy, but it wasn't impossible.

I was the only female at SP Andover for the last several years, but being the only female didn't bother me. I signed up to work in a male orientated career, we as females know what we are signing up for when we take this job. My Field Training Officers consisted of three troopers who I thankfully got along with all quite well. The first one was a super nice, super easy to be around great guy who did things by the numbers and did his job well. He wasn't an over achiever and was locking guys up on the daily but was always out there writing tickets and responding to calls without issues or drama. My second FTO was someone who was forced to be an FTO, therefore was a bit cranky however with some humor and smiles, I got him to make the best of it and he also taught me well. My third and final FTO was a Trooper who I previously not only knew but adopted a German Shepherd to so we had a blast. At the final FTO, it's your third phase which means you make the calls of who to stop, who to arrest, how to respond to calls, etc. Basically they stay in your passenger seat and observe to make sure you are ready to go onto the big roads, solo. I will always remember during my third FTO (my friend and dog rescuer) and I were at the Andover barracks, at the desk, shooting the shit. One of the guys from A4/Medford barracks came in, began talking to him and I went to the ladies room. During my time away from the desk, this specific Trooper (who later on ended up suspended for hanging out and corroborating with mafia connections as well as having a BFF who owns three big Italian restaurants, one in the North End, one in Woburn ... need I say more?) began to give my FTO a ration of shit asking "who the hell does she think she is? She's a fucking boot and talking?" My coach explained that I know a LOT of people and worked in dispatch forever, that he knows me ... etc. This Italian mob wanna be cop insisted I was still "salty." Salty, huh? Salty ... because? Because I made friends on the job? Salty because I smiled? Because I was sociable and not a scared, miserable, wounded soul of a boot? Come on, dude. Give me a break. As of right now, as I type this on December 6, 2018, I am told ironically now that Dean Bennett of Public Safety has retired, this specific boob of a Trooper will be getting his job back. Well done, sir. I give you a solid couple of years before your ego and power complex get you in the glue again. Best of luck. <cue sarcasm>

Anyways, I digress and will get back to focusing on this timeline. The day came that I went to pick up my cruiser. This "sled" term for what MSP cats call our cars – well, back in the day anyways with the Ford Crown Victorias due to when you drive them in the snow, they aren't cars ... they are like being in a SLED going down a snow covered hill, all over the damn place. My cruiser was old. My cruiser had a regular light bar. I didn't give a shit. Danny and I detailed that damn thing to be spotless. It was I believe a 2010, high mileage, typical new boot cruiser, and I was happy with it. I bought rain guards, new LED spotlight bulb, anything to make the ol' sled nice as I could. Well, my ole cruiser 1404 decided to have a shit the bed electrical issue and made the A/C fail. I advised General Headquarters fleet section and the sergeant in control and command told me I need to go there at some point to grab a spare when I dump off this sled for repairs. The repairs were over the top and they said it would be a while. UGH! So, Danny did

this one and only one time favor for me. He called the person in charge and they said go check out what they got at GHQ, so one day Danny and I checked out what was there. So ... we did. And this gorgeous, older, unmarked cruiser with plate readers was there.

PLATE READERS. I was already trained in them from a dispatch class so technically I was already certified to use them. Most guys on the job would bitch about having LPR's (license plate readers) because there was a certain expectation from the job to produce numbers if you have them. Example: Take a cruiser into Lawrence, MA that has active LPR's. You cannot, CANNOT drive a half a mile down Route 28 in Lawrence without the damn things going off as "high alert" to at least 3 vehicles that are uninsured. Danny asked the Sergeant of fleet at the time if that car was available, he said it was. I spoke with the Capt of Traffic Programs who knew I was educated in LPR's and he said he would love for me to have them in A troop (where I worked) ... so it happened. Did Danny help me with Cruiser 842? Yea, a bit. Did he help a colonel's kid get a cool area code cruiser amongst other Troopers that he knew? Yea, he did. So, let's mark this moment. Mark that in my ten years on the Massachusetts State Police ... this was the one, the ONE time Danny made a phone call. The same call as he did for others, he did for me. Ladies and Gentlemen ... do not ever think differently. And I wish he never even made that call. Would it change where I am at today? Probably not. But did it give people ammo to give me shit? One hundred, thousand percent.

It doesn't matter how many stolen cars, motor vehicle pursuits, arrests, citations or summons I obtained. "Genduso has plate readers, she gets em easy."

Easy? Easy my ass. Easy would be shutting them off and not pursuing any potential alerts. Easy would be not turning them on while on a detail in the left lane and stopping any car that was of substance to do so with a high alert. Easy would be to just pretend like I'm some sort of bad ass and brag about them and never use them. Easy would not even wanting them from the get go, because they cause more work and paperwork. But you know what? I LOVED THEM. I used them every single second I was in that damn cruiser. Details? On. Regular shifts? On. Driving home from a shift? On. If there was a car that was a high alert and something worthy of pulling over ... I don't care what time or where I was, I wanted to make sure I didn't miss a damn thing. Cruiser 842 brought me a TON of great pursuits, arrests and paperwork that I didn't even mind doing. My goal was to keep my stats at the highest levels at SP Andover and work was enjoyable to me. A few Troopers would give me slight digs about the plate readers, however most didn't have the balls to say it to my face and I would either never hear of it, or hear from others and confront some of them about their shit talk. And I was also one of the first like 40 Troopers to get a laptop. Oh, the junior kid on the totem pole ... how dare she get a laptop, right? Negative. I was always good to the MIS (computer) folks at headquarters, hell their office was right next door to our dispatch center. One of them always told me that if when I graduate, his present to me would be one of the first batches of laptops. He stuck to his promise and I was extremely thankful. You see, most folks when brand new need radio time instead of running stuff on a laptop. You need to get used to requesting a 9 & 10 on a 2013 Honda Accord bearing MA registration Kilo, Victor 1 ... you get the drift. New kids, locals, everyone who has no attachment to MSP – the codes and the way we do things is hard to get used to when you are under the scrutiny of being the new kid that will be laughed at for fucking up over the air, trying to get all info thru the disgruntled dispatcher who has had to deal with how ever many RTT's and listen to the stuttering and hiccups, and the simple normalcy of getting used to the codes. I did not have any issue with the radio. I was on that damn thing for six years and was actually reprimanded by a former Major (story for a chapter ahead) for sounding "too calm" on the radio during a motor vehicle stop with a murderer. <cue eye roll> You can't make this shit up if you tried.

So my first of many adrenaline packed, crazy and new experiences began to happen. Right after break in, I will never forget my first pursuit, hell I even still have it on recording somewhere. I was going back to SP Andover during the day

shift for my lunch break and saw a shady looking older pickup truck swear gently over the marked lanes from the middle to the left lane. "Sweet." I thought. I ran his plate prior to stopping him, saw he had an active 14 (warrant) in the system for failure to appear for Class A (heroin) and figured, perfect! Easy arrest and easy location. The dude wasn't even at my exit yet, I could have him stopped just prior to, tow come and bring him back with me for lunchtime. I activated my lights and sirens and proceeded to attempt to pull him over from the left lane. A half a mile came, a mile came and went and I realized that "holy shit, this fucker may not be pulling over!" I got excited...the adrenaline began to come. My favorite drug of this world, adrenaline (oh and endorphins from a really good, well you know). The rush of adrenaline was coming, but I was still calm. "I got this" I thought. I dealt with countless Code 1's in the past in dispatch while sitting in the over sized dispatch chair. So what if this was actually, on the other side of the radio, right? This was it ... my dream of always wanting to be on that side and not in that big ass chair. The time was now and the time had come. A request for a Code 1 on the Massachusetts State Police radio airwaves was to advise that you needed emergency radio air time. This mean, any other Trooper on that specific station (this one in particular on this day was APTL-1) would not be able to utilize that particular station until the duty Lieutenant who was in command and control of the Code 1, disengaged the emergency code in its entirety. So, this dude wasn't stopping. It was almost two miles of my lights, sirens and cruiser crash bar in his ass. He saw me. He got on the phone suddenly as I thought I saw him hide something under his passenger seat. "Cruiser 842 to Station A" I said calmly as if I was calling in a plate. "Station is on, go ahead 842." HOLY CRAP. My former coworker in dispatch, Brian was answering up and not giving me shit by ignoring my radio traffic for a change as his way of busting balls. "Sir, requesting a Code 1, 495 southbound just passing Route 114 on MA registration ...."

.... "Recieved, 842. Station A to all cruisers, be advised .. code 1. Code one on APT-1" Then the LT answers. "Lt. (so and so, will leave out name) in command and control of the Code 1. Cruiser 842, please keep us updated on your six (location), weather, speed and traffic."

HOLY SHIT. This was finally happening. One of the best days of my best career and the first Code 1 was happening and I was damned if I was going to fuck this up in any way, shape or form. I had a lot to prove and Danny to make proud. The pursuit kept going ... and going ... and going. Eventually, I had so many cruisers behind me who left their details to jump in on the fun that the duty Lieutenant advised only three cruisers in the pursuit and the rest keep back. Someone else kept up with us and called out the sixes for me as I stayed behind the vehicle. The vehicle went from the left to middle to right to left to middle lanes, from 60 to 85 miles per hour. After about 12 miles and almost into another Troop, the radio stations were patched so everyone was ready for this vehicle to go to the next troop. HOLY SHIT, this was not a short pursuit. This was amazing! We carried on and someone eventually advised they had stop sticks (a strip of badass, tire shredding sticks that a trained Trooper would throw into the road just as the vehicle that was a threat was driving by, which would deflate one, two, possibly four depending on where the strips strike. The key to these bad Larry's was to make sure when you throw them out? 1) DO NOT ALLOW OTHER CRUISERS TO HIT THEM, ESPECIALLY THE PURSUING CRUISER and 2) DO NOT CAUSE A GOD DAMN CIVILIAN CRASH DUE TO OTHER CARS HITTING THEM. Now, you may ask yourself, how stressful is this? I don't know ... let's just ask a professional baseball pitcher the same questions. How stressful do you think it is for a pitcher, in a game at the bottom of the fucking ninth inning, bases load, ball count is 3-2 and he's about to try and pitch? YES, ITS THAT STRESSFUL. On the job, if you fuck up? You are the talk of the town. You may as well be on the local news network with your pants down to your ankles drunk and peeing on camera. We are our own worst enemies as cops. The shit talking, the negativity and the "guess who fucked up now" mentality supersedes any of the "Hey! Did you hear about the kick ass arrest this guy got or the pursuit they were in or the K9 apprehension that was made?" Negative. The quote "misery loves company" is as true as the sun sets every day.



ANYWAYS, I went off topic yet again. So, the strips hit not just one of his tires, but all four. Left lane hit, we as cruisers following were all well aware and swerved around and the pursuit was still good to go. This guy a few miles later ended up on all four RIMS with all of his tire debris smashing into my windshield. NOW, now this was a freaken pursuit. We almost were into C Troop. C Troop was the central mass Troop that my boyfriend, Danny was in charge of. He was listening the whole time and afterward, told me he was scared to death for me because it was my first. I continued behind this fella with no rims, going 60 when he was in the right lane, lost control, went down the embankment and smashed into a tree.

I pulled into the side of the highway that was nothing but rain soaked mud that I knew my cruiser was probably stuck. Zero fucks given – I had just been in lead of a 13 plus mile pursuit!!! I ran down the embankment and a couple of Troopers already made it down and had extracted this gentleman, who did not have a seatbelt on and just hit a tree, out of the car. Let's just say I saw an exchange of fists, gloves with plastic knuckles and suddenly everyone dust themselves off, look at me and say "you good, Trooper?" I looked around and in legit less than two minutes everyone who participated in the beat down was getting back into their cruisers, their anger issues fulfilled and headed back to their details, leaving me with this bloody, older, heroin addict.

GOOD? Good. You guys just beat the fuck out of MY arrest, want to walk away and now I'm supposed to deal with this fella? I looked at him. He was BANGED UP. He looks up at me, probably can tell from a million miles away I'm a newbie and says "I deserved it."

"I deserved it." You know who says that shit anymore? NO ONE. No one but old school old time, criminals who knew what it was like back in the day. You see, back in the day? If you ran from the police? You got a beating. You disrespected authority back in the day? I don't care if it was a cop, a teacher or your parents. YOU GOT A BEATING. I remember in first grade I sent a spit ball from a straw over across the desks, about 8 feet to my classmate and hit his ass square in the middle of the forehead. The class began to die laughing. Miss Weagle? (god rest her soul) ended up going over to me, grabbing me by the earlobe and dragging my scronny ass outside to the hall to rip me a new one. Did I tell Mom and Dad? Nope. Why? She did enough and wasn't going to tell them. Lesson learned, no more spit balls. That's the difference between the old days and the new ones. These fucking kids need unicorns, safe spaces and glitter. We had slaps in the ass so hard that they left welts, teachers grabbing us by our ears and arms and athletic sports where not every god damn person was a "winner" - your team either was the loser or the winner. Oh, we also back then didn't suck the tits of our parents financially until we were thirty years old in the basement. I'm sorry, I digress.

So, my old timer criminal and I went to the hospital. By the time we got there, I asked him the most important question. "Why did you decide to not stop?" His answer? "Ma'am, because I had needles in my car. I just shot up in Lawrence and left to go home. I saw your lights and thought I was a goner."

Me: "Ummm, sir. You know needles are LEGAL this day and age in the Commonwealth?" He just glared at me. His glare said it all .... he was telling me with his reaction? WTF. WHY DID I RUN. This dude literally called his wife or girlfriend or what ever the hell he called at the time to tell them he was going to jail for NEEDLES. NEEDLES! Oblivious to him, he had NO clue he had a warrant. The doctor came in and looked at his face saying, "umm, is this all from the crash?" He said, "yes doc, I wasn't belted and hit a tree" while looking at me and winking. JESUS, thank god he was old school. I had zero reasons for his injuries and he still regardless didn't care. Old school thinking: you fucked up, you reap what you sew. I hope this gentleman is a sober, cleaned up individual and is living life as I type this. Thank you for being the most respectful, understanding pursuit into arrest a new boot could ever have. Respect is always of you give what you get. He gave it, I made sure to give it back.

## Chapter 18: A1, Continued

So, my first pursuit was the talk of the town for a quick minute and I was on cloud nine. Not because it was being talked about, but because it was done by the numbers, with adequate radio traffic as I gave and the post arrest stuff was easy. I'm sure the haters out there had shit to dissect and bitch about, but I don't care. It was a damn good pursuit and an easy hospital portion. My confidence was boosted a bit and I felt like I was flying. Of course I would encounter people still running their mouths, and if/when I was notified of it, I would be the first person to call that Trooper directly or see them in person to do it. You see, anyone can talk shit about someone behind their back, ESPECIALLY this day and age with the internet and social media sites. People can talk there, however confrontation is and always will be less accepted by human nature. I'm not sure if being a confrontational person is a positive or a negative, but it is who I am and I can't change that. If speaking about an issue and throwing it on the table to be dissected, discussed and hopefully worked out then so be it. But many of these men on the job always had the glory holes talk shit, yet upon confrontation? My how the wind would change direction. Point of the matter is, be real. If you don't like someone? You don't have to like them! But please, do not kiss their ass when you see them. Be real. There was this one older bag at A1. He was a day shifter, had the most annoying way of saying "received" on the radio .... his was "ceeved." This gentleman was the epitome of the miserable, shit talking, fuck everyone and fuck the job, salty Trooper. But you know what? I'll give him credit where credit is do. This dude talked a lot of shit, but he never kissed my ass. We knew we did not like each other and were respectful as we had to be while at work. I respected him more than the weak minded, can't stand females on the job fucktards who had an issue with me for reasons that he couldn't explain, solely because of who I dated. So A1 was a lot of learning, lessons and evolving. I absolutely loved my lieutenant – he was that guy who I legitimately felt comfortable to be around, who had my back and never raised his voice if he was pissed. My shift was the 2300-0700 (11-7) overnights with the rest of my classmates, and we had a blast. Desk nights were filled with motor vehicle OUI crashes, pursuits, K9 requests for parties fleeing the scene in Lawrence, you name it. I'll never forget my first winter at SP Andover, especially mid February when I had the first and last time I ever questioned my career choice. It was a mid shift, I believe on a Monday night and we were in the middle of a bad New England winter storm. The roads were awful due to the snow however being around 12 o'clock at night, no one was on the road really either. I was patrolling the portion of route 495 and Route 3 while my coworker had the northern part of route 495 and route 213 when a Code 22 (911 call) came in of a pedestrian in the vicinity of the double decker bridge in Lawrence. My coworker advised he would go south bound as I approached northbound to search for the random person walking in the middle of the night, during an extremely bad snowstorm. Of course the first thing I thought was "please don't be a Q5 (suicidal). Please." I begin to approach the double decker when I observe a large male on the phone and looking over the bridge on the right hand (northbound) side.

Fuck.

I advise SP Andover that I will be code 4 on scene with a possible A5 male who is looking over the bridge down at the river. All cruisers begin to head that way. As I get out of my car clearly not prepared without my jacket on. As I began to approach him, he put the phone in his jacket and began backing up, saying if I come any closer than the 5 or so yards away that I was, he would jump. Now, I've handled hundreds upon hundreds of Q5 parties on the phone and we were all trained as dispatchers thru course completions of what to say. What to say on the phone versus someone who is clearly ready to die in front of you is a lot harder in this case. SP Andover was advised to please switch channels for any radio traffic headed that way and almost immediately, the 495 on both sides was shut down. I advised all cruisers that he also made it known to me that if anyone else comes near us, he will jump. Suddenly, in the midst of a snowstorm, with no cars, no radio traffic and no one near me, I felt extreme quietness. The male was in his early 20s, 6'3ish, probably around 275 pounds with a name I will not say, told me he had been drinking and is

bipolar. His mood went from high to low quite quickly and I found out with more questions to him that he hadn't taken his meds in a while, got in a big fight with his mom and left to go kill himself. I knew hostage negotiations was in route, I was calm, as friendly and understanding as I could be and inside shaking like a leaf. A poker face in any situation in life can always come in handy, ESPECIALLY in times like this. I told this male that I was not here to hurt him, that I wanted to help and to please look at me as a person and not as a uniform. I told him I would go secure my weapon and escort him into my car to any hospital he was willing to go to. We began to make progress, I inched slowly closer to him and wondered what the fuck I was going to do if he jumps. I didn't have a taser at that time in my career, I thought about OC spray and if I could tackle him and handcuff him while he is subdued with it in his eyes, I thought about every "what if" possible while he kept talking about his life. He stated he didn't want to go back to particular hospitals, would maybe go with me to another one, when I began to relax and thought "wow, I think I can do this. I think this big guy will end up coming with me without an incident!"

When you're in a high stress situation, seconds become minutes. Minutes become hours. Suddenly, in a matter of seconds, it all changed.

All of a sudden I see a local cruiser driving up south in the northbound lane to us. They parked about 50 yards away when I see two Lawrence Police officers get out saying "Hi, we are EMT's, we are here to help."

EMTS? EMTs. Look, this kid was bipolar. He was drunk. He was NOT STUPID. He suddenly turned to me with a look of anger, yelling that I lied to him and began to attempt to climb over the side.

No, no, no, no. Please no. I ran as fast as I could to him, Grabbing the back of his jacket when he jumped. My coworker, who crept up behind my cruiser by then (which I had no idea of) said he saw my legs go in the air and thought I wasn't going to let go.

I let go. I let go and began screaming at the top of my lungs as I watched him fall into the ice covered river and go under. I couldn't stop screaming. There are not many times in my career that I lost my shit and turned unprofessional. This was one of those times that I did. I turned and looked at the two officers and began screaming. "What the fuck did you guys do? I had him! He was going to come with me and now he's dead because you didn't listen to me! I told you to not come up here and now he's dead." I didn't realize it, but by then I was crying. My coworker grabbed me and hugged me hard. I realized I was in uniform and had to reel it in and reel it in quick. I took a breath, shaking and got a hold of myself. The patrol supervisor sergeant came over and told me I could go home. The airwing was called, the dive team as well as all other active patrols to begin looking down the riverbanks. All I wanted to do was go home and drink the 4 pack of Dogfish IPA that I knew I had in my fridge. I knew Danny was listening to the radio at home – he listened every night I worked because he was worried sick. I was advised by the duty Lieutenant I had to report to SP Andover first to talk to one of the Troopers from the stress unit, which was the absolute LAST thing I wanted to do regardless of their intentions being nothing but good. I went to Andover and put yet again my poker face on. I spoke with the stress unit Trooper who wanted me to talk about my feelings, I was extremely emotionless and just asked if I respectfully just go home. Once the meeting was over, I began to drive my cruiser home and let it all out. I called my mom, it was about 3:30 in the morning now so I knew she was getting ready for work. She answered and I could barely talk through the tears.

"Mom, I couldn't save him. I tried to save him and I failed. I failed."

As I type this, I'm holding back tears. This will be one of the darkest moments for me I endured on this job. I took a few days off and actually questioned myself. "Is this what I am going to do all the time?" "Am I good enough to be a

good Trooper?" I failed this kid. I promised him it would be just us, I promised him I would help and now his body was in the Merrimack River, unfounded. March came and went and his body was still not found. My heart broke for the family looking for closure and his face haunted my dreams. It took me several times to be able to drive over that bridge on patrol without having extreme anxiety. The month of April came when I received an email sent out by the investigating detection from Essex "CPAC" (msp detectives – the old school name). The email was of a picture of a shirt on a deceased male who was confirmed to be unidentified. I saw the shirt and my mouth dropped open. It was HIM, I recalled the look of that shirt instantly. I called the detective, who I was friends with and without even saying hi, I just blurted "that's him! That's him, Mike." He told me they had just found out thru dental records. His body was found at the base of the Merrimack, right at the mouth of the ocean in Newburyport, washed ashore on someones backyard. He stated the body was so well preserved that they thought it was a new corpse (as in one or two days) and that it looked like an older gentlemen. This mans body must have been in an ice capsule, away from any type of animals to pick at and slowly drifted the miles and miles down the river to wash ashore on this backyard. I was finally a little more at peace. I knew the family could finally say their goodbyes which meant a lot to me. It turned out he had tried to attempt suicide several times prior to that winter night in February. I can only pray and hope to God he has found his peace. I will never forgive myself for not successfully saving his life that night and will never, ever forget.

My days at Andover went back to normal after a bit. I hated if/when anyone brought up the jumper. What do you even say to that? I went back to working mids, eves, days, well every shift. Being the junior gal meant I would get bounced around the schedule like a ping pong ball. And that was fine by me. Days shift would have random pursuits and large quantity trafficking weight going through Lawrence, eves would have OUI drug crashes, domestics in cars, and although we would get shit at SP Andover for arresting anyone being a desk and two (meaning two Troopers on the road and one in the barracks), you could write a book of citations in a matter of hours during pm traffic. People will do whatever possible to cut corners to deter from back ups like drive in the break down lane, tailgate, and road rage is now a daily thing for basically 3 out of 5 people (well, us Massholes here In MA are notorious for it anyway) and mids were when the real shit hit the fan. Any of you out there have the mom or dad who said "nothing good happens after midnight?" .... They were right. And as a new Trooper who has aspirations to get into a specific unit someday? You would want to be as proactive as possible. Pursuits, I have to say were by far the best when it came to adrenaline rushes, however in the good ole Commonwealth, State Troopers are now not allowed to pursue a vehicle off the highway unless it's an extreme case (Amber alert, murder, things to that nature). Motorcycles are NEVER to be pursued either, in the policy and procedures of the MA State Police. You want to get away from a Trooper? Ride a bike or take an exit. I get that it's dangerous with pursuits, but you need to also know that person in that vehicle, who is high on heroin for example and all over the road, that person could end up killing someones family member in or out of a pursuit. If we were chasing a vehicle, if you are running from the police, you very well have some fucked up things going on and are not running just for fun. Safety is an issue with anything, I get it but all police should be allowed to pursue vehicles on and off the highway. Cameras installed on cruisers should be a necessity to allow the duty lieutenant to be able to also view the pursuit in order to determine what is safe and what needs to be called off, in my opinion.

Lt. Walsh announced his (second) retirement. The first time he had his retirement party, signed out on paper and before the ink was even dry, he realized he missed the job too much and came back. And I now get it. You develop a type of PTSD when you become a Civilian again. Lt. Walsh left, and in comes the former Sgt – now – made Lieutenant Bibeau. Bibeau was a very, very quirky man. He always gave off that vibe that he had an issue with me, regardless of how nice I attempted to be to him, he was very awkward to me. Lt. Bibeau came in and turned the whole barracks around (aka made everyone feel uptight). The third deck of the barracks was all male showers and locker rooms until I came there. Lt. Walsh had given me the left portion of the upstairs for a locker/changing room as well as a

shower/toilet. Lt. Bibeau came in and came in hot. He took over the female locker room side, giving me a downstairs bathroom instead. I kept my mouth shut, moved all my stuff out as he began to put ALL his uniforms up there and never worked out in that barracks again. Another example? We used to have our monthly stats posted downstairs in the hall. This would give props to the guys who worked their asses off in arrests, summons, citations and timeliness without being on the shit list of reports overdue. It would also call out the biggest bags of the barracks who had minimal to zero citations, summons or arrests and had multiple crash reports that were over a month overdue. My goal every month was to be in at least the top three for the arrests, citations and summons. Citations, PS also included warnings and I gave a LOT of warnings. People talk themselves into tickets. Honestly? If you're speeding, if you were tailgating, ran a red light, whatever typical infraction you can make? Just fall on the sword. Be honest! Say, "sir/ma'am, I apologize. I was speeding and I should not have and understand why you have pulled me over." Most of us in the law enforcement world respect a person who just admits they were wrong and in turn, will cut you a break. Take the hit and move on! The excuses? Man, people can make some stupid shit up. Using the obligatory "I have to poop" excuse when speeding and passing three exits showing fast food restaurants and gas stations to stop at while I'm following you, doesn't cut it.

MY BIGGEST PET PEEVE EXCUSE? The one that would guarantee you a ticket? "Why did you stop me? I was just following traffic."

Following traffic. Following traffic? My response would always be "Well, sir/ma'am, if the car in front of you was going over a bridge and decided to bang a right and drive off the bridge, would you "follow traffic"? If everyone decided to start smoking meth in your neighborhood, would you say pass the pipe? Don't, just don't. Take the hit and move on, folks. The biggest question I get asked is if anyone ever gave me more shit or disrespected me because I was a female cop. I can say honestly that ninety seven percent of the people I pulled over, I never had issues with. I think twice I got the "I'm not talking to a female cop" as I was taking them into custody for arrest-able infractions, the other times were for motor vehicle stops. I believe command presence is something any officer needs to have, ESPECIALLY as a female. I apologize in advance if I am about to offend anyone out there, but I believe everything on the policy and procedure that is with the MA State Police. The rules were hair had to be tied up, secured and not touching your shirt collar. No nail polish (although I will admit I rocked nude tones once in a while) no earrings, no jewelry and natural make up. I've seen local female officers who have had bright red, long nails, red lipstick, big ole hoop earrings in a high ponytail. I'm sorry, I am going to take you differently as a Civilian being pulled over with hair and makeup like you're going out to the fucking club versus a clean cut, hair secured into a low bun, not dolled up police officer. And side note ladies, doesn't having your hair in a pony tail scare the shit out of you? Don't you ever wonder if someone will grab the damn thing and whip you to the ground like a ragdoll? If you don't show intimidating confidence as a police officer when necessary, you may risk your life. I'm not saying a well pressed, boots shined up to a T, cover straight and placed right over your eyes, straight posture and monotone voice will deter from a bullet being shot at you, I'm saying that criminals aren't stupid. Just as an aggressive dog that can sense the fear in a person who is scared of dogs, criminals can read cops. They know when someone is intimidated or trying to subdue their fear of being alone having a vehicle pulled over on the side of the road at 0300 hours. Your command presence says a LOT to them. If I had to arrest someone and no one was around, I played the lonely female cop route. I would ask them to step out of their car for a second so we could talk, bring them to the back of their car, have them turn around and say "for your safety and mine, I'm just going to put my handcuffs on you so I can search you safely, is that ok?" Once the cuffs were on, I would then advise them they're under arrest. Worked every time and not once did I hear anyone contest this trick. During the overnights at Andover, I would try to keep my jacket off and just have my winter uniform on during stops. Don't get me wrong, I would have layers of thermals underneath, however if I was stopping a car on a night that my backup could be 15 miles away on the other side of their patrol area, having no jacket on when its five degrees out and walking up to a car that could be filled with Lawrence gang

kids made them glare at me like I was completely fucking insane. Then there was my pure stubbornness for never asking for backup unless I REALLY felt it was necessary.

I'll never forget pulling two males over on Route 495 Chelmsford for 85mph, unsafe lane changing and driving in the breakdown lane. I pulled them over, approached the drivers side door (which I don't do often, usually passenger approach but it was daylight and I felt this one was going to be interesting) and the male driver glares at me, throws his hands in the air and asked why I stopped him. I glared back, paused long enough to make it awkward and asked "you really have no idea, huh?" He began to go off again as the male passenger began to tell him to shut up and stop. This man didn't stop and I just loudly interrupted him with saying "license and registration." He unwillingly gave it to me and I wrote him up for a doozie of a ticket. As I walked back, I went to hand the ticket to him, advised he has twenty days to pay or appeal while reaching out to him to take his ticket, license and reg. This dude decided to not take his stuff from my hand so I threw it into his lap and began to walk back to my cruiser when suddenly I hear this LOUD screech of tires and he takes off.

You got to be fucking kidding me.

I tried to calmly walk back to my cruiser and with lights still activated, I sped up, got behind him, threw my sirens on and pulled him over again. Times like these I'll give a big shout out to the drill instructors. Thanks to you, I was able to keep my temper in check. I was shaking I was so pissed, placed the cruiser in park, cover back on and walked up to the car to hear this dude bitching again. I asked for his license and registration again, not saying anything else until I had to raise my voice for it the second time, walked back to my cruiser, giggered him for unsafe tires, walked back, handed him the ticket and walked away. Those tickets were never appealed and my patience was certainly tested for sure.

ANYWAYS, I just trailed off a minute so let me get back to Lt. Bibeau. One day, I noticed the stats were no longer downstairs at the barracks and had been now posted upstairs next to his office door. Another Lt, who I was friends with and will not name, ended up telling me they spoke to Bibeau about this. Bibeau's response was "Gendusos stats were lowering the morale of the other guys so they will be upstairs from here on out."

Lowering the moral? HUH? How about go out on the road, do your job and work? Why is that my fault? So a female is kicking your ass in stats? Get off your ass and go do your job. So many guys on this job do nothing but complain and bitch. Fuck this Trooper, fuck that Sergeant, fuck the barracks, blah blah blah. Hey assholes, you know what? YOU HAVE ONE OF THE GREATEST JOBS IN THIS WORLD. You are all making over six figures. You sit your ass in a cruiser for sometimes 4 ½ hours minimal to get paid 400 dollars for a full 8 hours. You can drive where you want in your patrol area, eat lunch, work out for an hour while getting paid. All you have to really do is respond to calls when you are asked to, which is the bare minimal! You guys have it good and yet so many complain. I don't get it, I really don't.

Bibeau and I had other incidents as well. He refused to speak to me alone at first and would make another male Trooper be in the room if he had to talk to me. You can't make this shit up, folks. He HAD to have another Trooper around? I never screamed sexual harassment allegations. I never had issues being the only female and never felt weird talking to a coworker or higher ranking officer alone. Once he beckoned a Trooper into the kitchen who happened to also be my former drill instructor to simply berate me and give me a ration of shit which in turn embarrassed the hell out of me. I was mortified. Another time, his office door was open upstairs so I walked up, saw him at his desk, smiled and said "good morning, Lieutenant." with a smile before asking him a question about paperwork. Normal, right? Nope. Not to him. I suddenly was dealing with an extremely pissed off individual, telling

me that I need to knock three times at the hatch of his door and request permission to speak with him in his office. Is this dude serious? When did A1 turn into the academy? I kept my mouth shut, apologized and never went upstairs to his office again after. My other memorable incident with Lt. Quirky was when he sat me down and had a talk about me pulling over vehicles at 0330 hours and how I should be in the barracks like the rest of the Troopers. This convo was being brought up because I had a pursuit the night before and no one in the area for a bit to assist, which wasn't a big deal at all. Bibeau told me I shouldn't be out there by myself. Out by myself? We are ALWAYS out there by ourselves. Most days at A1 were a desk and two and your backup may be 10 minutes away going over a 100mph to get to you for help. If necessary, local police in the city or town you're in can assist. I yes sir'd him to death during the convo and made sure to be in that barracks as little as possible from there on out. If he wanted to write me up for being on the road and working as much as I can to try and get two arrests a night for the goal of trying to make it into my dream job in the K-9 unit? Go ahead.

One night during an overnight shift, I was asked to go to SP A6 for a guest patrol due to lack of bodies at the SP Danvers barracks. I recall that night as being extremely foggy, perhaps one of the worst I have ever seen. I was on Route 1 southbound at the Peabody/Saugus area when I observed a sports car blowing past me in the left lane, estimated to be going 115 miles per hour or more. I called into Station A-1 for an immediate Code 1 for a motor vehicle pursuit. I tried to speed up and after 115 miles per hour, I called it off before the duty Lieutenant could. The fog was so dense. Although it was almost 0300 in the morning, the extreme dangerous that I could put others in as well as myself was too much, even though I wanted nothing more than to catch this moron. I advised Station A that I would continue to march southbound to make sure that this vehicle didn't crash due to the roads being so bad. No cars were found and I presumed regular patrol, making the flip to head back northbound on Route 1 Saugus. Just before the Kowloon restaurant, I observed a four door sedan in the breakdown lane with its hazards on. Now, one of my habits was to run the plate of the vehicle I am pulling over prior to exiting my cruiser. On the MA State Police, at least up until as I write this anyway, we would never radio that we were stopping a car. You as a Trooper will run the plate (if you have a laptop) yourself and make the stop without anyone knowing you are on a stop or where you were. Just recently, the department began to utilize GPS, which I think is a HUGE step for safety reasons, although having Big Brother watch you constantly is a tough pill to swallow at first I'm sure for anyone. But prior to that and when I still had the job, if I was to get shot and killed roadside from stopping a car in a desolate area, then no one will know until my body is found. You have an emergency button both on your radio in the cruiser and on your portable, however if you get into a position where you are not able to key the mic and give your location, you're on your own.

After running this car I noticed two red flags: 1.) The owner was from Charlestown aka Bostons capital of bank robbers and thieves and 2) The vehicle was queried I believe 37 times in the last four hours by local police departments and a few of our guys. Somethings up and I radioed to Station A immediately my location, the vehicle plate, reason for stopping and to please advise why it has been queried so much as I exited the vehicle to approach. No response from Station A and the female dispatcher usually pipes up, however there was radio silence so I attempted to contact the A6 Trooper, who was my classmate on the desk. I gave the info again and asked him to look into why this plate had been queried so many times. Many would request back up, I did not. Like I said before, I RARELY called for backup. Stupid you ask? Sure. But I didn't care. I guess one of the reasons I was a decent cop is because I have zero fear of dying, whether it be getting hit by a car on a detail, roadside on a stop, etc. I don't have family, don't have kids and don't have any reason to fear of being killed for doing what I loved. I walked up to the drivers side and while waiting for any information to be received by dispatch, just began to try and have a conversation. The operator was a white male in his forties and appeared nervous to see me stop to see if he needs help. Remember how I explained before that command presence is key? Reading people is just as important. Using command presence on someone who looks like they could be dangerous could be harmful or hurtful and being a

female can always help with this situation. You see, when you see a nervous person and you're alone roadside? Sometimes playing the blonde, clueless female cop can help. I decided dumb blonde cop role it is and began to be super laid back with tons of smiles. I asked the operator if he was okay and stopped because of his hazard lights. He immediately seemed to relax a little and stated he ran out of gas and his friend is coming with some. I asked how far away his friend is when he stated he's coming from Lynn and should be there soon. I took the license and reg and went back to my cruiser hoping that someone on the radio would know what's going on. My classmate, A6 piped up on the radio saying he was still trying to get info but so far no luck. The dispatcher was still MIA so I decided to try and kill some more time with conversation with this fella. I went back and asked him where he was going. The man looked nervous and said "uh, my mothers." He stated his mother lives in Salem, however I asked him why he was going to visit his mom at three o'clock in the morning. His response was stagnant yet again "well, we just had a death in the family."

"Ok sir, but is it normal for you to go visit her in the middle of the night?" The operator stated she works third shift and he couldn't sleep so he was going to go have coffee with her. Although I knew he was full of shit, I had no concrete probable cause to rip him out of the car and search the vehicle and asking could be not the best idea. AHQ never got back to me and my classmate didn't have a clue what to do, so I told the operator I would be back to check on him in a little while to make sure he was okay and left.

Approximately forty minutes later, Station A, the female dispatcher, gave out a "BOLO" (meaning be on the lookout of" a particular four door sedan, MA registration, wanted in question for a double homicide for the possible firearm in the vehicle. That vehicle registration? You guessed it, it was THAT CAR. She didn't even put two and two together and I was told she was in the bathroom so never even heard my previous radio transmissions. Saying I was pissed off was an understatement. I gave the info of his mother potentially living in Salem and all information I obtained. An at the time K-9 Trooper began helping me look for the car who was already in the area because he was enroute when he first heard my call. I called Danny and woke him up, infuriated.

"Danny, I could of just had a gun arrest!" and explained what had happened. He immediately responds, "Leigha! Are you fucking kidding me? You could have gotten killed!" I didn't think of that, not once until he mentioned it.... I was too pissed off that I could have had a kick ass arrest of a murderer and a gun from a double homicide taken off the streets.

Danny called the at the time Lieutenant Colonel enraged that this BOLO wasn't given out earlier. Turns out the detective unit had known about it and did not disseminate the information when the locals were. Long story short, the guy ended up getting found back in Charlestown, was arrested and the girlfriend confessed that he did have the gun on him which he was bringing to get rid of to his buddy in Lynn. A small invest began for the "CYA" factor and I even had to have verbal counseling with the at the time Major of A Troop. The major actually had the nerve to tell me that I sound "too calm" on the radio. TOO CALM? Gee, sir ... never knew that there was such a thing? If a new kid gets into a pursuit and has an inkling of fear in his voice, the pursuit is terminated. We had Troopers on the job who would be at a crash scene and sound like they were at the stop of their lives, and yet here I am getting counseled for being too calm and not putting more investigation into the stop. Thanks, sir. You guys covered your ass on paper, nicely done.

## Chapter 19: Dreams Can Come True

So, the first posting of available K-9 spots for K-9 east were posted. I panicked. Did I do enough? Did I mess up too much? Now, when I say mess up, I don't mean I was a fuck up. I mean I literally, fucked up. Let me explain ...



The first posting that I was allowed to actually place my resume into, came out. I was friends with the Sergeant of the K-9 East team. He assessed multiple rescues of mine, accepted one and knew my passion and work behind dogs superseded many. Sergeant Patrick Silva was the epitome of a squared away, marine K-9. He was fair, he had a heart and he put his heart and frigin soul into the job. I was friends with him, but when I applied for K-9 the first time? I didn't say a WORD to him. I didn't want him to know, I wanted to do this on my own, by my own without anyone assuming (well for fuck sake, they assumed all day long) that I didn't do this on my own. Being the girlfriend of the now Major of H troop (aka Boston) did not help me, at all. The day for the final submissions of K-9 applications came, and I had planned to drop off my cover letter and resume, with full confidence to DHQ (Cape Code State Police Headquarters). My goal was to go assess a rescue shepherd in the Seekonk/Rhode Island border area then go drop my resume off after. Kill two birds with one stone and make everything easy as possible, right? Yea ... not so much. Apparently the black cloud that loves to linger along side me decided to make a super extravagant special appearance on this particular day. Danny had his unmarked Tahoe cruiser and threw out the idea of taking his cruiser seeing A) I was going to assess a dog for K-9 and B) we were enroute to DHQ to drop off paperwork for the job so the cruiser being taken was understandable. We headed out to our little day trip and I'll never forget what transpired ...

So we left for our voyage to the south shore. As we began to travel southbound, we heard a pursuit initiate on air in C Troop. It was by a local department, which got onto the highway, which lets say had total probable cause to continue to march, however was disengaged several times by our lieutenants, however the cowboys of this local PD kept going ... and going ..... and going. Next thing you know, these central mass cops were approaching Route 3, Chelmsford. Now, personally, I think if another law enforcement officer is given the permission to continue to pursue a vehicle, we sure as shit should be their back up. They continued on, into SP Andovers area. Now, the trooper who took command in control? His name is Trooper Joseph Flynn. Tpr. Flynn knew the area and knew it well. He gave out the sixes (locations) better than anyone else could. The pursuit continued into New Hampshire, with the local central Mass cowboys still attempting to follow (PS shout out to that Chief at the time!). It continued over the border with the permission of the A troop Duty Lieutenant who was in command in control. This scumbag, who they were chasing, literally drove onto sidewalks, threatened the lives of civilians, and did NOT care who he could hurt in his escape. The pursuit continued into further portions of New Hampshire and Trooper Flynn continued to kick ass with his updated locations. Suddenly, the vehicle they were pursuing lost control and crashed. In a matter of seconds, this pursuit into arrest apprehension was all on film. On film, because the news reporting helicopters, were directly over them, sending live feed as it occurred. I was watching online when my stomach flipped. When the bad guys car crashed, the dude tried to run. Imagine 5 Troopers, who were pursuing the vehicle for miles upon miles, almost hitting cars, pedestrians on the sidewalk, then finally seeing this asshole attempt to run. Imagine, as a person, trying to apprehend this guy. Knuckles involved? Ummm, let's think about this. WHY WOULDN'T THERE BE? Remember mentioning back in the day? How if anyone who ran from the cops, got a beating? That rule needs to be back into place. I apologize to the Liberal unicorns of the world. I guess I am old school, sue me. You want to run from the cops? You better stand by. Sorry.

So the beating ensued and on social media, live stream. I figured, fuck it, it wouldn't hurt, but if I can get Joe to answer his phone to let him know the haymakers they just threw on the suspect were on camera, it may get him ready for the shitstorm that was about to occur. I called and couldn't believe he answered. "Hello?" "Ummmm... Joe, listen. The last portion of your apprehension to the suspect, is all on camera. Look up."

"Fuck."

Me: "listen, I will call the (sergeant of SPAM at the time who I think is such a complete scumbag there's no way I will even remotely give his shitbag ass props in this book) and let him know. "Okay." and the call was disconnected. I

called that specific Sgt and you know what? He didn't even believe me until I sent him the footage. Footage sent, an "oh fuck" response was placed and Trooper Flynn had union coverage there almost immediately. Long story/short of Trooper Flynn so I don't have to repeat his nonchalant name again? He was covered by our union. He was out for over a year and he had, as I still do, demons to fight during his battle. During his battle, mind you, I was there for him. Why, you may ask? Because. Because, I knew he was a good kid. I knew he got caught up in the moment of the apprehension of that shitbag. I knew, seeing the footage, everyone wanted to try and take hit on this (white) dude and he simply joined in, as a male being a male. During his suspension, I made sure to check in with him. I made sure to let him talk to Danny, as a Major on the State Police, to calm his nerves and support him. And a year plus later when Trooper Flynn was cleared? I was there for his "welcome back" party in Devins. I tried to get as many people the invite to go.....yet the party consisted of about 12 people. When my shit went down? Do you think I heard from or ever do hear from Trooper Joseph Flynn?

.... Negative.

I'll make this a quick example until later chapters, but lets just say? You learn. You learn a lot about people when they are in need of help and when you are.

So, after that shitshow, I made it to the residence of the Shepherd I was going to go evaluate prior to dropping my resume off. Now, let me explain first. I was contacted, by a rescue, of this one year old Shepherd that this Portuguese female bought as a pup and could no longer deal with. She was hard to understand when I spoke with her on the phone, however I made it VERY clear to have the dog secured if he was going to be an issue upon arrival. We arrived at the house, after I advised this woman we were five minutes away, to a German Shepherd a a Golden Retriever outside, barking at Danny's car pulling in.

The Shepherds back hair was up in a physical stance of "who the fuck are you" while barking. I told Danny to stay in the car, grabbed my rotisserie chicken pieces and stepped out. The Shepherd, as much of an asshole as he was portraying, sat when I told him to, I fed him a bit and we made pals. The owner came outside and we began talking. As the conversation ensued, her three small kids came outside as well, walked down the stairs and I observed the Shepherd's behavior suddenly change. His hackles suddenly became noticeable again and he began to show physical cues that me being in that yard while the kids were there was not his cup of tea. The dog began to circle me when I calmly said to the owner, "grab your dog" just before he tagged my arm. I kept calm, and repeated the statement hoping she would understand my English, "grab your dog." The second bite was my upper right thigh a bit harder and more of a "get the fuck out here here bite. I wanted to scream and run, however knowing this is a fight of flight situation with an unruly one year old Shepherd who was just trying to protect his family, I couldn't blame him. If anything, I looked at this as a classic, ballsy shepherd move that would pass a courage test possibly without issue. The third and final bite? That was the one that stung. He spun around me again, this time biting even harder than the last two into my left side. I stayed still, not moving and made this last "grab your dog" more obvious with a louder tone. She yelled. "Oh my god Caesar, what are you doing!" she yelled at the dog, grabbing him (FINALLY for fucks sake) and bringing him into the backyard. Danny jumped out of his cruiser and looked at me puzzled. "What happened? Why did she just take him away like that?" Inside I wanted to scream but I knew that if Danny saw my reaction and how much in pain I was in, he would panic and I also knew he was carrying a firearm. I calmly said, "I just got hit three times."

"What?" he said in panic as I slowly pulled my shirt up to reveal the side of my hip. "Jesus chirst Leigha, it looks like you got stabbed." as he began to ask the lady for any bandages. I looked down and saw my side. "Yup, that's bad" I thought to myself, however I continued to keep that good ole poker face on and remain calm. We quickly left as I

googled the nearest hospital that happened to be in Rhode Island, which also happened to be a fucking mental facility. My hip began to sting as my adrenaline subsided. The SECOND hospital I googled actually was a real emergency room. We walked in and the receptionist asked to see the bites. I lifted my shirt and got the exact opposite of what I expected. You would think she would be normal ... nope. She glared and says "Oh my god how are you not crying right now???" Thanks lady. As if I needed more fuel for the fire to upset Danny. They only could put two stitches in so it could drain properly. A bottle of antibiotics later and we were off. We got into Danny's cruiser when he stopped the car, looked me dead in the eye and asked "are you sure you really want to do this? You want K-9?" I responded. "More than anything in the world, yes." So we continued to march to D Troop to drop my resume off at the at the time Lt's mailbox in DHQ. I'm pretty sure after that day, Danny thought I was bat shit crazy.

Here's the deal. Dogs are real with behaviors, reactions, love. Humans, not so much. I would prefer working with a dog that tried to maul me and know more than likely what the issue is and fix it. Humans are a lot harder to figure out. We as humans are broken animals. We become selfish, self absorbed, inconsiderate liars who will cheat and do whatever we have to to continue in life the way we like it. Dogs? Dogs are genuinely gentle creatures. Many, like humans become flawed due to their upbringing, which of course is usually disturbed by humans. Puppies, like babies, will be the representation of their background. A hard, fear aggressive dog didn't become fear aggressive because it had a fight with its siblings from trying to attempt to suck the milk out of their mothers same nipple. A hard, fear aggressive dog essentially is the picture painted by the human who raised them. One of my rescues and what I would consider therapy dog, Duke, is a purebred pitbull. He was found tied to a pole in New York's finest projects post hurricane, 8 years ago (I believe Hurricane Irene?) emaciated and one years of age. At that time, New York Animal Control was FILLED with pit bulls either lost to their families by the storm or left out on the streets to defend themselves due to their families leaving their homes. Duke was one that stuck out to Danny and I and he was on the "TBD" (aka To Be Destroyed) list for the upcoming day. Danny volunteered to get him and I placed a hold on this beauty. He has a perfect half face of white and tan with already cropped ears. Danny went to pick him up and immediately called me telling me he will have a hard time letting this one get adopted, then sending a pic of Duke who had placed his head onto his arm as they were driving home. As I type this, my buddy who is nine years old now is next to me, never leaving my side. When I bought a house on my own, his demeanor changed. He now plays the "guard dog" roll and my god, he plays it well. This pooch has been my personal bodyguard, house alert to any car that's in the vicinity of my driveway stop and have a door close, never mind the fact that he has been a pretty damn good detector of any guy that's come over (yes, he has either growled or tried to bite one or two who ended up being no bueno! Good boy, Duke!). I can honestly say, I don't know what I would do without this dog ... my heart hurts just thinking of him already being so old. My point of mentioning Duke is, he was abused, for sure. To this day, if you move abruptly, Duke will cringe by closing his eyes and jerking away like he is about to get the beating of his lifetime. It's been 8 years, 8 long years and he has never changed that reaction, no matter how much love and happiness he has been given. Something happened to that dog between being a puppy to one years of age, however it has never changed how loving, loyal and affectionate he is. I've had friends literally meet him, fall in love and try to go "adopt a Duke" by going to the same animal control in NY to adopt a pit bull....no such luck. This boy is a special one and I will forever be blessed to have him in my life. But, the perfect analogy of his significant behavior quirks from his past and humans can actually be processed into the same ideology. You see, you can be broken as a human or dog in your adolescent stages and no matter what, you will have some sort of aftermath reactive issues in your life. What you endure as a kid or as a pup will always effect you to some extent, however dogs are a hell of a lot more resilient and can bounce back from trauma a lot easier than humans. They trust more, forgive without hesitation and let's just say as a cop I would take a trained patrol K-9 to be my backup over any human cop. A good K-9 will never think twice about going after a suspect when commanded to. A human police officer very well could hesitate and end up being the reason for your casket. That, in my opinion is a fact.

Let me fill you in a bit on the state police K-9 testings. There are three major tests that our dogs would have to pass: Courage, Ball Drive and Hunt. Primarily, the first test would be the courage test due to 80 percent of our dogs that were tested, would fail. The test would go usually as follows: dog prospect would be placed in a "stake out" situation, away from anyone he or she knows, away from any scents of the tester. The dog would be walked out to the said given spot, leashed securely to a tree or said pole and left, unattended, for fifteen or more minutes. This would in turn allow the dog to feel a hundred percent to fend for itself, alone and vulnerable. After the time was up, the trainer would approach the dog in a very intimidating fashion, usually holding a large stick or bat and having a tarp or a hoodie on in order to look like an extreme, creepy ass threat to the dog. Now, most dogs, like I said, 85 percent of dogs that I have seen try to pass this test would run the other way so fast that they could have snapped their god damn neck on the leash with the collar from trying to run so fast. I saw a Belgian malinois year old pup one day become so afraid when I was testing her that she expressed her anal glands all over the trees. What we look for? A stable dog. That doesn't mean the biggest, badass of a pooch. Not at all. We look for dogs who stand there guard, do not back down and that necessarily doesn't mean be at the end of the leash barking and drooling to bite. A positive notification could also be a dog that just stares, doesn't look away, doesn't initiate severe aggression toward the threat, however doesn't back down. Negative observations? Again, a dog that runs from the hills and almost fucking decapitates themselves from running so fast. Also? Dog stands fast. Dog looks away from the threat? That's a negative. Dog backs up? That's a negative. I will say many K-9 trainers had issues with our testing. I will also say I've learned that if you take three K-9 trainers from three different agencies or companies, do you know what they will all have in common? That they all believe the other two are wrong. The K-9 world is small, the K0

ball drive and hunt testing. Someone would hold the dogs collar as another handler would tease the dog with a ball, throw the ball into the woods or tall grass and the handler in control of the dog would spin him around in a circle prior to releasing in order to confuse the dog in order for him or her to utilize their nose to find the ball as opposed to their eyes. The dog would be released, and the test would begin. What is ideal is for the dog to show intense, over the top, ball drive. The dog needs to show that nothing else matters but finding the ball, which is the prey in this case and will do nothing else than go to search for that ball, regardless of the environmental issues that they will have to endure during testing, such as thick brush, prickly bushes, large fallen trees, etc. Sultan, for example was an epic fail for this. He could pass any courage test like a champ, however his ball drive in the woods or tall brush? Womp, womp. Epic fail. But, many dogs tested would always do fantastic on the ball drive test and flake out on the courage. Vendors in the K-9 world are always comical. First and foremostly, I'll say that there ARE some good vendors out there, however for every good vendor there's about ten bad. You see, good, qualified and potential K-9s are hard to find these days. Why, you may be wondering? Because everyone and their mother attempts to become a vendor, trying to obtain a name for themselves and in turn the actual, true reason of being a vendor is lost. Ideally, a good vendor has passion in the canine world and wants to produce THE best police dogs out there. Others see nothing but dollar signs and will in turn produce absolute shit dogs. We had vendors who would bring dogs out who when the ball was thrown INTO AN OPEN FIELD, they would just look back and stare at the handler like "umm, ok? What do you want me to do?" So, the testing with the MSP is tough but you know what? That's why they produce the best dogs in the Commonwealth (sorry, locals and LECS ... no hard feelings, just being honest). There's a midwest vendor who got to big for their own bridges after having a show on television and a couple of the guys went there to test once. The man they dealt with brought out 8 of the shittiest dogs they ever saw. The two guys from MSP said "alright, well we are done here then, no need to stay another night" when the vendors worker hesitated, he blurted out that he would have 10 other dogs that are actually good the next morning to show. You see, these cats are the car salesmen of the dog world. Many police departments would simply take their word and spend the six thousand to fifteen thousand on a dog that a popular vendor would produce and think they were getting the cream of the crop. Vendors would prey on these poor men and women who weren't educated enough in this industry like mosquitoes in the summer night. Then there are the vendors who produce good, qualified dogs, like Mike Betts here

in MA, who the handlers would get into quarrels with over the finance aspect of the department would drag their feet on payment and screw them over, leaving them as a no go for the option list.

## Chapter 20: Someone Please Pinch Me

The days came and went and I heard the interviews for the K-9 East position that I had dropped my resume off too were beginning. I was shocked and immediately called the (at the time Sgt) Pat Silva. Pat was in shock. "Wait, you submitted your application? Why didn't you mention it to me?" I told him I wanted to keep it quiet and not tell anyone I was submitting that way no one would try and say I had received special attention in any way, shape or form. Turns out, the Lieutenant at the time called me and apologized – apparently my resume was still in his mailbox because he did not utilize that specific mail box. He felt horrible but ultimately it was my fault for not opening my mouth to Pat that I had dropped my resume off. Pat thought that I must have just decided not to put my hat into the circle on this round and assumed I was waiting for the next time around. Anyway, my classmate, Chris Thurlow got the gig and the hand me down dog he was getting was a LOT of work. The dog turned out to be great, however I try and believe everything happens for a reason.

Winter came and went and the posting for two more K-9 handlers for K-9 east came out in the late spring. This time, I made sure that the resume was dropped off by hand to ensure I was going to get a shot at the job. Interview day came and I was nervous as hell inside, poker face outside. The interviews were held an hour away and because I lived the farthest, they choose me as the first out of 16 Troopers (only female being me) or so to go in for the interview. I later found out when I walked out of the room, some of these assholes began to chirp comments. One of my friends, Nick actually barked back at them telling them to cut the shit. I will forever be thankful for people like this that I was always blessed to know. Anyway, the panel consisted of the at the time Lieutenant, Sergeant Silva and one other handler. I felt like I answered the questions to the best of my ability and was told they would be in contact after the weekend to who they choose. Three K-9 handlers were going to be picked – two for the east, one for the west. I felt good about my interview and went home, barely sleeping for the next three nights because I was so anxious to find out. That Monday I was working the eve shift at SP Andover, at my favorite spot to look for drug cars – Route 93 at 495 when I saw my phone begin to ring with the Lieutenants number on it. "Hey Leigha, Lieutenant Cambra. I wanted to personally call you to say congratulations, you have been chosen for K-9 East."

I did it. I began to shake. I DID IT. I finally, finally got to this place. As I write this, I get goosebumps just remembering how that feeling of accomplishment was. The day came, the day had finally come. All the blood, sweat and tears, the past hell I was in years before, the academy trials and tribulations, it all finally was paying off. I thanked him a handful of times, hung up the phone and cried tears of joy while I called Danny to let him know. The second best time of my life was this very moment that I will never, ever forget. I was officially the fourth female ever in the history of the Massachusetts State Police to be in the K-9 unit.

The job transition wasn't going to be immediate and was a couple weeks away. My last shift at SP Andover finally came and coincidentally I was going to be forced onto the mid shift for the Governors house overtime due to no one else stepping up for that shift. And you know what? I didn't even care. It was my last shift as a Trooper in Troop A, force me for a double? That's fine, if anything I got a good chuckle out of it. At around 2100 hours, I received information on the local scanner that Tyngsborough Police had a pursuit heading down Route 3 and I happened to be the next exit away. I advised over our radio and our air wing coincidentally was in the area to assist. The air wing had an eye from the sky and began to update me on the sixes of the vehicle when the pursuit continued on into Chelmsford and got off the highway. I entered into Chelmsford when the airwing advised the vehicle had crashed in

front of an ice cream store. I pulled onto the scene, jumped out of the car and was immediately confused as to what was going on.

There was a Chelmsford cruiser up alongside the suspects vehicle with a Caucasian male in the drivers seat, head down and blood pouring down his face and into his lap. A female Chelmsford police officer suddenly ran over to him and was holding both sides of his head in the drivers seat while the driver was flailing his arms around, unconscious but almost seizing. As I approached with my flashlight, I could see that the blood was almost uncontrollable and she was screaming "don't fucking touch me" to the suspect. Knowing he was not a threat, I secured my gun and was immediately told he had been shot in the head. Looking around to secure the scene, I noticed the entire ice cream shop patrons were all sitting there, watching, phones out trying to take video. One guy was extremely close trying to get footage, well the only footage he got my hand into his phone and pushed back. I'm sorry, I don't care how much of an asshole this kid may be who was just shot in the head. That kid has a family out there, a mother, a father, possibly a wife. If he is dying and some asshole wants to look like a bad ass to post on his social media, I will be damned if his family is notified that way. The guy got pissy with me and later tried to Tweet "it's my constitutional right to be able to video and this female Trooper should get in trouble!" but I didn't care. This is what is wrong in todays society. No one cares about anyone but themselves anymore. I saw a cartoon meme not long ago which hit the nail right on the head. It showed a guy drowning in the ocean screaming help, meanwhile on the beach everyone has their phones out, videotaping. No one is helping, people just recording. Our society has become so obsessed with social media and recording when shit hits the fan that no one cares of repercussions anymore. It's been almost a year without being on Facebook and Instagram and you know what? Its been nice. I miss seeing friends posts, however we become so absorbed and mentally focused on social media that hours can go by with just staring at our damn phones creeping on peoples pages, reading about how great their lives are and who can post the cooler "living my best life" Insta bs pics.

Medflight helicopter was advised and the scene was secured. It turns out, when the suspect drove by the ice cream store, the Chelmsford Sgt and Tynsgborough officer who initiated the pursuit had him cornered. The Sgt got out of his cruiser and when he opened the suspects door, the suspect hit reverse, pinning the Sgt to the side of his cruiser. At this time, due to the threat, the Tynbsorough officer drew his service weapon and fired two rounds, one missing the suspect, one going into this mans head and exiting out of the other side. The suspect was strung out on heroin and had a baby seat in the back of his car. Thankfully, the Sgt was okay with just minor injuries and amazingly, the suspect had survived. Apparently the bullet hit a portion of his brain that we do not use. That scene was one hell of a memorable last night at SP Andover.

## Chapter 20: The Best Times of My Life

The day finally came and I was officially transferred to the State Police K-9 unit. People on the job who were the typical bullshit mouth spewers began to talk, saying I must have had Danny make phone calls. My Sgt made sure to let me know that if anyone was to run their mouth, they could call him or Lt. Cambra. You see, neither of them received one single phone call for me. I had the background and knowledge of dogs and in the interview I placed second out of the top 3 picks based on my answers. SECOND. Out of sixteen or so other Troopers. No freebies, no calls (unlike others) and no special treatment. The best part? People who ran their mouth saying I'm too new of a Trooper for K9. Too new, huh? Chris Thurlow, MY CLASSMATE had gotten a spot months before me! Yet, no one cared about Chris, people just wanted to make reasons and excuses to bitch and complain about me successfully getting into the unit.

The kennel was set up outside and I finally got the call. "Leigha, this is Lt. Cambra, please contact Dave Stucenski to go pick up your dog."

HOLY SHIT. I have a dog!!! I was ecstatic and couldn't make the phone call fast enough. I met him at the Sturbridge barracks and pulled up to see this gorgeous, perfect sized Belgian Malinois. He was super drivey but also friendly. It was love at first sight and I immediately named him my favorite, kick ass name that I always wanted my K-9 to be called: Bolo (short for be on the look out of). Bolo and I began patrol school almost immediately with Dave Stucenski (nicknamed Stu) as lead trainer and his friend and other K-9 handler was the secondary teacher. Bolo was a three year old mal that was previously trained in Canada with French Ring, therefore he had some quirks and kinks needed to be worked on, however this dog had ZERO fear or environmental issues. He did, however show his issues – one of them was obviously formerly being over corrected with a prong collar. If I was ever about to give him a correction, he would go to a heel stance at my left side and cringe. I focused on patrol school and the teachings of Stu, who was an outstanding trainer. I knew the other guys in patrol school probably thought I was a joke and I had to prove to each and every one of them that I belonged there as much as they did, earning their respect over time. Patrol school came and went and my new partner and I certified to be road worthy officially. Drug school was on hold for a few months so we were not 94C certified but we were a team and able to track, apprehend and do article searches (example: for a missing gun thrown during a foot pursuit). I'll never forget my first find with Bolo. We got a call about a pretty bad one car crash on a ramp near the Foxborough area. I was balls to the wall, 132 miles per hour with pure excitement and adrenaline as we headed to the call. What I did not know is the car was literally in the middle of the ramp, blacked out and without any notification, once I went by the cruiser blocking the ramp, still at full speed I noticed the smashed up car at the last second, swerving around it barely, almost losing control. THAT was a close call. Whew.

We met a new kid from the last class there who was going to go on the track with us. Now, mind you .... this wasn't a nice warm summer night. It was mid winter, middle of the night, cold as hell, snow covered ground and icy, VERY icy. I threw on Bolo's tracking harness, had him jump into the smashed car, gave the command to begin tracking and off we go. We began going down the off ramp with a very steep, man made boulder covered embankment to our right which led down to cat nine tails and an icy swamp. Bolo suddenly showed a change of behavior with a head snap and pulled me over to the embankment. Here we go ... time for me to fall on my ass. He pulled me down the rocks as I went face down into one of them, losing the 30 foot lead. I yelled at him in German to down, which he did obediently on command. Once the other Trooper and I made it down, he began pulling me aggressively thru the icy swamp and prickly bushes. We were close, this was his close proximity alert. I yelled out commands that I was going to release the dog if they don't come out. Suddenly, I heard the brush began to move and someone begin to run. I gave commands again and radioed to the perimeter officers and Troopers the location. The suspect literally ran right into the local police officer and was successfully apprehended. I felt like I was on top of the world. We did it! We had our first find. I was so proud of my dog and while the suspect was getting handcuffed let him bark and be excited for his find. Not long after, we apprehended another suspect who ran out of a domestic home in Revere. No bite, yard to yard search but another successful find. That night of the second find however, I noticed Bolo's one issue become worse.

Certain breeds have certain strengths and weaknesses. German Shepherds, in my opinion, have better noses for patrol and drugs, always nose to the ground for human tracking and much more precise in doing so. Belgian Mal's are more drivey, not as good noses but were far more intense, better bite grip, stamina and could very well be the best for environmental work. Bolo had an issue in patrol school for tracking by air scenting and utilizing his eyes more than nose. Mals are visual dogs normally and will tend to "cheat" if they can. Bolo was never a nose to the ground dog, was a hard dog to read and generally struggled with track training that was for anything over a half mile long. He began to show his issues more in maintenance group training and we ended up jumping back in with another

patrol school class to try and work on his issues, starting with fire trails and working backwards a bit. We all came to the conclusion, despite how great Bolo was in every other aspect, that his tracking was not up to par with the state police. Ultimately at the end, my Sgt, who now became the Lieutenant in charge of our unit, allowed me to make the decision on whether I should keep Bolo or get a new dog. This decision was extremely hard and I spent a LOT of time to come to terms with my choice. I decided if I wanted to sustain a successful career with the K-9 Unit, Bolo would not be the dog I would have that with. Would it suck having to go thru a whole other patrol school? Yep. But looking at the bright side of it? Going thru again meant more knowledge and background with patrol work, which at the end of the day, would make me a better handler. Thankfully, the owner of the vendor we got him from was someone I knew from online. I reached out to him and asked if I could hold Bolo for a few weeks to see if someone I knew locally in a department would want to purchase him from the vendor. "Sure, tell them I'll even take a thousand dollars off." My biggest fear with this dog who I loved was to send him back to the vendor and some Joe Smo from the south cop would buy him and mess him up. I wanted to be able to have updates on him and know hes doing well. I contacted the Sgt of the Department of Corrections and asked if they would want Bolo. I had secretly in the past trained with them at times to work on Bolo's bitework. "BOLO? You want us to buy Bolo?" I said yes, with hesitation. "YES of course we will take him." Not long after that, we did a few testing with the DOC folks and they wanted him instantly. His new handler was amazing and I was happy, however dropping him off that day to the DOC, I balled my eyes out. I knew it was the right decision for both of us but it didn't make it hurt less. While I still had Bolo, I was also called by Trooper Greg Keane – the new head trainer for the next patrol school that he had choose a dog for me. I met him on his detail at the airport and out jumped out this big ole Shepherd/Mal mix of a goofball. He was a year old and didn't have a single bit of training instilled in him, no sit, no nothing, which is what we call a "green" dog. He jumped up, putting his paws on my shoulders and kissed my face. It was love at first site and although this dog was EXTREMELY large for my size as a handler, I knew I could handle him. After looking thru hundreds of names, I named him Kojack. After I found the name, I was told Kojack was actually a detective on an old 1970s tv show. Old cop name for a new cop dog ... works for me!

Patrol school began, again and yet again, I had to prove to the other handlers in this class as well as the two instructors. The second instructor, Brian was even harder. He literally was trying to show me how to handle the leash by wrapping it around my hand so I don't loose my dog. Is this guy for real? The passive aggressive treating me like I've never even been around a K-9 did nothing but piss me off. I kept my mouth shut, to the point where my tongue sometimes was probably bleeding but he had an issue with me and made it very clear. Greg, on the other hand felt like he was beginning to be a friend to me. I know I proved my handler skills to him and although it took him a bit to warm up to me and respect me as a handler, he eventually did. Kojack was an amazing tracker from the get go. His nose to the ground versus what I had lacked with my mal was extreme. The best and most scariest part? This dog was greener than green. He had zero bad habits instilled into him and I wanted to make sure I didn't screw him up any way possible. We went thru patrol school and I worked with him on the weekends by myself, getting his down stay to 100 yards with verbal sit and downs in German. I would bring him to Steve's K9 facility on Saturdays, just as I did with Bolo to work on his grip fundamentals, the only thing that I was concerned with but he was young and inexperienced. The day came for patrol certification and off we went to Rhode Island for RISP NESPAC certification during an extremely hot summer day. Kojacks track was a little over a mile I believe, with multiple turns, gravel to pavement to wooded area and coincidentally on base, a running platoon of about 30 people ran thru it. Four of the RISP guys, Trooper (now Sgt) Keane and the other handlers all followed my track. I was nervous, this day is always nerve wracking regardless of how good your dog may or may not be. By the time Kojack took a hard right into the woods to where the decoy was, his tongue was dragging on the ground from being fatigued from the heat and distance of the track. Kojack found the decoy and got a bite of the sleeve. I was so proud of him! This time, post patrol certification we immediately went into drug school. Two months later and certified in both, we were officially a team on the road, ready for patrol and drug work. Kojack was maturing and his drive increased. The drive of the



mal only turned on when he was in work mode – he had the fantastic switch to shutting work on and off. AND? HE NEVER BARKED IN THE CRUISER. Bolo had the worst habit of barking non stop when I activated my lights or sirens due to being so fired up to go work. Kojack would just sit there relaxed, calm and ready for whatever. This was a HUGE help in calls because they use a considerable amount of energy with barking and pacing. Some dogs would jump out of a cruiser and already be spent from the anxiety and barking to the call. It wasn't long after patrol school with Kojack until we had our first pursuit suspect jump out of a car and give up after I gave him the warning (which we have to here in MA) that the dog will be released, he will find you and bite you commands. Not long after, he found a half of kilo of crack-cocaine along with 80 grams of heroin and a thousand bucks in a motor vehicle mechanical hide that was in the center console underneath. Kojack continued to mature and our drug finds became good enough to where I was receiving texts prior to shift asking if I could hang around a particular area for drug calls from the workers of the road or calls asking if I was working a detail (which I normally would be).

## Chapter 21: Endings into New Beginnings

I was asked to work with Blauer – one of the biggest police uniform companies, with catalog modeling. After the first year of making a few full pages in their 2016 catalog, I ended up making the cover with my rescued German Shepherd, Sasha. THE COVER! I was so ecstatic and thought it wasn't a big deal. We did not get paid to model for this company however the company only uses real life police officers. I made sure to stick and adhere to the MSP policies of making sure no uniform material of the job was used in the photos, hence using my rescue dog even. I used my .9 millimeter pistol for the shoot and my own gun belt to ensure I was doing everything by the book in the jobs eyes. Later I learned I was going to be disciplined by Colonel Gilpin for the cover, yet I don't even to this day know why. I also began volunteering to be on the committee board for the Boston Bruins Bfit Challenge, which raised over a hundred thousand dollars to the 100 Club of Massachusetts, which if you die in the line of duty as a police officer, fire fighter or EMT, your family is taken care of for the rest of their life. This was a huge focus of mine and I tried to put my love and effort into it as much as possible. (Side note: I am no longer on the board, they washed their hands of me as soon as my story came out as well.)

I had made the decision to leave Danny. Back in the spring, he had made Lieutenant Colonel of Field Services. I was SO proud of him, I still to this day am. Sadly, in the back of my mind I knew that this could be the death of us. Danny was great in command, did his job well, fair to the guys and girls on the job and was well liked. But, this would also change him as a person. I remember going to the Run to Remember half marathon. Just as the previous years, a few select classmates of mine as well as Danny would meet up at the Boston Fish Pier post race to enjoy a few cold ones together. This particular year, I opted to do the five miles because my knees took days to recover on the last half marathon. I had lost a ton of weight due to stress and hadn't ran much either. So, my classmates and I completed the race and began to have a couple cold ones. Danny stayed in my Jeep and refused to come out. He ended up leaving when we went to a seaport pub for food and told me he can pick me up after, stating that he couldn't hang out with Troopers anymore. This broke my heart. I was a brand new Trooper still and not a politician's wife. The fact that he had gotten the promotion of being the third in command in the state police made it hard for me. I heard less shit talking but knew it was there. Being titled as "the majors girlfriend" now went to "Colonel's girlfriend" and the judgment given by people who didn't know me began to escalate. Danny put work before me, taking his job super serious. I remember the day I decided we were officially done. The day of my certification, I texted him that am and asked him to come with me to celebrate if we certified. We agreed for 6 o'clock after I passed because he had to stay in the office late (as always). Six pm came and went and I refused to text him being the stubborn ass that I can be. He never even said he was running late. No texts, radio silence. I got my purse and decided to go grab sushi on route one by myself. After texting a few of the greatest friends someone could have like Danielle Murr and my classmate Steve Hanafin (who unfortunately had to deal with the "Oh you must be sleeping with Genduso" because god forbid

you have male friends on the job who you are close with), they came down and ate, drank and sang karaoke with me. That night was full of happiness and sadness ... happiness that I was a fully certified K9 handler, happiness that my friends came out to be apart of it with me however sadness over the fact that I knew Danny and I were at our final chapter. The next day, his friends, brothers son from Everett who overdosed, had his wake for 1600 hours that day. Danny went to the wake and was home early. He left the craziness of work to attend and I was blown off the night before. That may sound selfish, I know but it broke my heart. I never wanted to be number one, that is the spot for his children and rightfully so, however I was now number three. Danny and I sat down, had the talk and considering he knows me better than anyone, knew that my emotional switch had flipped. I didn't tell many people that we were breaking up, I didn't want the job to place us in their US Weekly front page of bullshit talked of at training days or at the barracks, I didn't want to hurt Danny, ever. But with what had happened and the fact that our sex life had become basically non-existent, I knew I had to move on. Life is to short and at the age of 36, I already have a boat load of "what ifs" to things that I did and will forever regret. I yearn for happiness as I do for adrenaline. Happiness to me is as hard to achieve as finding love, plain and simple. Anyone out there who has found either of those two things in life? Cherish it. Feel it and please be thankful for the feelings you are blessed to have. Both happiness and love can leave your life in a split second. For those of you who have had the opportunity in life to be able to have one or both of those blessings your entire life? You, my friend are one of the luckiest people on the planet.

I began looking at houses and working more details then I ever had in my entire life. My mother and I were okay at the time and I began contemplating on getting a house with an in-law portion for my mom as I looked in the area of Worcester. I also contemplated having my at the time best friend who was also my Realtor with her nine year old daughter move in if I bought on the North Shore. Now that I look back, I realize I was being as clear headed as if you're in a bar at last call and decide tequila shots are a good idea as a night cap. WHAT WAS I THINKING? I can't even have a sustainable relationship with my mother and I thought I would be able to live with her?!? And how did I think I would be okay to have my friend, who was ten years younger than me, technically/basically jobless who lived at her parents and have her and her nine year old daughter move in? Granted, her daughter is someone who I loved and wouldn't mind, but after getting out of an eight year relationship, I just wasn't sure if I needed to have a sudden family live with me. So, between details, house searching and work, I was officially running normally on 3-4 hours of sleep a night and it was taking a toll on me. The good ole break up diet became officially in effect and my appetite was barely there. I usually ran on protein bars for a meal and got down to 115 pounds, which for my physique was insane muscle loss and just skin and bones. I got a quote tattooed on my side that had substance to my life: "Strength is what we gain, from the madness we survive." Little did I know at that time that this quote would mean even more a few months from now.

The holidays drew near and in came my anxiety to endure them, as always. Seeing Danny and I were officially done meant I was not going to be going to his families house or making a turkey at ours. I decided to keep my midnight shift that night and work the overtime at Charlie Baker's house for the 1500-2300 eve shift. A new Trooper was going to get forced out of the Troop and I much rather preferred someone who has kids or a family enjoy it rather than sit alone for the day. Charlie Baker and his family were incredibly nice and although I worked the governors detail a bunch of times, we never officially met until that day. He came out and asked to pet Kojack (which literally I was a nervous wreck about no matter how great Kojack was with people and not in work mode) and his wife asked me if I wanted a plate of food, which was incredibly nice, however I declined. The overnight shift came and I was starving so I grabbed a good ole McDonald's number one with a diet coke for a late night, Thanksgiving meal. There were two other K-9 Troopers working that night who are so up each others asses that I always felt like I was the odd ball out, which was fine. We ride alone and have the coverage of the North Shore, South Shore, Boston and the Cape. I recall being on Route 1 when a Trooper requested a narcotics search just a couple of miles away from my location. The

senior Trooper immediately said he would be enroute but from quite a distance away. The other Trooper, my classmate who thinks he is the best thing since sliced bread, gave his location which was somewhat closer but not anywhere near as close as me, so instead of asking me where I was, he told Thurlow to head that way. "Ok guys, you can go play with yourselves together? Screw this." I thought. I'll head out to H Troop and be in a location where if anything comes in and I'm close, I'll take the call. So I headed 495 southbound near Walpole when a call came in of a burglarized convenience store which was attached to a McDonalds at the Foxborough/Walpole line, stating that the suspect may still be in the building. Guess who was only four miles away when the call came out? I couldn't respond quick enough that I would be on scene momentarily. The senior K-9 Trooper said he would be enroute however he was still way north and I knew I could get this call as my own. I arrived on scene to find my classmate and a whole slew of other local officers containing the perimeter. Kojack and I went to the delta side of the building, gave commands and with no response, I released him into the store first. My dog showed no alerts so we began to clear the McDonald's portion as well, without anyone being found but a crow bar and a winter hat stuck to the door cage where the suspect lost it. I asked the Sgt on scene if we could take the hat outside the door for the hell of it and attempt to obtain a track, which he had no problem with. Kojack sniffed the winter cap, the command was given and off he went, showing all cues that he was into the odor. We began to track down the street northbound and across the street for another half mile or so until I noticed he no longer was on a scent track. My classmate and a local were with me for the track and I asked if we could go across the street to do yard to yard searches as we headed back to make sure we didn't miss anything. As we were almost back on scene of the break in, Kojack had a beautiful head snap to a driveway and started pulling me with all of his strength down to the woods, which I knew was his close proximity alert and he was into some serious odor. I told the guys that we were close and he has to be down here. Sure as shit, about 20 yards into the woods, Kojack began to pull me harder than ever and shining a flashlight at where he was headed showed a man up against a tree, almost pretending to be dead with bottles of wine around him, a carton of cigarettes and his hands in his pockets. I gave the commands to show us his hands or the dog would be released, yet apparently this drunk wanted to try to play the good ole opossum trick as if he was invisible. Kojack was released and given the bite command. It's known in the K9 world that most dogs on their first bite do not bite well due to it not being actually normal for a dog to bite a human. Kojack was exactly the same as the statistics say, at first looking at him like "am I going to get in trouble if I bite him?" Then with my reassurance from the 30 foot line, grabbed his arm and coat and began to bite. I used my bite stick to release him from the suspect and while he was getting cuffed, my dog was in full force barking and lunging at the guy as I gave praise. We did it. We had our first K-9 apprehension and I was on cloud nine like you wouldn't believe. Was it a bad bite? Nope, pretty pathetic if you want to know but I didn't care. My shitty Thanksgiving went from being one of the worst to one of the best, thanks to having such a great dog.

The house search in Worcester became officially a no go. Why? Not because of the location, not because of leaving people in the North Shore. I actually at one point had an offer accepted in Worcester on a house and pulled out of it literally at the last hour. It was too city like in that neighborhood and the anxiety I felt deep within about living with my mom, knowing that it could be a really bad move for us both, made it clear. So, Worcester was done, more importantly because I decided I wanted to stay north of Boston in order to be able to stay in the K-9 East team and to be able to stay in my training group. Lt. Pat Silva was our lead trainer as well as another handler named Brian. Both were great handlers and I respected my boss more than anyone. He was always fair, always good to us and had our backs no matter what. I also could pick up the phone at any given day and call him just to vent about anything and everything. Pat always had my back and believed in me. He saw my potential and the only thing he would give me shit about was over doing, meaning training too much, always being the person going to every call, etc. Not the worst thing I guess to have as a job flaw but I took all of his advice and made sure to improve every way possible. So, focusing now on the North Shore, I found a house in Methuen in a cute little neighborhood just three miles from Route 93, which of course was perfect for a callout and to get on the highway to where ever as soon as possible. The

backyard was fenced in with white, stockade fencing and the four bedroom, two bathroom had the best perk about it: there was a large shed outback that I envisioned as an indoor/outdoor kennel. If I had to work a double, my rescue shepherd and pitbull could stay out there and not have to be a concern. The family who lived there was extremely friendly and accepted my offer. Holy shit ... this was it. Closing came and I had to pull about twenty one thousand dollars out of my ass to cover all expenses, but I was handed the keys. Was this house in Andover and a half a million dollars? Nope. Did it need work? A little, not much but stuff I could do over time. Then one day, I was leaving the new house and on my way back to Peabody when suddenly my phone started blowing up with texts and phone calls asking me where I was and if I was okay.

... Then it hit me. I knew it was bad and the feeling at the pit of my stomach made me want to throw up when the next text was of the article.

“Sources: Mass State Police Lt. Colonel Dan Risteen Covered Up Cell Phone Information from Lt. Governor Tim Murray’s 2011 Crash, Helped Cover Up The Ali Bibaud Scandal and Got His Hot Dispatcher Girlfriend A Coveted Gig In The MSP”

I pulled over, began to cry and had to get a hold of myself. My name was apart of this bullshit, scumbag trash of a beings blog and it was being spread like wildfire. The people who know me and worked with me knew the story was bullshit, however it was still just as ruthless. I stopped responding to people, driving back to Peabody in a snowstorm. Thankfully Danny wasn’t home, I was so upset, so damn upset that I didn’t want to lash out at him as I knew I would. I ran inside the house, gathered an overnight bag, my .45 and after a trip to the liquor store, checked into a nearby hotel on Route 1 in Peabody. I drove right by Danny’s cruiser as he was driving home. He put his lights on and pulled over due to wanting to talk to me, but I couldn’t. I just wanted to go drink a bottle in a hotel room and contemplate just ending my life. I told only a few people where I was and one of my closest friends and classmates as stated before, refused to let me stay there by myself. Steve picked me up and we went to a local dive bar and just got drunk. He let me vent, drove me back to my hotel and I passed out. The next day I attempted to reign all my emotions of anger and defeat and went back to the house. Danny approached me and I began to cry. I told him if my past comes out because of this ... my life is over, and I meant every word that I said. He just looked at me and didn’t know what to say, he knew I was being honest and not in the very least dramatic.

Days went on and the press became more involved in the Bibaud case with the at the time Colonel, the Deputy, Danny and the Major of C Troop. The Colonel and Deputy retired almost immediately and Danny had a whirlwind of backlash to continue to take. In came a female Colonel, appointed by the Governor Charlie Baker. The Colonel was the perfect fresh face for the state police per the Governor. She was a lesbian (married to a Trooper on the job) who was very liberal and an extremely sad mystery murder of her sister from years and years ago (which was thankfully solved during her tenure as a Colonel). The Colonel had minimal experience to even be placed on the top of the food chain, however image is always a priority with politicians. I had to put on that good ole poker face and continue to work, continue to go to details and throw that good ole poker face on to not show my true sense of embarrassment, however inside it was eating me up more than you can imagine, but life continues and you have to accept what you cannot change. I became obsessed with reading the comments on the blog and seeing how many people in this world are such horrible, horrible human beings with zero issues at slamming someone they didn’t know. The name calling, the accusations, the evilness that a human being simply can type on a keyboard and press send without even considering the ramifications they have on the person they are writing about makes me want to throw up. I have never seen such pure evil then what I have read online. Social media has created monsters and it is no surprise why kids out there who are bullied end up becoming depressed or even worse, suicidal. I would never want a single

person in this world to endure that and hope to someday be apart of a charity or organization to assist in helping to stop the madness that we as society allow.

I had to continue to sleep on Dannys couch and work as much as possible while the kennel was situated in the shed, when the sleep deprivation finally caught up to me. One day, I met a friend at Kowloon who was going thru the beginning stages of a divorce and wanted to get my advice. We went to Kowloon in Saugus and I was running on my usual four hours of sleep from work. Two mai tai's later, I went to go to my house in Methuen to sleep on the couch for the first time, just to sleep there and have a night to myself. As I was driving, suddenly I woke up smashing into the side of the guard rails like a ping pong ball in my 2016 Jeep Rubicon lease on Route 128. Let me clarify something, I was always skeptical of any crash I responded to while working where the driver said "I fell asleep." How the heck can you fall asleep? Well, lets just say that night, I learned my lesson and learned it well. My Jeep was fucked. I drove it back to Peabody, pulled into the garage and broke down. Not just broke down, but to the point where I felt like everything was just too much. I felt like my life was over. Not because of the crash, but because of everything. The stress of the house, working 80 hours a week, leaving my relationship of 8 years, my mom again not talking to me because I was buying a house in Methuen and not back home, being housebroke, dealing with coworker bullshit, and most importantly the blog post that spread like wildfire. I'm sure the lack of sleep plus the drinks had enhanced it all tremendously, however I just ... wanted ... to die. I went into the spare bedroom, locked the door, sat on the floor, took out my service weapon and placed it to my temple and began to cry. Danny somehow, someway woke up at this very second and heard me in the room. He began to try to open the locked door and yelling my name. I didn't respond.... My mind was going a million miles a minute and a that very second, I was ready, I wanted to die but I couldn't do it, I couldn't do that to him. Seconds later he kicked the door open, found me on the ground with the gun to my head and immediately jumped on me and secured it. The look on his face burned into my memory is something I'll never forget. It's something I wish I never allowed myself to let him endure, he was so distraught and I am such an asshole for even putting him in that situation.

#### Chapter 22: "To Be Absent From The Body Is To Be Present In The Lord"

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, I was doing my usual routine – headed to AHQ Danvers barracks to work out for an hour prior to my shift starting at 1500. I finished my PT, went to the showers and suddenly my phone was blowing up. My friend Courtney had texted me "where are you." I responded, "umm .. where I always am. Lol whats up?" She told me to call her immediately when I said I would give her a shout when I got into my cruiser. Suddenly, my friend Sylvia texted me "why does he hate you so much?" I responded with "who? Wtf are you talking about."

She wrote back. "OMG, Leigha, you don't know yet?" and sent the link. I paused and took a deep breath as I began to shake as I hit the link ....

"State Trooper Leigha Genduso: Admitted Drug Dealer, Perjurer and Tax Evader, Friends With Former MSP Colonel Marion McGovern, Dated Lt. Colonel Prior to Being Hired"

The anxiety in my body was something I couldn't even put into words, however I calmly texted my Sergeant and the senior K9 Trooper who was also working the shift that I would be taking sick time for the shift, gathered my gear, walked by a few other Troopers in the gym and got into my cruiser. I suddenly felt a sense of numbness overcome my body as I began to sweat. "This is it" I thought. My life is officially destroyed and I knew what I had to do.

I drove that cruiser home as my phone continued to blow up with texts and calls, however I hardly answered any. The Major of A Troop texted me to ask me where I am and if I'm okay, I stated I'm okay and with friends (big lie). I

drove home, took Kojack out to the kennels, fed him, kissed him on the head and gave him a gigantic hug as I said goodbye. I went into my house, changed and drove my personal car to the liquor store about two miles away. I walked into to that liquor store, looked at what they had and wondered what type of alcohol could numb the pain and numb it fast. Suddenly, I saw a big bottle of Jameson whiskey. Yup, that'll do. I bought the bottle, went home and had to think fast. I didn't want anyone coming over to find me but I didn't know where I could go either. I pulled back into my house and realized I could hide my Jeep Rubicon in the backyard. The six foot white stockade fence opened up both doors so a vehicle was easily able to pull in. I placed the Jeep into four wheel drive, pulled behind the gates and went inside my house. I texted my two best friends in a group chat that we always speak of and asked them to please take care of my dogs and cat (which were still at Danny's) and that I love them. Looking back, I feel awful. I still have a voicemail saved from one of my best friends Danielle, crying and begging me not to do anything stupid because she loves me and can't let anything happen to me. It took me months before I could listen to it, knowing fully that it would be heartbreaking to hear that I even put someone I love into that situation. I grabbed my .45 service weapon, changed into gym clothes, shut the blinds and went upstairs to my bedroom with a wine glass (don't judge, I hadn't unpacked 70 percent of my stuff yet from working so much) and a bottle of Jame-O. The whiskey went down quick as I sat in my room listening to my phone beep and ring with my gun in my lap. Another full glass went down and I began to come to terms that my life was officially over and hoped if there is a God, he would forgive me for what I was about to do. Suddenly, I heard a male voice that sounded like they were in my driveway.

FUCK.

I looked out through the blinds and saw my classmate, Steve on the phone, overhearing him say "No, her car isn't here, let me check if her dog is." He opened the fence gate, saw my Jeep. "No, wait, her car is here. She's here."

FUCK. FUCK. FUCK.

I couldn't do it. I couldn't allow him to hear the gun go off, to break in somehow and see my brain fragments plastered across my bed with my body there. I was looking over the fact that I would hurt some people by ending my life, but there's no way in hell I wanted anyone I loved as a friend to find me like that and destroy them with a god awful memory like that. By now, I tittering on the line of blacking out seeing I had already drank ½ of the bottle of whiskey. I tucked my service weapon into my love seat couch in my bedroom, walked outside, walked up to Steve, hugged him and lost it. I was crying so hard I couldn't breath. The rest of this day is half of a blur so it's bits and pieces of what people said that happened and of course what I recall what happened.

Steve and I went inside and moments later someone was knocking on my front door. I, (being shitfaced at this point) went to the door to find my former friends, one a female civilian and one my classmate in full uniform with his cruiser out front. I asked what they were doing as they came in, both frantic looks on their faces and asking me if I'm okay. (Ok? No ... hammered and checked out / numb? Yup). I told them I was fine, walked with my whiskey wine glass to the kitchen door, opened it and said "hey guys, thanks for coming, you can all go now, I'm fine." I wanted to still go finish what I wanted to do and was hoping in my drunk stupor that they would think I was okay and all just fucking go home. They looked at each other and looked at me. "Leigha, umm, yea, we're not going anywhere." Steve left because he had to go, or what I recall he was suddenly gone. Again, cue in the fog, however suddenly my door was being knocked on again. "Ok, what the fuck you guys." I mumbled. I opened the door, wine glass in tow and looked in shock. My Major of Tactical Operations, Major McHale was at my door. I asked him what he was doing here. The look of worry in his face caused me to want to cry, however I had gotten composure and was damned I was going to not let go of my poker face. He came in and asked if I was okay. Of course I said I'm fine and kept drinking my "wine." Now, I am foggy again, however I'm told that they asked me where my guns were. I had a .22 Bodyguard revolver in

my nightstand and my service weapon. I left my .9 millimeter Smith and Wesson, M&P Shield somewhere at Danny's house. I told them I don't know where the guns were. As my former friend walks upstairs, I yell "its not up there." She responds "huh?"

"My gun. It's not up there." I yell again. "Ooooookay, Leigha" my former friend said. She found my service weapon in about 2.2 seconds, just by looking to the left and seeing the butt of my pistol sticking out of the crevice of my love seat. Mental note: don't ever try to hide something while hammered. You'll either A) Do a shitty job of hiding it or B) hide the damn thing so well you forget where you put it the next day.

I walked (kinda) back to where the Major was, when suddenly two unknown, plain clothed Troopers are knocking at my door. Who the hell could this be now? They introduced themselves as Troopers from EAU – also known as the Employee Assistance Unit. The female Trooper, Colleen was much easier to talk to, you could see the pain she felt in her eyes about my situation which unraveled my numbness a little. The male was a little more stern and not as immediately pleasant. The Major I think was on his cell phone and hung up, beckoning them to talk to him in the other room alone. I continued to sip my fake wine (aka Jame-O) and just kept asking everyone when they would be leaving because I had enough of this circus side show and still assumed I would be left alone to die. Suddenly, Colleen pulled me into my downstairs spare / aka dog room-laundry room. "Okay, Leigha ... you need to make sure to answer truthfully to my next question, okay?" "Sure," I mumbled while looking at my cell phone at the time and how many missed calls I had. "Danny told Major Mchale you have another gun, a nine millimeter? Where's the gun, Leigha. We have your twenty two and service weapon. We need the other gun." I stared at her in a drunken numb stage. "I don't have any other guns here." She sighed and repeated herself. I eventually got annoyed that she wasn't believing me and walked, er stumbled out of the room. Major Mchale and the other EAU Trooper walked up to me. "Leigha, we need to know where the gun is." "Guys, I don't have another gun." Next, they took me alone separately to try and play good cop, bad cop, interrogate, hell I don't fucking know, but I stuck to my story because my story was true! At one point, I'm told the Major said something to me as I was walking upstairs and I responded "Fuck you ..... (long pause) sir." SIR .... well at least I was still some what respectful as drunk as I was. There was a knock at my door when my favorite former dispatch coworker and one of my best friends was there. Dan Puckett got the run down and did the same exact attempt – brought me into another room, upstairs and began to question me. Now, mind you it's been over two hours, folks. The interrogation of this fucking gun that is not in my house became quite annoying to a suicidal, drunk person. I began crying to Puckett and said out loud "I just want to blow my brains out." Bad move, Leigha. You just showed your full house cards in your deck. The EAU male Trooper over heard me say that and asked Dan if he heard right and Dan confirmed. Well, there goes my freedom. I was now being told that Major Mchale would legally order me to the hospital if I don't go voluntarily. I begin arguing with them telling them I was fine when suddenly my door is being knocked on again. At this time, I was sitting in my dining room table while everyone decides to go round two on "wheres the gun, Leigha." My other best friend, Danielle walks in and I guess I looked at her, made eye contact and gave the biggest most obnoxious eye roll ever. Danielle asked to speak to me and brings me into what seems to be the new fucking interrogation room aka laundry room in my house. By this point? I was hammered. My adrenaline kept me acting like I was just sort of drunk but realistically I was checked out. Danielle plays bad cop with me and lays into me. "Come on Leigha, I know you know where the fucking gun is, cut the shit, it's me ... so where is the fucking gun." I sighed. "Danielle, I'll tell you what I have been saying for the last three hours to every other person who is attempting to get info that I don't have. I don't have another gun here. It's at Danny's." She tells me Danny said I definitely have the gun. Wrong. She asks me again, I try and stay calm. I guess at this point I start to say fuck the poker face and I look mad, slowly reaching for her with my hand like I wanted to choke her out, but don't. Finally, another attempt and she asks me again. This was my switch flip. I yelled "I DON'T HAVE THE FUCKING GUN!" turned and hit the wall as hard as I can. There was a loud bang as my fist hit into the wall. Most people in this world would punch a wall and break the wall, right? Yea, not me. I hit a stud. A fucking stud. Suddenly,

the pain ran through my hand to my brain so fast that I couldn't even compute, however I knew. "AND NOW I BROKE MY FUCKING HAND!" I leaned onto a tower of moving boxes and had to take a deep breath. Did I just see my knuckle down my hand, by my wrist? I looked again. Yep, I saw right. My right hand pinky knuckle broke and moved down my hand. I have to say, a half bottle of Jameson is the numbing agent for the world of alcohol. Not only was my mind numb, but breaking my hand with a boxing fracture that I ended up having would have hurt like HELL sober. I didn't even care. Danielle, horrified ran out to tell everyone what just happened as they all gained attention and focus on the room that the loud bang just came out of. Dan looks at my hand and I recall him saying "yep, that's definitely broken." Well, looks like I have to go to the hospital now, regardless. I sent a few drunken responses in texts that I was going to the hospital and broke my hand and off we went.

Here I am thinking I will have my phone, get my hand fixed, tell them I am good to go with the Q5 talk and get back home. Wrong. Instead I was brought to a room where its like a prison cell, not allowed to leave. I was drunk and becoming to feel like I wanted to throw up. The pain of my hand was still numb but I knew I officially had no right hand for a long time. "We are sorry, Ms. Genduso, the doctor won't adjust your knuckle placement until you're sober." They had taken my blood at midnight to see what my BAC (blood alcohol content) was still .20%, almost three times higher than a regular OUI, which is .008A%. I recall Colleen telling me she was concerned that my levels were that high and I was still able to stand and speak. So, I have a tolerance....a smidge. Don't judge. Anyways, friends and the EAU Trooper stayed with me. The next morning, two Captains came to serve me my papers stating I was immediately ordered into suspension with pay until my trial board hearing. I saw the pain in one of the Captains (now Major) in his eyes. The other looked down and hesitated to make eye contact with me. I later on learned that both Captains had been both in situations of unforeseen issues with the job, both hung to dry and both bounced back even stronger in the long run. The doctor came in in the am and said he was going to attempt to put my knuckle back into place. He gave me minimal injections to numb and began to manipulate my knuckle. I jumped at first of the pain and he asked if I needed more numbing injections. "No, just do it, lets get this over with." The pain was intense enough to want you to keel over and vomit, however I'm sure the hangover from hell I had at the same moment didn't help. One of the male nurses asked if it was okay to watch because he was intrigued at how far down the bone was. Thanks, bud. The knuckle was put back in place, bandage thrown on and I was warned that I'll probably need surgery. AWESOME. I am right handed and let me tell you, having your dominant hand be taken away temporarily? Awful. Anyone who has lost a limb? I give you so much credit and sympathy. I know you learn how to adapt and overcome but my god, you don't realize how much you need your dominant hand until you're left without one. The day began to pass and my hangover was something that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. EAU Troopers hung around, my former friend stayed and suddenly when everyone had left the room for a bit, Danny's ex-wife walked in. So here I was, in this psych ER room, eyes swollen and looking like a zombie that had emerged from Halloween and still hadn't eaten brains yet with a big ole wrapped up cast on my hand. Awesome. Check mate, to whoever I pissed off upstairs to allow my life to have come to all of this. Danny's ex said their daughter Sarah had came home crying and a wreck about it all so she came to check on me. Check on me....hmmm. This is the same woman who never said two words to me, who I had met probably two to three times in an eight year relationship, who I swear to god told her children not to accept me, based on the way everything always went. I wanted to scream and get her out of the room yet instead I threw on my (probably at the time horrible) poker face and played nice. After she probably had taken the hint at my short and sweet responses and a bunch of thank yous, she left as soon as Trooper Colleen Tanguay was coming back in. The look of "what the fuck" on Colleen's face said it all. She instantly came in and said that she would have never let her in if she saw her out there. I know, the Sergeant who was at the door and formerly worked with her did, having absolutely no idea that it could be an issue.

At 1800 hours, the nurse finally came downstairs and said they had a bed open for me upstairs. It took longer than expected because the hospital head of security had my last name changed and a request for my own room. I said



goodbye to everyone, assuming since it was Wednesday, assuming my duty status hearing on the trial board would be Friday that I would be out by then. The nurse showed me around as I watched some absolutely serious psych patients walk by, yell, etc. By the time we got to my room? I couldn't hold it in anymore. I began to ball my eyes out. This was it ... this was my life. My job was going to be gone, my dog was taken away, my house would be torn apart in a gun search for a gun that wasn't there and here I am without access to the outside world, my cell phone and stuck in a room of a psych ward which is basically a jail inside of a hospital. I was advised I could not have anything of any sort of elastic, razor blade or be out of eye sight from a nurse, 24/7 due to being upstairs for being Q5. Not long after I was shown my room, the younger female next door to me began screaming at the top of her lungs that she wanted a new room and refused to live next to me (later on apologizing saying I reminded her of her pretty college roommate that turned into a nasty bitch, but she likes me now. Ok, yea, thanks?). The yelling wouldn't stop and I just thought to myself how many hits I could get with just my left hand seeing my right is out of commission right now if this chick decided to want to fight. That night when I was about to shut my door, my new shadow aka nurse that was following me everywhere placed a chair right outside my room with the door open. "Everything okay?" I asked. "Oh yes, I'm sorry but because you're a Q5 patient, I have to stay here and keep you on overnight watch. GTFO. I had to have a nurse WATCH me sleep? This has to be a nightmare. I was able to get Benedryl to try and knock me out until the next day when Colleen came up to see me and we went into a private room. Poker face ... check. I had finally showered after a couple of days and my hand was throbbing, however I made sure to zip up my emotions for the emotional stress trooper. She began to ask me how I am, stating that she's been watching me and just when she thinks I'm going to break down, I zip up my emotions again and regain the blank stare. I apologized and told her this is just my defense wall to be able to endure all of this. She broke the bad news that the two days downstairs in the ER did not technically count for the five days I had to legally stay at the hospital. "You can't leave until Monday and that's as long as they clear you." WHAT?? No, no, no. I can't stay here, I have to be present for my duty status hearing. God, no. I told Colleen thank you for the visit and didn't want to see anyone else for the night. I recall going back to my room and letting out a cry, I mean one hell of a cry, to let it all out. I would stay in my room, only coming out to grab my chow in the cafe and bring it back into my hole. The psychiatrist was scheduled to see me Thursday afternoon (finally) and the nurses said I would be in trouble for not going to group, which consisted of extreme bi-polar, schizophrenics, neurotic patients that would yell and speak about the government putting them there ( I even heard one kid say the METS locked him up – sorry pal, the METS were gone and merged with the state police probably around the time you were 5 years old LOL). The doctor let me into his office along with two other doctors present. I could feel the judging coming out of their eyes like laser beams as they read my profile and awaited each and every slight response, whether verbal or physical out of me. POKER FACE, check! I explained to them my situation for Friday and being locked up in this facility is doing me more harm than good. I heard the news as I would walk by the televisions, I was on every station and the dink blogger was having a field day with me being his superstar for going viral online as a daily blog post. People would be trying to get in touch with me and I knew for a fact that my former friend would tell all of her badge bunny male "friends" who she just wanted to be close with (some literally if ya know what I mean). Sure as shit, the info was leaked that I was stuck at the hospital in the white trash kids blog. I allowed a few friends to see me and eventually Danny. When I saw Danny, I lost it yet again. \*Side note – I was starting to break a little with the whole "you're the strongest person" title, this was basically my breaking point. Danny's eyes are what broke me, the look of pain and hurt he showed when he looked to see how fragile and broken I had become being held against my will at this hospital. I became extremely sick with a lung cold, probably from depleting my body of food, being extremely dehydrated and more depressed than I have ever been in my entire life. That same night I tried to call someone who I wanted nothing more than to be able to talk to. I tried to call him at his work the night before, hoping he was on the desk. I had Danielle try and reach out as well, however she told me she couldn't get in touch with him. This night, I attempted again and he answered. What I expected and what I endured were two totally different emotions. Instead of the person who I fell in love with from getting close romantically with being his sweet, caring and over the top considerate self, he was cold, extremely cold and it took my breath away. I

wanted to vomit. I said I had to go, he said no wait as if he had changed his mind about trying to shut down, however I hung up. You see, two days prior to D-Day arriving, we had the conversation about who did worst things when they were growing up. I told him I would tell him when we got together that week, however he and I placed a bet. The bet was a night of beers out and who ever had the worst times before being a cop, would win. (Clearly I had this one in the bag). The fact of the matter is, time ran out and I didn't get a chance to spill my past out to someone I had trusted more than anyone I ever had before. Again, I'm not sure who I pissed off upstairs, however timing is everything and my god, the timing sucked. So, I hung up, ran to the bathroom in my room to throw up from the stress of it all and went to bed. Later on I learned that Danielle had spoken to this person and he stated he didn't want to talk to me. After all we had been through .... what had transpired. Yes, we were having an affair but to go from telling someone that you're falling in love with them to basically telling them to fuck off without saying it over a phone call when the person you're supposed to be in love with had just been through the worst incident of their entire life, that was harsh. The days went and there was a young kid, around 19 who would ask to eat with me when I went into the other room alone. He seemed so young, so naive and we began to talk about why he was there. Basically, this kid grew up with addicts for parents, ran away at 15, got into the wrong Haverhill / Lawrence area crews and began to do a lot of drugs. While in and out of rehab, he was homeless and tried to kill himself to get him back in good ole Saint Michael Psychiatric ward. I tried my best. I let him vent, told him what he should do, that he's a good kid, has his whole life ahead of him and can change. That if he needed anyone to talk to, I was there for him during my tenure in this mental prison. My heart really went out to this kid. You could tell his childhood had broken him down into shambles and he showed that he wanted to do right, however being someone who was a follower and not a leader, he would get wrapped up in his "friends" thefts and drug habits. I can only pray to god he is doing better now and has come around.

My duty status hearing was scheduled without me at the State Police General Headquarters with my former union attorney, Dan Moynihan. I was given the heads up by Danny that he had the Colonel was firm to push for suspended without pay, no matter what. My emotions were full of anger due to the fact that they were ultimately have a status hearing on me, not being present and being able to fight for myself and make the conclusion. Sure enough, the hearing came and Colonel Gilpin suspended me without pay. The schizophrenic 25 year old ended up liking me, at the end drawing me a card and offering me her sweater, which was super nice of her to do seeing I do believe she wanted to rip my throat out on day one. The day came of my release and my former friend went to pick me up. My hair hadn't been washed for a week and I was already requesting a blow out at my local dry bar seeing I had zero capability to do it on my own. We went and met Danielle at my favorite steak tip hole in the wall in Peabody and I saw there with a beer in my hand, feeling as if I had just gotten out of jail. What I came home too, broke me apart.

## Chapter 23: Reality.

I am convinced that different people awaken different beasts in you.

I had given permission for anyone to search my house for another gun. I knew there was NO gun, I knew they wouldn't find a damn thing. Well, they searched alright. Most of my stuff was still in boxes, I would say 80 percent? Well that 80 percent was now all over the place – the floor, all folded stuff ripped through, all kitchen stuff, you name it. My house looked like a tornado had hit it, aka as if it was a house we would have a warrant for at work to go through looking for guns or drugs. I was told they brought the K9s in to search the house as well to check for any potentially hidden guns and obviously, nothing was found. That next week I hit an all time low where many moments I would drink a bottle of wine, lay on my kitchen floor and just ball my eyes out. I couldn't watch tv, I couldn't read the papers but I was obsessed with checking the ahole blog to see what else he would fabricate about me. Days went

by where I didn't get out of bed. I asked to see my dog at the kennel and the egotistical, trash talking Sergeant Keane had already taken him and given him away to one of the newest K9 West team (and my classmate). My cruiser was gone the day I was in the hospital, my dog and all of my equipment. I felt like my life was over. I felt like I would be walking out to the media at the end of my driveway any day now. The blogger continued to bash me and the Howie Carr couldn't jump in fast enough to put me in the front page of the Boston Herald numerous times. I would read each and every comment in the comment section, despite everyone around me advising me not to do so. What I learned is the full and entire evil existence of the human kind. People were saying I blew my way to the top, that I am a disgusting human that they would like to fuck, that they hope I go and off myself. How? How can one sit behind a keyboard and spew such hateful, cruel and disgusting words about someone they don't even know? It's one thing to attack me, but seeing the full reality of what people endure in the limelight is absolutely horrible. No adult, no child, no human being should have to endure the absolute hatred of what people will say and write. I didn't have the internet growing up until my very late teens and cannot even fathom what the kids of this era have to go through with the bullying. Our worlds evil sadly can strike you dead in the face in life. The Boston Herald would end up using the photo of me years prior when I saved a rescue German Shepherd, donated the dog to my K9 unit and the media went into a frenzy as Mako becoming the "top dog" saved by a dispatcher (me). The irony of it all, huh? From being in the headlines for saving a stray turned K9 hero to being portrayed as the "Disgraced K9 Trooper" all in a matter of less than 7 years. I used to have Google Alerts activated for my name when I would be involved in a good pursuit, arrest, K9 apprehension, etc that would be implicated in the media .... now the Google Alerts I was getting daily made my sit on the floor of my bathroom, dry heaving with anxiety. Suicide still was something I thought about daily, my life in my eyes was already over. I had a four bedroom, almost 2,000 square foot house with an indoor/outdoor multi pen kennel insulated for heat along with A/C, a 2016 fully loaded Jeep Rubicon, no family other than a mother who was being extremely harsh to me for not reaching out (even though she should know how I shut down). My K9 was gone, my dogs were at Danny's still, my career gone. I had nothing .... I had no one. Just a big house I bought on a whim to be close to the highway for K9 calls that cost me \$2,380 dollars a month, a \$575 dollar a month car payment, no money left in my savings from spending it all on the house and the fear of even walking out to a store due to the fear of someone knowing who I was. I became to drink excessively and shut down from the world. We had a few whoppers of snow storms over the next month and I would attempt to shovel the foot of snow with a broken hand, injure it more, go inside and cry with a bottle of wine. Many did the "hope you're okay, stay strong" text, others who I assumed would reach out, who I was close with, did not. I began to feel I was trapped in a dark, disgustingly empty hole that I couldn't get out of. The people who didn't reach out hurt more than anything – one of my best guy friends on the job didn't even reach out once, one who was my classmate and little brother that I had so many good arrests and pursuits with, who I loved their wife and would be there with them through thick and thin, went MIA. My female classmates? No one reached out. One of my female classmates and I had a basic intervention with the other a month prior – she began dating a POS local who emotionally abused her and her toddler daughter. I wanted to be there for as much as I could. One day I had a few cocktails after yet again another Howie Carr punch in the face article and had a "fuck it" moment. I texted one of my best friends on the job (who was my "work husband" as a joke), poured my heart out on how I felt for his lack of reaching out and received the response of "I wanted to wait until everything died down." As a friend, I always reach out when things are HAPPENING .. not when things "die down." Message received and he was blocked. Next up, my classmate who was like a little brother to me, who was there the day everything happened. I assume he read the scripture posted on that stupid site and immediately judged, washing his hands of me. I texted him, poured my heart out and got back "All I am going to say is ... you're a survivor. Keep surviving." Message received. I let him know to stay safe, I'll always be there for him, however please delete my number. My trifecta? A female trooper from the class after me (83RD RTT) had a friend who I was also friends with in the gang unit. Prior to her going in, she was the well known Jen Penton from the reality show, Boston's Finest. I was informed that there were a lot of rumors, gossip and bullshit that was always spewed about this girl, who was leaving Boston Police Department to become a Trainee with us. I trusted my friend and said I would

be happy to meet her and of course, will make my own opinion based solely on nothing else but my own opinion. Basically, he knew I got my ass handed to me in the academy and wanted me to give her guidance. Paying it forward is something I try to do as much as possible. If there is any meaning of existence left in my life to this very day, its that I hope I can help someone, somehow, someway. I met Jen, I gave her a couple of hours of chatter about the academy, what she should expect (especially with Princess being a drill instructor again) and getting to know her as a person. Long story short, Jen would call me every weekend home from the academy in tears and broken down. It was basically PTSD for me – her fears of getting gigged out, Princess obsessed with her (due to her being a pretty, well known female), etc. She got out of the academy and most wanted to judge her and give their opinion of her based on the bull they had heard. I talked to my classmates, told them to give her a chance, Lieutenants and Sergeants, you name it. I had that girls back as much as I possibly could. Fuck anyone who wants to base their opinion on hearsay gossip and jealousy in this world. Make your own opinions, folks. Anyways, fast forward to my time in need and she went MIA as well. So, here came the long, drawn out message to her telling her how I will always have her back, was always there for her but the fact that she turned hers so quickly was truly a shitty move. You know what I got back for a response?

.... a thumbs up emoji. A THUMBS UP EMOJI. My friend Dan has always had a good feel on people when initially meeting them. He told me he had a bad feeling about her and disliked her from the get go. I should have listened. I guess having the fault of trying to look for the best in people isn't the worst flaw to have. During this time, another classmate of mine had gotten an OUI (operating under the influence) in the North Shore by another one of our guys and the media had gotten a hold of the story. I never heard from this classmate when my situation occurred, however as bitter as I had become in a sense I didn't want it to change my core. I reached out, told him if he needs anything I'm here, gave my cell and told him to be prepared for some people who you would assume to have your back, disappear. Since then, my classmate and I have become friends and he is someone I truly trust.

I began drinking more, taking up the disgusting habit of smoking cigarettes again and was in a deep depression. I hired a friend of Tami's (one of my best friends) who was an attorney in Charlestown as a defense attorney. My union lawyer was doing absolutely zero for me. His lack of communication with me and extreme coldness made me always wonder if he had a predisposed opinion of me seeing he was good pals with Dana Pullman, the now former president of the state police union. I felt extremely vulnerable and needed guidance. The attorney, Vikas Dhar was a saint. He was extremely polite, super professional and actually had me feeling as if he really did care. He went above and beyond with my phone calls and texts. Attorney Moynihan? I didn't even have his cell phone number. I would call and leave a message for him to respond a week later, always making sure to explain how busy he is. I get it, I totally understand that his office is busy, however if you can't handle the caseload, perhaps give a few away to the other union lawyers or leave the position at its entirety to focus on your own law firm? Attorney Dhar recommended I interview with the Boston Globe. He knew of a reporter, Shelly Murphy who would be compassionate and want to hear my story in order for me to get a chance to speak my truth. I thought long and hard about this, having to yet again go over my past after I had to explain it in detail to not only my union lawyer, defense attorney and now to a reporter was extremely hard. I knew for a fact it could piss the job off however the job was not longer loyal to me what so ever with the exception of the stress unit, who I will forever be grateful for. I thought long and hard about it and went through with the meeting with the Globe. Shelly and Andrea from the Boston Globe, may I add are two phenominal reporters who look at the gray between the black and white. Anyways, the story came out and sadly didn't do much.

A My tax money had come back so I was surviving off the skin of my teeth. A kid I knew from Gloucester in the dog world and who I was friends with, offered me a job working with one of his bed bug dogs for his company, he just had to fire his other employee first for multiple issues. I was dropped off a super quirky, super bitchy, pooped more

than I've ever seen a freaken dog poop of a Jack Russell Terrier. I worked her out of her kinks (well, as many as I could) and worked her on the down low so no one would get word to my media stalkers. A friend of mine in dispatch reached out and asked if I wanted to pick up shifts at a little local hole in the wall in Danvers. I thought long and hard about it, and said F it. I need the money and need it bad. Brian went out of his way to reach out and offer help and I will forever be grateful. It's people like that, who you may not always talk to on a daily, weekly, hell even monthly basis but they will always be there. Those are the ones in life to cherish as real. Brian had me on the bar and the tips were decent. The first night I worked, I drove home in tears. My life had literally did a drastic turn. I went from bartender to cop, back to bartender. I was miserable bartending, I hate it. I hate men staring at you, women and men judging you, getting attitude, having to put a fake smile on when you are screaming inside. I will say, however, I was always happy to be the one to physically escort patrons who were being kicked out, out. The look of surprise on a mans face when they are put in a walking arm bar by a 130 pound female is priceless. Not to mention, I had a lot of anger built up inside and this helped a tad. My K9 handler in the disgusting industry of the bed bugs came and went. I became close with my friend who owned the company, not sexual, not in the very least, but we became just good friends until one day when he told me ex-girlfriend who cheated on him before and moved away to become engaged with another fella was coming home and leaving her beau. She came home and I was suddenly unemployed. Her vagina must emanate rainbows and unicorns to fire your close friend from your company due to your now back again cheating girlfriend is home and she has an issue with me working for him. (Side note: never met the girl, sadly we probably would have gotten along too, I assume).

I began to learn who all the regulars at the Danvers dive bar slowly but surely. One of the bartenders, an older woman who had more mileage than a 1995 Honda Accord on her face from the years of drugs and drinking was always extremely peculiar with me. I had a bad feeling about this woman and began noticing her always staying after her day shift, watching me intently. I mentioned it to Brian that I thought something was up. Turned out, she was friends with my ex, Bucci. I then noticed one of Bucci's friends begin to frequent in and the interaction was always extremely uncomfortable as I tried to be professionally nice and would walk away as if I was busy if he began asking me too many life questions. Then, one night it got worse. The bar was full, typical weekend night when I saw an obese fella (who after a little internet investigating, I found him commenting on people's Facebook pages about blowing lines of coke and getting high) holding his phone up in a precarious way, almost as if he was trying to take my picture indiscreetly. I ran over to Brian and told him I think that guy is taking my picture. Well, sure as shit ... he was. The next day, the white trash blogger had my pictures on his page with an article of how I'm working at a bar in Danvers. I felt awful for the owners attention they may receive because of this and almost quit, however was told to ride it out and it'll pass. Well, pass it did not. Howie Carr began calling the bar relentlessly asking if I was working, when I was working, saying "I'm looking to buy some weed from Gendusol!" and then cackling about it the next day live on his podcast like he's some king champ for stalking me and saying what he said. The next week was fourth of July and I was off. Brian was working and I had no plans that night so I said I would come down to say hi and grab a beer. I came in and was told immediately someone kept calling and asking if I was working tonight. I answered the private call the next time and said I was, and to come on down. Sitting at the bar, I knew my initial reaction was probably extremely dumb, however I was numb ... I was at whits end. An hour later and Bucci's friend and some older guy walk in and sit across the bar from me. Brian looks over from across the bar and asks me if I want them kicked out. Not yet. No, not yet. I wanted to have some reasonable suspicion that it was them before going to that extreme. He looks at me and the confrontation begins. I told him seeing he was calling to see if I was working, here I am. This kid, who I won't give the satisfaction of naming in this book, yells across the bar "Go fuck yourself you rat piece of shit Trooper." That's when I jumped up as Brian began to tell them "that's it you're out of here." I was on the other side of the bar in two seconds, in a beach dress with a bikini on from being in Gloucester earlier, mind you! I walked over to Bucci's friend, and told him "let's go." He quickly responded with a "fuck you I'm not leaving" when I slapped the beer bottle out of his hand and grabbed his shirt. He got up and started to move when the older fella

who was with looked right at me and said “fuck you, (c u next tuesday) I’m not leaving.” “Yes, yes you are.” I grabbed him by the shoulder and arm, lifted this 5’7ish guy out of his chair and began to push him out when Brian jumped over with some others. As Brian was pushing him to the door, the old man pulled his neck down, shot it back up behind him and smashed Brian in the face. Both morons were outside finally and a Danvers PD cruiser drove by asking if everyone was all set. They said yes, crowd dispersed and Brian came back in with a welt on his cheek. After his shift, he ended up going to the hospital with a broken orbital. I felt so bad, my heart sank. I wish it was me who got the skull to the face, not anyone else. These assholes were causing a ruckus because of me, this was all my fault and it killed me inside.

Two days later, the trashy blog posted the bar brawl post. My other favorite stalker, Howie Carr jumped in on it saying he was to take the recognition for that because of his non stop phone calls into the bar. I was in the press yet again for removing those guys out of the bar. After that, I texted the owner how sorry I was, thanked him from the bottom of my heart for giving me the opportunity to work there and began looking again. At the time, I still had the K9 bed bug dog, the owner of the business didn’t give me his farewell you’re fired because my psycho girlfriend is back home until a little later on. He recommended previously of going to a bar in Gloucester to work called the Mile Marker One. I went and applied, told them what my deal was (my FULL deal) and was hired. The “bridge deck” bar there has to be one of the most popular summer spots in the north shore of MA. It over looked a gorgeous ocean canal with slips full of expensive fishing boats and high end luxury boats along with rental spots that filled with cigarette boats and pontoons. The locals there, the staff, everyone for the most part was amazing and treated me with nothing but respect.

Chapter 24: Summer comes, summer goes.

July into August was crazy busy at the Gloucester hot spot and I was making enough to get by with all of my bills. I was able to get my anger out on a few drunken patrons by having to escort them out right before they fought or when they were refusing to leave which was the highlight of my tenure there. I spent days upon days working doubles and drinking way to much tequila. My news story had become a bit stagnant with the exception of one story coming out about a few of my drug cases being overturned. I was beginning to loose hope in the job allowing me ever to go back, however I kept the hope inside that they wouldn’t keep me on suspension without pay for six months if they had any substantial backbone to simply terminate me. I dreamt of getting my job back and going into the Employee Assistance (Stress) Unit. Where else could I still love my job and would be able to help people? They would know I have been through the ringer and back and could hopefully in turn open up to me so I could help in any capacity possible. Even if I wasn’t allowed to testify in another case ever in my entire life, the Stress Unit would be perfect. I also envisioned being able to be a speaker for the MSP – perhaps going to schools, colleges, etc to be able to reach out to the youth. Tell people what not to do based on my screw ups and give them the hope that if you put your mind, heart, blood, sweat and tears into wanting something in your life to happen, you can. The news about the MA Pike Troopers being placed on suspension without pay, some even federally indicted for stealing six figures in overtime pay that they did not actually do became the story lines. Of course, my favorite old man stalker Howie Carr would throw my name into each and every single MA State Police Story that he could write about. I had zero union members reach out to contact me, ever. I knew Dana Pullman was behind it all and I hated him for it. One day, I received a call from Attorney Moynihan asking for an immediate meeting with Dana Pullman to discuss my case. I reached out to Colleen (stress unit) and she planned to come with me. We got to the meeting and there was Dana, louder and obnoxious as ever, strolling in. He sat down across from me at the table as Colleen was at my side. Dana began to talk. And talk. And talk. Not about my case, about the Bibeau case, about Danny and Frank Hughes, about how “I know you don’t like me Leigha, and I don’t give a fuck, you can hate me but I’m here to tell you this to help.” He tried saying that Danny made calls as a Major when I was in the academy to “leave his girlfriend alone.” Ok, Dana.

I grinned. Danny would never in a million years jeopardize my being in the academy by pulling a stunt like that. I knew what was going on. Dana came here solely for Dana. You see, Dana didn't come to help me and my case, he came to help the Bibeau case with trying to bring Danny and Frank down in law suites, hoping if he fabricated some bull shit lies enough to me that I would get mad and tell him secrets of them both. Secrets, may I add, I do not have nor would I even ever in a million years release to this scumbag if I had any. I kept kicking Colleen under the table and finally asked Dana politely if we could get back to the matters at hand and discuss why we were all here. Dana then began to talk more about himself for another solid 30 minutes of how great he is and how he is an open book with all his skeletons out, blah blah blah. Finally he got to what I wanted to hear. He stated he was in a union meeting with a few of the members, the Colonel and the Deputy going over each case when he asked whats up with mine. Dana stated that the Colonel said and quote/unquote, "I know for a fact over fifty people knew about Gendusó's past when she got on as a Trooper." Dana claimed he responded with "what the fuck did you just say?" and outside post union meeting, they all concluded they heard the same. This union president, the man that I still swear to this day has connections with the blogger, looked me in the eye and said "I will back you with this. I will testify on stand with what I heard, I will go to the media, whatever you need me to do." Dana left and I was in shock, however I still had that feeling in the back of my mind that it was a set up. Attorney Moynihan and I decided to draw up a letter to the Colonel advising her in our own words that we were well aware of the knowledge that a large amount of people on the state police were well aware of my past and I still was allowed in. We also made mention that we would have the capacity to file a law suit in accordance to the recent knowledge obtained. So, we pulled a wild card. Did I assume that it would piss Colonel Gilpin off? Yep. Did I have anything to loose at this point? Nope.

The letter was written and we called the Boston Globe in to give them the info we had in yet my second press interview. Once we sat down and began to discuss everything, Dana's name was mentioned when I looked over at Attorney Moynihan and asked if hes going to tell them about what Dana heard at the last union meeting.

"Oh, are you talking about the fact that Dana heard Colonel Gilpin say that fifty people or some number like that knew about your past?" Andrea Estes, the Boston Globe reporter chimed in. "Yes, yes I was! You guys already know?" I was slightly excited to hear. "Yes," she responded. "We immediately reached out to him and he said he had no comment and wouldn't call the Colonel a liar."

My heart sank. God dammit, Dana. You scumbag. You set me up. He knew I could possibly take that information and want to spend each and every single penny I had left on a law suit if he lied and said he would testify. THANK GOD for instinct. I knew he was bluffing and I won that hand in black jack. Sadly, with that hand won, I knew I was also defeated. At that very moment, I decided I would resign. I belted out the words and began to cry. So much for the poker face, this time I just couldn't contain myself. My walls were run thin. I could see the sadness in the faces of both Andrea and Shelly as I did. Defeat was now my status and I agreed with the attorney to type up my resignation. I left there and felt I had died. I called the one person I wanted to talk to who I was still in love with to help me. I was on the side of the highway, pulled over in the breakdown lane having a severe anxiety/crying meltdown. I couldn't breath, I couldn't talk, the tears were just too strong. Colleen was going to head down to General Headquarters as my fill in to hand it to the Colonel's secretary personally to make sure it was in before the article came out Saturday. This was Friday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017. This was the day my heart, my pride and my passion was ripped away from my soul. Signing that resignation later was signing apart of me to die. It hit me as hard as the day everything went down. I was no longer a Massachusetts State Trooper. And just when you think it couldn't get any worse, I was about to face yet another media nightmare the following day. The job released my resignation to Docushare (aka the Trooper's TMZ report to everyone's access) and Dave Procopio, the civilian in charge of releasing anything in public relations to the press, the one who used to send out my arrests, pursuits and apprehensions, had sent out at 2100 hours that night stating I was given a dishonorable resignation. Dishonorable. Really? After everything I endured, Colonel, you

felt the need to give me one more kick to the face on my way out? I didn't even know there was such a thing as a dishonorable resignation! Dishonorable discharge, yes. Resignation? Come on. Again, that set me off. My attorney promised we would contest it in a hearing seeing they had zero substance to the ruling due to it being a resignation, however as I finish this book, he no longer responds to my calls, emails or text messages. Toward the end of my case I felt that Attorney Moynihan had been coming around a bit and working a bit more aggressively to help, hell he even gave me his cell number, however at the end of the day, he could have cared less. Days went by, nights came and left and the expression "when you're gone, you're gone" truly came to surface. I've always heard, then literally saw men and women retire from the job and people react to it as if they are dead and no longer in the world now that they have departed from the state police. Being suspended at least had a lot of people reaching out, some I'm sure just to simply try and get the latest juicy scoop on whats going on with the invest. But after the resignation? I truly learned who wants to always be a part of my world. I also learned who only wanted to know you as a cop. The past year of my life I have learned more about the good and bad about human beings then I ever have.

The job front was going to a dead end each and every time. I put in for the overseas K-9 Handler jobs with the private sector multiple times in the spring, however my certifications were not up to two years so I did not qualify. I began to give up hope after over a hundred resume submissions to just the site Indeed.com alone, nevermind the other ones I am not even counting. Most companies responses would be the typical "sorry, we decided to move on to the next step of the process with other candidates, best of luck" after reading my resume, seeing I had the dream career and was downgrading. That's a tell tale red light to go and google the shit out of the person's resume. A portion of the time I would make it to the in person interview, feel I did great at it, then get the good ole "thanks but no thanks" email in the nicest way possible.

September 2018 had come and my life span left with the Mile Marker in Gloucester was coming to an end. The bar is a seasonal hot spot and after Columbus Day, the area becomes a ghost town. My love life was hot and cold – I tried to date and had dated a 31 year old firefighter, however I was still in love with a man that I could not ever have. The emotional toll this had taken on me for ten months was something I wouldn't wish upon anyone and the saying "you want your cake and to eat it too" was a disgustingly real, true fact for this person I was wrapped up with. A friend of mine who owns a very popular and lucrative K9 training facility ended up agreeing to go into business with me regarding narcotics dogs. I won't get into the logistics of it because we are still working on our first dog, however we ended up buying an amazing 9 month lab puppy from a breeder that has the reputation by another state police K9 unit in New England for producing the best narcotic and bomb dogs at the cheapest range. Steve, the owner of K9 Top Performance here in Reading MA and I went and scooped up their pick of the litter, the one they wanted to keep for their breeding program due to her outstanding behavioral traits already being observed at such a young age, which they couldn't actually end up being able to keep due to other litters being born. She is now in the process of training in narcotics and is by far one of the most wittiest K9s I have ever seen at such a young age. Molly is currently being trained in narcotics as we speak and killing it in training. I put my resume into a life insurance agency, had the interview, nailed it and was hired on the spot. They advised me I was going to be scheduled after the holiday weekend to take the MA Life Insurance Agent test. The test usually takes a few weeks to study for and I was working four doubles in a row for the holiday weekend. They assured me if I don't pass the first time, I could take again and have the job. I crammed as much of the study time for the test as I could, and let me tell you ... it was painful. Ever try to study something that was so insanely boring that you would be legit reading the page, get to the bottom and realize you were thinking of shit on your mind while you were reading therefore you weren't really reading in terms of processing through your brain? Yep ... welcome to life insurance. Long story short, I went to ask the manager a question regarding the test ... no response. Email was sent, then to the secretary regarding date of potential second exam ... no response. I told my friends I had a bad feeling that they googled me and I was no longer apart of the process. Sure as shit, a day later I received an email from the owner of the company saying they had decided to go a



different route with the hiring and I am no longer apart of the process, however wish me best of luck in finding a career in life insurance.

I ... give ... up.

I had quit my bar tending job for a job that just fired me before I could even start. Thankfully at the same time I had depleted my SMART Plan (employee deferred compensation plan) out for a whopping 20 thousand dollars to hold me over and continued to apply on job websites like crazy. One day, I received a call from a company called Securitas, a world wide security company that I guess I had submitted my resume for a managers position. I walked into this interview, loved the human resources recruiter and she made mention of me meeting the other flex team manager as well as the branch manager, who would be my boss. I was then warned that the branch manager was a former police officer as well and can be very "harsh" and "intimidating." I smiled. "You mean hes basically like a lieutenant at the barracks of my former job? I got this" and walked into his office. As I was interviewing for my second portion of the day, I noticed while I was talking to the other manager, the boss was on his computer typing away. "Fuck. he's doing it. He's googling me, as I speak," I thought to myself. The boss sat there, no expression changed while focused on the computer. Typical cop – no emotions shown to change what was found out like hearing in your cruiser the suspect you have pulled over has a warrant for assault and battery with a deadly weapon as you walk back over to the car with that knowledge in your head. I left with my usual poker face which was the equivalent of a smile and fake confidence and left knowing I probably wouldn't hear from them. Driving back home I called a company I googled to see how much it would cost to erase my negative google history from the web. Well, they don't technically erase it, per se but will add positive articles to supersede the negatives in order to get the ones that discredit you to be at the end of the search. I asked how much the cost was? Seven thousand dollars. SEVEN THOUSAND. DOLLARS. I spit my coffee out when I heard that price. "Ok, thank you for your time, have a nice day." And that was that. As I was on the phone, I had a call come through on the other line from a number I did not know but by the time I hung up my call, I had a text. "Hey, it's \_\_\_\_\_ from Securitas. Can you come meet me in the parking lot to talk?" Fuck. The branch manager wanted to speak to me. I knew what it was, I knew what was about to happen. I advised him I would be enroute and back in ten. I was shaking and apart of me wondered why I was even going back to hear the same old song and dance. I was back at the company's lot and met up with the boss. He began to talk to me like a cop with the typical F bomb language that I know and am so comfortable with speaking. He said he had googled me while I was being interviewed, I admitted to him that I had already knew. He said he had to resign as a police officer years ago for getting into a jam, knew how it felt to be belittled by the media and wanted to say, if I want the job, it's mine. This man told me that he believes in second chances, knows the past is the past, we all make mistakes and whats important is what we do in the future. I wanted to cry and hug him all at once. Someone, after months and months and months of being rejected, time and time again, was actually giving me a second chance. He told me the job sucks and the pay was only \$20 dollars an hour, however I couldn't say yes fast enough. I don't care if I have to take a loan out on my mortgage to pay the bills, I wanted to prove to him and the company I am able to be the best manager I can for the job, despite how shitty the job or pay actually is. To try and describe the amount of appreciation I have for these people ... I can't even put it into words. I said from the beginning, I believe in second chances and everyone deserves one, in this case for me ... two. The past is to prove that no one is perfect and the future is to prove that everyone can change if they truly want to.

I am not sure where my future will lead me. As of right now, I could loose my house, am still battling depression, the feeling of being truly alone and the constant battle of being able to pull myself out of bed each and every day. I have taken my anger from the events that have taken place over the past year of 2018 and focused it into training at the gym and training hard. In order to alleviate my vices of wine and tears, I am back to the gym for usually two hours a day of cardio and weight training and feel to be in the best shape I have ever been in. People always tell me I am

doing to much at the gym, many at the gym ask me if I am competing in a weight lifting competition when they see me throw two hundred and seventy five pounds on a dead lift bar. I get yelled at by other gym friends constantly to stop the heavy weight throwing before I injure myself, but I don't care. Betting myself up physically in a positive manner helps me cope with every day life stress. If I didn't have that outlet, I don't know what I would be doing.

In conclusion, I know I will be judged relentlessly from what I have wrote, however from my past battles of online hate comments, media frenzies and human beings who I thought I would have by my side through thick and thin, I think I am ready to be open and honest and tell my story. Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent of how you react to it. In the future, I hope to inspire others who are out there also struggling. I know the feeling of the depths of depression, the feeling of suicidal thoughts, the struggle of being financially almost bankrupt and how it truly feels to be alone. Point of the matter is folks, you're never alone. There are millions of people out there who may not have the exact same story as you, not the same exact pasts or situations, however there is help out there to be found. Focus on therapy, online groups, whatever you need to help you during your time of need. The first step toward success is taken when you refuse to be a captive of the environment in which you find yourself in. Just as the academy days, I am taking each day as a day by day process to get through and hopefully, eventually succeed. I hope to someday be able to be a public speaker to our youth community, get back into mentoring children in need and continue somehow, some way with working with police K9s in what ever capacity I can. But for anyone out there who needs someone, if I can help you in what ever way possible, I would like to try. You are not alone, we are not alone and this world needs more light and love in it to conquer the evil, jealousy and hate that so many focus on. The one thing I wish to ask of you all, no matter what is to always try and pay it forward.

And when you're having a bad day? SMILE. Think positive and remember ... when others are trying to bring you down? DON'T LET THEM. Use a poker face and keep on trucking.

"For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone" - Audrey Hepburn