To understand my anxiety, one must know about the events that precipitated it. In May 2009, I was in my last class period wondering what I was going to do after school. I didn't want to go home just yet, but I also didn't have any money or many friends to stay in town with. Unfortunately, that decision was made for me when halfway into class my phone started blowing up with calls and texts from family and family friends. I was annoyed, but it didn't register that something serious could be happening. I excused myself from class and called my dad in the bathroom. The first words that came out of his mouth were, "The house burned down." All I could mutter was, "What?" The days that proceeded were excruciating. Everything from my childhood was lost, and I started to question my identity. Who was I now that I didn't have my childhood artwork? All the stories I had written? My prized possessions? Two short weeks later, I was spending time with my boyfriend, Austin, at my temporary home. We had a lovely day watching movies, listening to music, and just enjoying each other's company. He had been my light in the darkness. We made plans to hang out the next day, but when the next day came he didn't come over. He had to work on his car because something went wrong with it. Being the selfish teenage girl I was, I didn't find that as acceptable and I was angry. We were texting, and I said hateful things. Ugly things. Then the texts went quiet. He had died. The lift that was holding up the car gave in and his car crushed him. It was a freak accident, but I blamed myself for it for years. I shouldn't have been distracting him and I felt so guilty. By the time I had learned of his death 10 days later, his funeral had come and gone. The day after learning of his death, I was involved in a car accident that sent someone to the hospital and totaled my car. I was driving too fast, and looking at the radio instead of the road. I never learned the fate of the person I injured.

All of these things happened within less than a month, but it took a long time for the effects to catch up with me. I suddenly became afraid of dying young. I was newly 17, the age Austin was at his death. I thought to myself, "It happened to him, it could happen to me." My first panic attack happened later that summer, when I was driving to my dad's house. I didn't know what was happening, but I honestly thought I was dying. I pulled over to the side of the road, hoping someone would find me before I died. I couldn't breathe, my chest hurt, my heart was racing, and fear crippled me. At the time, I still didn't understand it was a panic attack and so every time I experienced one, I thought I was having a heart attack. I would think it was the end of my short life. A year later I moved to Austin, TX so I could attend college. I was living with my sister, and had a wonderful boyfriend, Aaron. Life was going really well, until the panic attacks started happening again. I was with Aaron at IHOP when the first major one struck. My heart beat was clocking in at 250 beats per minute so Aaron drove me to the ER, where I underwent a series of tests to check for a pulmonary embolism. Thankfully, I was in the clear, but the snowball had already started rolling. I started to attribute panic attacks to pulmonary embolisms and heart attacks. I suddenly became paranoid of having one or the other or even both. Over the course of about four months, I started having panic attacks on a regular basis. Each time, thinking I'm dying. It got to the point where I couldn't go to my classes anymore so I dropped out of fall semester at college. Then I couldn't go to grocery store alone anymore. Eventually, I was terrified of walking to the mailbox. In my mind, I was safer at home if something were to happen to me. If I wasn't in the car, then I wouldn't crash my car. If I was afraid, I could lay in bed, which was my comfort zone. But I wasn't safe at home because I started to have panic attacks there.

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When night rolled around, and the rest of the world was asleep I would ask, "Who will save me if everyone is sleeping? Who will hear my cries for help?" By the end of the year, I was having on average four panic attacks a day. Four. A day. I became depressed, I slept all the time, I became clingy in my relationship, I stopped caring about my appearance, I ate all the time, and I stopped caring about life. I thought to myself, "Dying would be better than living like this," but I was terrified of dying. It was a perpetual cycle of self-abuse. I was living in my own hell. Eventually, I started to see a therapist who diagnosed me with agoraphobia and panic disorder. I was given medication. It saved my life. I had Xanax to take when I couldn't calm myself down from a panic attack. I had Prozac to help with my depression and anxiety. I was slowly getting better. However, my anxiety had already taken its toll on my life. I had dropped out of my second semester of college which meant that my family was no longer supporting me so Aaron moved in to my apartment. But I woke up one morning in May 2011 to Aaron sitting on the bed and he told me it was over. He couldn't be the punching bag for my anxiety anymore. I was heartbroken and had no choice to move back home with my parents. I stayed on my medication, and my anxiety soon became a thing of the past. I was attending cosmetology school, I could walk to the mailbox, and drive to the grocery store alone. I even travelled to the other side of the world by myself.

God's love was my saving grace, but it wasn't always that way. I had had a relationship with God in the past. He had even spoken to me once, and it was the most beautiful thing I had experienced. I couldn't deny Him for I had known him. So during these years of turmoil whenever I had experienced anxiety, depression, and panic attacks I always turned to Him. I would beg and plead for him to take away my suffering. I would pour out my heart and cry until there was nothing left to cry. I was

so desperate and I just wanted God to heal me. Whenever I did this, I felt his love fall over me like a blanket, and through my veins like a flood. But I still had anxiety, and I thought to myself he's abandoned me. So I turned my back on God. I walked away from the only one who knew me better than anyone else, and who loved me more than anything else because I couldn't understand why a God who loved me let me suffer. Then one night I found myself in a bad spot after years of "remission" from my anxiety. I began having panic attacks, and I was running on little sleep, a poor diet, too much stress, and was feeling worthless. I was so overwhelmed with my emotions that I found my spirit broken. So I kneeled on the floor and exposed my soul and the tender most areas of my heart. I stood naked before God and sought forgiveness, understanding, patience, love, and acceptance. I cried the kind of gut wrenching cry that can only come with a truly broken heart, and He was the only way it would heal.

When there was nothing left to cry, and nothing more to say I felt God's presence with me in a way that I had never felt before. He prompted me to open the Bible, and when I did I found Luke 10:27 "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." It wasn't until I lived this scripture and came to know Christ as my savior that I found true peace and healing. God's grace saved me from my anxiety. He saved my life.