

The Struggle Is Ours...
By Anonymous

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I didn't know, in all truthfulness. I didn't know that his interest in porn was a life-long addictive struggle. I didn't know that I contributed to the problem all along.

What I did know was that he was absent, in every sense. After the birth of our first child it became extreme. He spent longer hours at work, he became more short-tempered and unhappy, and he seemed more disinterested in us.

My dad left us when I was barely walking. This is what men do, I thought. They leave. Marriage and children drive them away.

I began to daydream about running, leaving him before he could leave us. As he discussed plans for a career change, I felt he was cheating or had cheated.

I'm not naïve, at least not in the sheltered sense. My parents were hippies. I understood casual sex to be a natural thing. Men were voracious consumers and women were open fields. It looked like intimacy.

I guess my desperation for security and love created a tolerant world for him to exploit my hippie freedom. He was a good boy wanting to be bad.

I trusted his direction more than my own intuition. After all, he had been raised in a seemingly normal world, unlike mine. His parents were married, went to church and actively involved in his life.

I stuffed him entirely and inclusively into my God-sized hole.

But lets back up, there was more.

When we first moved in together, I would wake in the middle of the night to find him typing away on the computer, in chat rooms, using my profile. I was uninterested in this new cultural phenomenon and saw it as just that.

Not much later, his fantasies about a threesome became a reality. I suppose I was curious, too. But more than anything, I wanted to please him, to keep him.

How was I to know that day by day, year by year, I was losing him?

We got married and cultivated the American Dream. If you had asked us then, we would have bragged about how happy we were.

We threw elaborate parties and attracted all types of friends. With one foot in the church, we rode the fence vicariously. He enjoyed a freedom he was never allowed as a child, and I relived the high points of my childhood from what seemed a safe vantage point: marriage.

One young woman in our circle of friends consumed us. She was unhappy in her marriage and hungry for, well everything. She spent all her time and energy with us, acting as a needy girlfriend. When we all had too much to drink, she was more ravenous, particularly with physical attention.

She left her husband for another man. Strangely, she turned on me though I was supportive. Our relationship ended abruptly.

My ten-year high school reunion rolled around. I traveled back to the Midwest with my girlfriend and was blindsided by an old, unresolved relationship. He preyed on my vulnerability and spoke to dissatisfaction in my marriage that I hadn't examined.

I kept him a secret for several months after I came home. The secret was so exciting. He pursued me! I was not able to make love to my husband then. He became foreign to me while this other man became someone I was sharing my heart with through emails and over the phone daily.

Finally, I came clean and felt instant relief. The emotional affair ended, teaching me so much about the lure of indiscretions. I clung even more to my husband.

As we expected our first child, I slowly disposed of my husband's porn library. We agreed that we didn't want our child, a sitter, anyone, finding them.

We crossed over into our Christian world. My husband led worship and became an elder for our twenty-something-aged church community. We were on the right track.

That's when he began disappearing quickly. I assumed he was unhappy at work. I didn't worry that he was attracted to me, despite the two pregnancies. He was always attentive, even inappropriately attentive, making comments about how sexy I was as I stood there with baby spit up on my disheveled clothes.

I was aware at how much time he spent on the computer at work and at home. I knew much of it was on porn sites. He told me it was a distraction from the stress.

It was his absence that was the breaking point; even for a flower child like me, tolerance has a bottom.

I voiced my worry, my loneliness, my disappointment. My words floated up into the sky unheard, unmet.

I desperately turned to my wild side, hoping to awaken him again. I found myself in a situation with a friend from a mom's group. While I invited them to party with us, they felt invited to swing. My husband gave me no protection from their offering and advances that continued for several weeks.

He wasn't going to fight for me. God! I wanted him to!

My heart could always see him for who he was. I love him.

It was this longing, longing for love, for intimacy, for protection, that carried me through the coming devastation.

With the feeble support of our young church, I left him, exposing our secrets.

For a month, he emotionally cleaned out his closet before an audience of other churchmen. He stood against the wall as they aimed.

And for the first time in his life, he humbled himself.

He was asked to step down as worship leader. He gave up his eldership.

I prayed for a miracle. It came in an unexpected way.

When he finally confessed to an affair with my ravenous girlfriend, I was in awe of his courage. As strange as it sounds, I knew that he had everything to lose and chose to be honest. That was courage, I thought.

I went home to the dismay of my family and our church community. People said it was unhealthy, too early. Our pastor friend told me I was a dog going back to my own vomit.

I joined him face down on the floor at night. I carried my own cross of shame; we were convicted by God's holiness.