

Shelly

Last night it rained. It was so quiet in the ward. I just lay there, and listened to the rain outside, and for a little while, I forgot about all the bad shit. I have alot of bad shit in my life, but for awhile anyway, while I was listening to the rain last night, I wasn't thinking about it so much.

I have AIDS, and I have this kind of pneumonia that I can't even pronounce. This is the third time I've had it, and there's something wrong in my joints too, and maybe in my nerve system. They don't know for sure. The doctor says as soon as I feel a little bit better, he'll start looking for what's wrong. I told him he might want to start looking for what's right, instead; that that would be more of a...uh...challenge! He said I had a sick sense of humor. "It goes with the rest of me," I said, and he said, "See what I mean?"

But really, sometimes I feel like I'm just giving out. My body is just...fading away one part at a time. It doesn't even surprise me anymore when I feel a new pain. It's like, "Okay, it's there now," and somehow it doesn't effect me that much. It's weird.

Other times I wonder what I did to deserve this. You see, I know I made alot of mistakes in my life, but, I don't know, it kinda seems like I'm paying and paying and it only gets worse all the time. I mean, I was never bad, you know. Weak, maybe. But I never killed anybody or even hurt or cheated anybody or anything like that. It's the honest truth. I swear.

But I do admit, I was weak. Real weak. Still does that mean I deserve to die? Or that my baby deserved to die?

I know I was a junkie. That's mainly what I mean when I say I was weak. And I know it's easy to put the blame on your family for what went wrong in your life, but the truth is, I do blame them.

My mother left when my brother was twelve and I was only nine. My father was an alcoholic, and I can't really blame her for leaving him, but I can never understand how she could leave my brother and me. One day she was there and the next, she was just gone. I never saw her again.

Anyway, after that my life was hell and when I met Clive I was only fourteen. He said he would take care of me, and he did for a long time. By then my brother was an alcoholic, too and be-

tween him and my father screaming and fighting and breaking and throwing things around, I really thought my life was in danger. Once my brother threatened to kill Clive if he didn't make me go home, and Clive beat him up real bad. After that, Clive and I ran away and came here because, after all, I was only fourteen and they could have made alot of trouble for Clive. Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you, he was twenty-five.

One day I found this box with all this stuff in it. Needles and little bags, a spoon and stuff, you know. I was kind of cleaning and I found it up on top of this really tall chest. Clive got high alot. I knew that, but I never thought he might be shooting up. I got high, too, on pot and sometimes we'd snort coke or a little speed. Oh, and one time we ate these mushrooms that made us feel really strange. But I never would have thought Clive was shooting up. In fact, he used to tell me he never would, and that I shouldn't either. But when I found that box I knew exactly what it meant. And, to tell you the truth, I was a little excited.

Well, to make a long story short, pretty soon I was doing it too. Speed and coke mixed together was what we liked the most, but later it was heroin. Only heroin.

Things got really bad. Clive stopped working and it got harder and harder to come up with enough money to buy the smack we both needed. Then one day he just disappeared. I think he realized he couldn't be responsible for me anymore, even though I'm sure he wanted to. It must have hurt him alot, because Clive loved me. I know that. Nothing will ever change that.

So then some friends of mine got me to go to this clinic, and I got into a program to kick the drug. It was really hard, but I did it. I stopped and just when everything was going good, I got sick. I could barely breathe and my lungs hurt so much,

I had heard about AIDS, but Clive and I never shared needles with anybody but each other, and I know he never made it with guys, so I didn't think about it much. When they told me it was AIDS and that I had...that kind of pneumonia, I wouldn't believe it. It took a long time before I would. I don't know, I guess I got it from Clive, from what he did before he met me, or at least what he did when he was away from me.

Oh yeah, I also found out I was pregnant. Of course I had an abortion. It was the right thing to do, but if I hadn't had AIDS, I would have had the baby.

I still miss Clive. I wonder if he's dead or alive.

Last night it was so nice to just lie there and listen to the rain and not really think about any of this. But then, after a little while, I remembered how Clive and I would lie in bed on rainy nights after we'd made love, and listen to the drops on the window, and then I started to think about our baby and whether it was a boy or a girl and what it would have been like if Clive had stayed and pretty soon, my mind was just jumping back and forth from one thing to another and I couldn't stop it.

The funny thing is, what always happens, is that finally I got to thinking about one thing and one thing only. You know what it is?

How much I want another hit...just one more rush. Sick, isn't it?