

Contents Flammable

by

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Cast of Characters

NORA:

Mid 30's

MODERATOR:

Early 40's

JACKIE:

Mid 30's

TIFFANY:

Late 30's

KIMBERLY:

Mid 30's

Place
Building

Time
Evening

Setting: Building. Evening.

At Rise: Nora, Moderator, Tiffany, Jackie, Kimberly and others are sitting within a group circle.

MODERATOR: It's so nice to see you in a better place, Kimberly. Thank you for sharing your uplifting story. It shows all of us that if we hang in there long enough, there is light at the end of the tunnel. (beat) We all need that...Nora? Would you like to say something?

NORA: I'm nowhere near where Kimberly is and it makes me angry. (to Kimberly) I'm not saying I wish you bad, Kimberly. I don't. It makes me angry to listen to your happy story because I don't see anything good coming out of the tragedy of what happened. Nothing at all.

MODERATOR: That's normal and it's okay for you and anyone else in this group to feel that way.

NORA: I don't want to feel this way! I want to be happy and proud like I used to be.

MODERATOR: That's good, that's important to be aware of your needs.

NORA: My needs? My needs are to go back in time and fix what happened but that's impossible, isn't it?

MODERATOR: Yes but---

NORA: I have these stupid words implanted in my brain that I can't seem to ever get out. Over and over again they play on me. I memorized the side of the bottle. I wanted to be clear to myself as to what I had done and repeating the phrase on the bottle to myself, reminds me of how horrible a person I am.

I just couldn't quit the damn smoking. Had a habit of leaving my cigarettes lit when I'd put them down and forget 'em. My daughter, always used to play with my hair spray bottles. She would spray and then brush her dolls hair. Ha Ha, so cute she was.

...One day she was playing in the bathroom, while I was getting ready for work. Anyway, I was smoking my cigarettes and decided to put it down on top of the sink in order to fuss with my hair. Then the phone rang, the babysitter and I was distracted.

That's when my baby daughter sprayed her hair bottle just right which caused the cigarette and the hair spray bottle to ignite and catch fire to the bathroom towel and to my daughters pretty face...

When I saw her...I screamed...went to put the fire out...I put my hands all over her tender face while she kept screaming my name...

(sighs)

I panicked. I pulled her out of the bathroom, then back in the bathroom. I dunked her head into the toilet to put out the flames.

NORA: (contid') She was coughing and...the rest is history.

My daughter is blind because of me. Because I smoked cigarettes, because I was stupid. Now my baby daughter is gonna be blind for the rest of her life and I did that. I took those beautiful blue eyes she had and singed them forever...FOREVER...

MODERATOR: When my son Ron was hit by a car because of riding his skateboard into the street, no one else was to blame but me. I still blame myself. That never goes away. I was the one that said yes when he asked me to get it for him. I was the one who helped him pick out which skateboard he wanted, I was the one who watched him ride down the block with it for the first time and I was the one who saw him get hit by a black mercedez-benz.

Not a day goes by when I don't ask myself, what if. What if I told him no? What if I chose a different skateboard? What if I told my son to stay out of the street? Something I didn't have the decency to do because I thought he knew better and...

Seeing him laying there, with his head against the back wheel of the tire, staring up at me as I approached him. His first words were, "I'm sorry, Mommy". Imagine? My son Ronald sorry for what I caused. My son apologising to his horrible mother.

Well, those images will never leave me alone. I wrestle with them, try to pin them down and black them out, try to erase them, try to paint a different story...but I can't...burned. Those images are burned forever in my memory, for life.

It's been ten years. Ten years going on yesterday. But I promise you something, Nora. I promise you with all my heart and soul that there will come a day when you wake up in the morning and the heaviness in your chest comes loose and you find yourself breathing. It's like taking your first breathe of life all over again.

What you feel won't ever go away. That's a fact. A fact all of us cope with. But you will breathe again. I don't know how and I don't know when but you will. I guarantee it.

NORA: Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing your story.

MODERATOR: We have all suffered from an event that has brought us here together. You are not alone. I am here for you and so is everyone else in this room. (beat) I need you all as much as you need me.

NORA: I feel that. I feel your strength and everyone in this room. Thank you all.

(Everyone in the room responds in their own way with nods of agreement and support.)

It's good to know I am not alone. It does help.

MODERATOR: Jackie's daughter lost her eyesight as well.

NORA: (to Jackie) Has she?

JACKIE: Four years ago this month. This coming Tuesday the fourteenth to be exact. Playing on the swing set in our yard.

NORA: I'm sorry.

JACKIE: How old is your daughter?

NORA: She's turning twelve.

JACKIE: My daughter is ten. Maybe we can introduce them at some point.

NORA: That would be nice.

JACKIE: How is your daughter coping with it?

NORA: She doesn't blame me but I fear that that will one day change. That's one of my biggest fears actually. That she'll turn on me.

MODERATOR: Keep giving her all the love she needs.

NORA: I do. I even think too much. Don't want to smother her but it's like I can't do enough now because of what's happened...my husband...he's changed. Oh, I don't want to hog up the session...next time.

MODERATOR: No, no, that is what we are here for...please, we want to know.

NORA: My husband, he doesn't, he's changed. He holds a great deal of resentment towards me and blames me for what happened. He doesn't say it to me, he says the opposite in fact, but he does. I think he secretly hates me. We don't make love like we used to. We don't communicate with one another like we used to...like something died and I try, you know, I try so freaking hard to get it back but at this point I'm just living with it, with how things are between us...

MODERATOR: Has your husband tried talking to anyone?

NORA: Jim? No way! (sarcastically) Jim is a man's man. He would never agree to it. I don't know how to reach him. Whenever I try talking to him he runs off, ignores me or bursts out in anger. I've given up.

MODERATOR: Heal yourself first. When you grow strong, so will he.

TIFFANY: Can I say something?

MODERATOR: Of course.

TIFFANY: After what happened to my son, my husband didn't talk to me for almost a year. We talked but not *really* talked. Then one day, we were sitting outside on our porch and he burst into tears and sobbed for an hour in my lap. We were on the verge of divorce but by some miracle he came around. I think it was because I learned to cope with it and I was strong and through my own strength, I kept my marriage.

NORA: Those are some big shoes to fill.

TIFFANY: Give it time. Day by day, you will inch closer.

MODERATOR: Heal yourself first. I can't state this enough. You have to do you, get yourself right and hopefully you and your husband can get right.

NORA: Okay...okay.

MODERATOR: Okay. (beat) Would anyone like to speak next?

END OF PLAY