

The first rule of writing is 'write what you know', and what I know is that abuse robbed me of who I was meant to be for almost forty years. And I also know now I am turning what I know into beautiful inscription. At only six years old, I met Abuse, and she lingered and dominated my life for a really long time. I had a little sister so I learned to survive and to keep us both going. 'Keep going'. It was my mantra. 'Keep going' propelled me for so long, but there comes a point where merely surviving and 'keep going' have to run out. Time to deal with all the abuse. When this time hits, you will either completely sink, or go through hell to be completely whole. I am a story of both.

God knew I needed to stop with the 'keep going', and knew me well enough to know I had been endowed with far too much stubbornness to make myself stop. Two years ago, God delivered the STOP. A hiking accident. I busted my head open on a rock. I should have been dead, but somehow alive with my face and head busted open. A concussion for four days where I couldn't even listen to music because I could not handle any stimuli. A long time before I would be healed enough that I could workout again. I was broken: emotionally and physically. A lifetime of abuse had caught up with me, and I had no outlets. I was so weighed down by all that happened to me that I wanted to die. Every day I wanted to die because I could not carry any more pain.

All of my life, I only had one thing to rely on: writing. It was my outlet, my characters at times were my best friends (sometimes my only friends), it was my soul, it was my peace. It was my belonging. I chose not to take medication for depression during this time because the pills could numb it for a time but would probably return with more problems. I held to the fortitude that if I could really go through this hell for two years, I could come out on the other side Whole. Really whole. Completely whole. At peace, and loving the life I was always meant to have. I relied on all I had. I came in from terrible days of teaching, and I wrote. Every weekend, all weekend, I wrote. I wrote.

I wrote it all out. I wrote myself to Whole. In this time, I wrote four novels, one, *It's Just Broken*, gutted me completely and brought me back to life. Being authentic to my characters was so difficult because some of it really was writing out exact scenarios that happened to me, and being that transparent can be so vulnerable, especially to yourself. Some days I wrote a scene then curled up in a ball and cried and ached for my six year old self having to endure that. As painful as all of it was, I believe I will one day call this the best time of my life - the time I finally found peace. March 18th is my birthday, and this year was to be my 40th. I had always promised myself that I would be published before 40 so on March 16, 2016 I made that happen. I published *It's Just Broken*. The hard part is that I am not alone. Yes, I said hard part. Because as I have shared my story, I have constantly met more and more and more people who say they were abused too. The most prevailing motivation for me now is that my brokenness can be used to heal so many other broken people, and then all I went through will have a unique purpose.

If you learn to trust, you will discover that God knows the right timing and the right people to come into your life. At the time I was ready to publish *It's Just Broken*, I found out I could not get the rights to the cover that I wanted. I was so disappointed and, quite honestly, ready to give up. Then I saw a student, Kasey Vandenboom, drawing in my class. Her art was captivating. I asked her to do the cover, and each Point of View in *It's Just Broken* had her own butterfly to represent her character; Kasey did those as well. Her cover was even more amazing and fitting for my book than the one I originally wanted, and with as much authenticity as I poured into writing these characters, I was thrilled they had authentic art as well. Kasey has done the artwork for all three novels that I have published, and we plan to feed each other's creative outlets to the end of time. Our second cover that we did together, *Echoing Silence*, was truly like Kasey took the image in my head and brought it to life, and I am so blessed that we found each other and how well we enhance each other's art. We have three novels that are published, and we have our 1st Book Signing coming up on May 25th 4PM-7PM The Artisan at Brightleaf Clubhouse, 2015 Copper Leaf Pkwy, Durham, NC 27703.

Two months since I published, and already have three published novels and a book signing, and I know this is only the beginning. I've always been a talented writer, but I wouldn't have been completely capable of living in the peace of being a published writer and giving all of the gratitude to God for making that happen until I went through these past few years. Now in the peace, I end my teaching career, and begin a more important journey: Writer and healer of other broken souls. www.lavinabond.com