

# Foreword

I know it's unusual to have three people write a foreword, and even stranger for the author to add something, but I wanted my siblings' perspective on how they handled the OCD situation. So here are my amazing sisters, who somehow still love me despite all the hand-washing reminders.

Bossy Empress:

Watching my sister navigate her journey with OCD was quite an experience. It wasn't annoying at all because I kind of related to what she was going through, but sometimes I'd find myself thinking, "What is wrong with this woman sef?"

Her journey has changed our relationship in many ways. Most times when I want to do something, I think about how she will feel about this or that being here or there. It has also helped shape how I see and do things.

Through this experience, I learned that every person has their own struggles and their own way of dealing with them. Showing them compassion and love while they go through what they're going through is so important. I learned to be open and kindhearted with people going through things like this.

To anyone reading this who may be struggling with OCD or other mental health issues: open up to people around you and let them know what you're going through. Teach them, if you can, how to help you, and stay strong. You're not alone, dear.

Blessing:

It was frustrating to say the least but I knew that I had to be patient and understanding and that was what I did.

Honestly, it made me closer to you because then every moment was a learning opportunity for me. I learnt more about you, your strengths and your weaknesses.

I showed love and acceptance by listening to you and trying my best to be what you needed or wanted. I tried to show up in ways that would make things easier for you and I learnt that understanding people and having compassion is not an easy feat. It was a serious learning experience that made me reevaluate myself and what I thought giving out compassion or understanding people actually meant.

To anyone reading this who may be struggling with OCD or other mental health issues: it might not be easy knowing you might be an inconvenience especially when you just can't help it, but know that so far as you try your best to overcome your challenges, those around you who love you will try to help you. But the help first begins with you.

Onyi:

It was stressful because I had to keep up with your expectations as your younger sister. I wash my hand once, you ask me to do it twice. I often spoke to you about its unnecessary but you'd still hold firm to your ideology. I decided to be patient with you in the hope that it wouldn't last forever and I'm glad I did.

It actually drifted us an inch apart because I tried to avoid putting myself in situations where I had to play the "OCD game."

Instead of going against your will, I tried to indulge in your beliefs once in a while to give you ease of mind. I had to learn to be understanding and listen to you most times because I knew you too were struggling with it.

To anyone reading this who may be struggling with OCD or other mental health issues: I know that it's difficult leaving those series of habits but you shouldn't be comfortable in that cycle. Slowly, step by step, break out of the cycle. Start small and release yourself from a never ending loop. It's a slow process but you'll get there.

# Preface

This was the last part of the book I wrote. I included an author's note in the first edition of this book, if you can call a 36-page eBook a first edition! I'll keep this short.

I hate OCD. I wish everyone could be free from it and that a permanent cure existed. I wrote this to lend my voice to the conversation and to remind you that you're not alone.

I've poured years of struggle into these chapters. I'm not ashamed of what I've shared. If it helps even one person, then it's worth it.

# Acknowledgments

Sadly, I've had to let go of some people who were close to me when I wrote the acknowledgments in my first book. Life changes, and so do relationships. But to the amazing people who have stayed by my side, thank you.

My eternal gratitude goes to Jesus. Words will never be enough to thank you for all you have done for me.

Thanks to my parents, siblings, and aunt, for always proving that love is real. It's patient. It's kind.

Thanks to my amazing sister for designing the cover of this book.

And thanks to you, Emmanuel, for not only being supportive but for always being open to read my books.

# Blindness and First Intrusive Thoughts

February 1st, 2016

January dragged on with constant discomfort: endless vomiting, sickness, injections, doctors, nurses, and troubling eye issues. I thought it was bad enough, but February 1st would prove even worse.

I woke up that morning as usual, but I could not see anything. I told myself it was just my blurry vision. I asked my aunt if the power was off as I groped my way to the light switch. I turned it on, then asked her again if the light was on. When she said yes, I knew something was terribly wrong.

“I can’t see the light,” I said, confused and weak.

“What do you mean you can’t see the light?” she asked.

“I can’t see the light,” I repeated, walking back to the couch in a daze.

This isn’t a book about losing my sight, but I need to set this as the premise so you can understand the decisions I made, why I made them, and how those choices shaped my situation.

May/June 2016

I was in bed, listening to a radio program. The presenter gave gory details about a mentally ill boy roaming the streets. I imagined the scene vividly, shifting uncomfortably. Then he began speculating on what might have caused the boy’s condition. Out of nowhere, an intrusive thought hit me.

The thought suggested an angel was making the boy’s situation worse. Horrified, I shook my head vigorously, trying to fling the useless idea away. The radio faded into background noise as I tried to understand what had just happened. Then something else the presenter said caught my attention, and I pushed the thought aside.

Little did I know that was the beginning of years of struggling with OCD.

They say OCD attacks what you hold dear, and I agree. I am a believer in Jesus, and like most Christians, I take matters of faith very seriously.

Even before the intrusive thoughts began, I was already cautious about how I spoke about spiritual things. I would not even say the Holy Spirit spoke to me. Instead, I would say, “I had this thought” or something similar. That was how careful I was.

One time, years earlier, one of my siblings moved my belongings. In normal sibling fashion, no one admitted to it. I wanted to joke, “Maybe a spirit moved it,” but I could not bring myself to say it. I feared the Holy Spirit might think I was talking about Him. Foolish, right? But that was the level of reverence and caution I carried.

So when intrusive thoughts finally started attacking my faith, you can imagine my horror, frustration, and deep sadness. I was petrified of committing the unforgivable sin: blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. For a long time, I thought I was doomed to hell because the thoughts were so disturbing.

I would listen to the Bible, a devotional, or a sermon, and my mind twisted everything backwards. I knew I wasn’t demon-possessed because I still loved praying and talking to God, and I showed none of the signs I had read about in books, seen in movies, or learned from the Bible. With that ruled out, I was left in the dark, trying to grapple with what was happening to me.

There I was, newly blind and trying to adjust to my new reality. I bumped into things, relied on people around me, heard some visit out of concern while others gossiped about my situation. Then, on top of it all, came the negative thoughts. To say I was depressed is an understatement.

I asked for forgiveness countless times every day, and even though I couldn’t accept that these thoughts were mine, I still felt responsible for them. I called them “negative thoughts,” never realizing they were intrusive thoughts.

After that first incident with the radio program, I can’t clearly recall the ones that followed. The next major incident I remember happened in July or August of that same year.

A church member came to visit me, and we lay on the bed talking. The conversation was going well until she mentioned an outfit she wanted to wear for an event. Immediately, a thought came: She'll wear that outfit black for a burial.

She had been talking about a joyous ceremony, not a burial, yet the thought twisted it that way. My body stiffened, as if I were trying to strangle the thought while forcing myself to lie still, keep my face relaxed, and continue the conversation. I don't know if she noticed the anguish on my face, but she didn't mention it.

That moment stuck with me as the second time I had experienced something like that, probably because of how distressing it was.

I cried and prayed, then got angry. Then I cried and prayed again. The cycle continued. And it only got worse.

It would take six years before I finally understood what the real issue was, and another three before I gained some control over it.

The following chapters are my attempt to condense nine years of living daily with OCD.