

Cracked. An Unfinished Story.

She stands naked in the shower long after the water has stopped running. Her dripping wet hair is shrouded in a towel. Her hands are cupped around her face as she is mesmerised by the sight of drips of water running down the shower curtain. Her thoughts are temporarily lost. What she could've been, and what she has become changed on that day long ago. Her destiny took a new path on that day, and now she knows she has to relive the anguish all over again.

In the past in her chosen profession as a nurse, she has watched as another human-being exsanguinated before her very eyes. In the chaos, she held a suction tube in the dying mans' mouth and felt as his blood poured out of the burst artery in his diseased chest cavity, and pulsed through the tube in her hand. His life blood ebbs into a plastic canister attached to the wall of in his hospital room on the oncology ward. All she could do was offer her empty words of comfort to the dying man, hoping he couldn't really hear her, and that it would all end quickly for him. His eyes are glazed, and one last agonal breath signifies the end. But still he continues to bleed. It is Christmas Day. In an hour she will have offer comfort to his family as they experience the shock of their sudden unexpected loss. An hour after that she must try and wipe the vision of his spilled blood from her memory before she hugs her young nephew for Christmas.

Somehow this graphic scene seems to pale into insignificance now, compared to her own psychological trauma.

She had always thought it was all part of her history until some seemingly innocuous event triggers the memory to resurface. When that gate opens she cannot stop the memories that

come flooding back. Then she is crippled by the wave of anxiety that seeps into every cell of her body. It consumes her as it escalates beyond her power. She trembles uncontrollably. Her hands tingle, as the muscles in the back of her neck tighten. The pitch of her voice changes and takes on a staccato quality as she struggles to get air into her body. The reality of today has disappeared momentarily as her mind is consumed with thoughts of yesterday. It is like she is standing at the edge of tumultuous sea, and allowing herself to be engulfed by the pounding waves.

It has happened many times before, but she has never been able to put the pieces of this puzzle together to form a picture, and then give it a name.

She is temporarily cracked, but not completely broken.

Her legs tremble as the last drops of water running down her body have turned cold. She has stood in the shower for so long she is almost dry. Outside the world prepares for a new day. The noise of someone dropping a glass bottle into a recycling bin jolts her back to reality. She closes her eyes and tilts her head to the sound of the exhaust fan above her head. Finally, she throws back the shower curtain that separates her from the world, and somehow seizes the courage to face whatever the day will bring.

This is *not* fiction, this is my life.