

BECAUSE I SAID SO

By Tristan Jones

So I was walking down life's path--well stumbling more like--and I came to a point and I stopped and I looked around and I wondered,

"How did I end up here?"

I looked back trying to figure out where it all went wrong. I saw a few possibilities. There was friends, family, religion, maybe? I wasn't too sure. You see I was never mentally, emotionally or physically abused. I've never lost a loved one, or a family member. I've never experienced any life-changing accidents. Nor have I lost a love that just wasn't meant to end.

I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness, and this is kind of a strict way to be raised. I wasn't allowed to play with other kids who weren't Jehovah's Witnesses. I've never actually celebrated my birthday. Nor have I had a Christmas dinner, or Christmas morning, or a Thanksgiving dinner. I've never experienced trick-or-treating, I've never been on an Easter egg hunt. I've never had a Valentine.

This did keep me away from a lot of different troubles though. I never got into drugs or alcohol because of this. But it still left me so unprepared for life that I just couldn't handle it when I got out on my own.

I ended up betraying myself and imprisoning myself within my own mind behind walls of anger, fear, aggression, hatred. And this is actually what it looked like:

"Away from me sanity! Comprehension of these torments is beyond what I can bear.

Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, SHUT UP! This must end, but how? To die: To sleep no more, and by a sleep to say we end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. Oh sweet death, where are you? Am I not mortal? Gods, angels, ethereal creatures of heaven's light. Hear me. Release me from this mortal coil that my anguish is bound to. I am ready... Can you not see me? Do my pleas not--fall upon deaf ears? Have you no tongue?

Devil, demon, creatures born of Hell's inferno, I invoke you. I beseech you: take my soul and damn it. Trade me this hell for any other. I am yours.

Is there no vacancy in hell? Or is it my soul? Is it just too cursed, too tainted, too wretched even for hell?

Am I forsaken by all? Is there any one? No one?

No, I have one last hope. Blade, be true this night. Cut well, cut deep, stop for nothing, and do not slow.

Oh, sweet pain! Your bitter bite! Oh, the rush! Ecstasy!

And as the pain ebbs, this calm, serene peace sung into my heart.

It seems that I am not forsaken by everyone. Can you see the blood flowing from me? Can you see this life force draining, and with it, draining all of my torment? This new god, Pain, he cradles me in his arms, holding me tight.

Don't make the mistake of thinking Pain is not a god. It is to me. I love it! I fear it. And I respect it, as I would any god worthy of my devotion."

So as you can see, I didn't handle life so well. I turned to physical pain in order to relieve mental anguish. But this is unhealthy. This is unacceptable. So when I came to prison, I stopped. But I found I needed that relief more than ever.

So like any good convict, I decided to improvise. Now at the time, I was 260 pounds and I thought, "I should work out." There's lots of wonderful pain when you first start working out, let me tell you. So I got down and I did a burpie.

"One. What? We have to do 19 more? Oh god. And then four more sets of twenty? You're trying to kill me. There are easier ways to do it than this."

Well I survived that first day, and I actually went to sleep that night, and then I got up the next morning and I started to rise and I said:

"Ooowww! Oh god, my everything hurts!"

So I gently rolled over, pushed myself upch, and I wondered the whole time:

"How many muscles does the human body have? And how did I hurt them all at once?"

Despite this rough start, I pushed on—I persevered—I carried on. And then pretty soon burpies were easy. I could do them all day. They were nothing. So then I had to do these--these are called Navy Seals, but then these got easy. So I did these. I don't know what these are called, but I did them anyway.

This was working out so well, I had to expand in other areas. So I picked up a book.

"Oh my god, Star Wars! Woah, 350 pages--what a scholar I turned out to be! No one's even making me read it."

So after about 70 or so *Star Wars* books, I expanded a little. I started reading other books, you know, Dante Alighieri. Homer. Charles Dickens. My thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. And this was when I started taking college courses. Now I am halfway to an A.A. degree.

And during my college courses, I took this wonderful course. It was called philosophy. See, when I was growing up, I'd ask questions.

“Mother?”

“Yes, son.”

“Mother, may I do this?”

“No, you may not.”

“Why not mother?”

“Because it’s wrong, that’s why not.”

“Well, why is it wrong mother?”

And this is when she gave me the most ill answered, the most vile answer she possibly could have. She said,

“Because I said so, that’s why!”

No! No, no, no, no. This could not possibly happen. I was not accepting this. Everything right or wrong because someone says so? No! So what did I do? I wiped my slate clean and I wrote, “Right” over here, and “Wrong” over here. And I said,

“This is right, and that’s right--and that’s wrong, and that’s right, and that’s wrong, and that has to be wrong, but I’m going to enjoy that anyway!”

So I had this list. And I had to look at it answering that most important question: Why these are right, and why these are wrong. And then suddenly it hit me. It was right there, staring me in the face. Do you know what that answer was?

“It’s because I said so, that’s why!”

It’s the most brilliant thing I’ve ever come up with, I swear.

Now this whole time, I was doing something, and I didn’t even realize I was doing it. I was learning to love. And no, I’m not talking about that warm, fuzzy, tingly, happy feeling that we men get in the presence of beautiful women, like the ones in the audience. Nor am I talking about that warm, happy, fuzzy, tingly feeling that you beautiful women get when in my presence. No. I’m talking about self-esteem—love of self. You see, I started loving myself. And I started taking control of myself. I took control—I. . .I just totally lost it. Lost control, too. No--I took control. . .I took control of my life, bettering myself.

Now when I was walking along life’s path this time, much more carefully, I got to that point and I looked around and I asked myself again,

“How did I get here?”

Well, this time, the answer was quite simple. You see, I was an idiot. And just to make sure I was an idiot, I looked back, to check. And all those spots that I once saw, those places where life went wrong—they weren't there anymore.

You see, I took control of my life. I took responsibility for my actions. So if it went wrong anywhere back there, it went wrong with me. Now this was a hard realization to swallow. But then I looked at where I had been, I looked at where I was now, and I looked at the future I was creating, the man I was becoming. And for the first time in my life, I was proud to be that man.

Now the craziest thing was, is that there are seven billion people in this world, and only one of them was able to stand in my way. Now don't get me wrong, he is devastatingly handsome, he's slightly arrogant, he's brilliant beyond comparison, he's a very worthy foe. Do you know who this person was? No, it's not Justin Bieber, but close. It was me! Seven billion people in this world—I was the only one that stood in my way, and seven billion people in this world, and the only one that stands in your way, is you! That's crazy.

So when life knocks you down, just get up, take that first step, do that first burpie, and keep going. Create for yourself a future that you can be proud of.

And you all know why you must do this, don't you?

"It's because I said so, that's why!"