

Dear W.C.,

I have been trying so hard to get by on my own for the past few years. My sister died two years ago and left me to raise her six year old daughter. My sister was addicted to drugs and that is why she died when she was only twenty-four. I just turned twenty-two so I have had to grow up very quickly over the past two years. Our mother was not a good parent so my sister and I pretty much raised ourselves. My mother is not in my life and could not even sober up enough for my sisters funeral. I handled all the arrangements myself. I do not want my niece to grow up with my mother or in foster care. I do not want her to fall into the same lifestyle my sister was forced into. I am doing my best to set a good example for my niece but we are truly struggling financially. I work full-time cleaning in a hospital. I have some physical disabilities that prevent me from working in an office. Because I took over the care of my niece at such a young age I was never able to find the time or money to finish my education. I did not have many opportunities in life but I work hard every day to keep food on our table. Our biggest struggle right now is our rent is overdue and my car needs repairs. We go to church every week and our church has helped in the past with clothing and toys for my niece. Now due to medical bills and endless expensive car repairs I find myself unable to pay our rent. We would be so grateful if you could help us with our rent this month. My niece has been through enough in her young life already. She does not need to know what it feels like to be homeless too.

Dear Readers,

I listen to many terrible stories of childhood abuse, tragic accidents and horrible illnesses. What our fellow creations suffer through breaks my heart every day. My daily prayer time and the support from all of you is what help me to continue to be able to listen and provide the assistance they need to change their lives for the better. Sometimes the stories are very hard to listen to but I know our good fellow creations need us there to listen and help. This was one of those painful times.

I went to visit the woman and her niece at their apartment. When I had called to speak to the woman she told me she had many physical scars from her childhood. Even with this comment I was not prepared for the physical scars I would see. The woman that answered the door had a large scar down one side of her face and neck. After looking at my identification the woman invited me inside. The young girl I assumed was the niece stood shyly beside her aunt. Knowing I would probably be meeting the child I had brought with a coloring book and new box of crayons. Once I presented her with the small gift she seemed not as shy and thanked me for the gift. After a few moments of talking to the girl the aunt told her she could take her new coloring book by the TV and watch her favorite show. This would be the only way the woman and I could talk in the small apartment without worrying about the little girl hearing every word.

After I shared with the woman how The Time Is Now to Help works she told me she had nothing to hide and would answer whatever questions I may have. I began with my usual questions about how they found themselves in this position and what assistance they thought they needed. I asked to see the car repair receipts and medical bills. The woman shared all

these with me along with her bank statements. I could see the deposits from the woman's job she had for over a year were not enough to cover the many bills she placed before me. I asked to see her budget and other bills she may have. She confirmed the rent was low and that was why they lived in this older building. The woman also shared she did not want to move due to her wonderful neighbors. I do not hear this often so I was happy to hear she had support from several of her senior citizen neighbors. The woman told me how her two neighbors often watched her niece after school or if she worked a night shift. In exchange she drove them to the grocery store and church when her car was running. The woman said, "They are like the grandmas my niece should have had from her own grandparents."

I used this comment to ask some questions about her mother and the remarks she had made in her letter stating she was not a good mother. The woman's face took on a pained expression and I could see she was visibly distressed to be talking about her mother. I added, "If you are not up to talking about her it is fine. We can keep our conversation to what is happening right now." The woman shook her head, saying, "No. I need to tell you about her so you understand why my sister died, why I need to keep my niece safe and why I have both physical and mental scars."

The woman tearfully told me about the abuse and neglect she and her sister had endured due to their mother. The mother had multiple boyfriends that would drink or do drugs at their apartment. The men would often sexually abuse the older sister. As the older sister became a teenager the men would give her drugs. The cycle of abuse and addiction had begun for the older sister at a very young age. The younger sister that sat before me had endured her own nightmare of abuse at the hands of her mother's neglect. Besides the multiple cigarette burns the woman had endured from the mother and her boyfriends, they endlessly berated her calling her homely and laughing at her. One night a boyfriend dropped a cigarette in her bed while she slept causing the burns to her face and neck. The mother had accompanied her to the hospital convincing everyone it was a terrible accident, but even as a child she knew her mother was at fault. No one questioned the other scars on her body from the times her mother beat her in a drunken fury or a boyfriend joined in. I was horrified as the woman shared with me her most painful moments. By the time she was finished she was sobbing and I was wiping my own tears away. At this point she said, "My prayers to God are the only thing that has kept me strong and able to go on." I asked if she would like to pray and through her tears she smiled and said, "Yes."

After our prayers I asked about her sister and the niece. The woman took a deep breath and told me how her sister had become pregnant by one of her mother's so called boyfriends when she was 17. As soon as he found out the man disappeared. The woman told me how her sister had tried to stay off drugs the whole time she was pregnant but went right back to them as soon as her niece was born. The woman said, "I had hoped her birth would help my sister become straight, but it didn't." The woman went on to tell me how she took over most of the care of her niece while she was still trying to finish high school, just to keep her safe. I heard about the nights she would lock herself in her room with her niece when she was a toddler to keep the child safe from the drugs and terrible people that came and went. "Once I was old enough I got a job and started trying to save up enough to move out of my mother's house. I was afraid to leave my niece there so I stayed until my sister died of an overdose. As soon as

that happened I took my niece and moved into this apartment. I had just turned twenty years old but knew I had to save her. Since then my mother was arrested for drugs and is in prison where she belongs. I feel nothing for her other than sadness.” I told her how proud I was of her maturity and selflessness. The woman told me how her church had helped her find her way spiritually and also helped her find the apartment and helped with daycare. It did seem she had a good support system to help with most of her challenges. The only main challenge she had yet was her financial difficulties. I knew The Time Is Now to Help and all of “You” would want to help this young woman and her niece. I know you would agree they had suffered enough in their young lives already.

After reviewing her budget and assessing her car I knew the best way to help her get on a solid budget would be to provide another car. Her car had many miles and needed more repairs than would be logical for its age and condition. We had a recent donation of an excellent running vehicle that would provide the reliable and hopefully maintenance free transportation she needed. We also provided grocery gift cards to help with their food insecurity and brought their rent up to date. We also paid their rent a few months into the future. As I explained our plan of assistance to the young woman I watched her eyes fill with tears. She began to weep, saying, “I never knew there were good people in this world outside of my church and my neighbors. Everywhere I go people stare at my scars, and every time I look in the mirror I am reminded of the worst in people. You have proved to me there are more good people.”

Several months later I received an email and a picture from the young woman and her niece. She was sharing a picture of them standing in front of their treasured donated car along with the neighbors. They all were waving and happy. The email message said, “Dear Everyone at The Time is Now. We are so happy you helped us. You have changed our lives. My niece and I smile all the time now thanks to you. God Bless all of you.”

These are just a few of the people we help every week at The Time is Now to Help. Please consider donating at this time and every donation will be met dollar for dollar by the Family Foundation \$30,000 Matching Grant. The lives changed are all due to “You”. Thank you and God Bless “You”.

Health & Happiness, God Bless Everyone, W.C./Sal

Please Help: There are many coming to us in desperation. Our good fellow creations need our compassion. Together we make a big difference. Make checks payable to: The Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 1, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization licensed in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank you receipt showing how your donation provided assistance for the poverty stricken.

A Very Special Thank You: Fox Charities, Priebe Family Foundation, Paul Ziegler, Dorothy Heffernan, Mary Kay Ring, John & Valerie Lincoln, Certified Power, Martin Business, Thomas & Mary Johnson, Bernard Labovitch, Kunes' Country Ford-Lincoln of Delavan, Lake Geneva Economic Development, Edward Hechmann, Scott & Lisa Stearns,

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Honoraries: Kelly & Lori Carty in honor of their parents Karen & George Davis.

Memorials: Donald & Marilyn Ketchpaw in memory of Bernard Sinclair. The following donations were given in memory of Joan Lamper: Luann Copeland, William & Barbara Kampas, Suzanne Haselow, Josef & Wilma Vierecki, Milo & Shirley Brown, Kevin & Rose Fritz and William & Diane Kunzer.

Prayer Chain: There have been numerous requests for a prayer chain addition to our weekly column. Please pray for healing for the following people: Caroline, Clarence, Ryan, Jayden, Santana, Alex, Lily, Kaitlyn, Kynesha, Brandi's Grandma.

W.C. Food Pantry: The W.C. Food Pantry is located at: 205 E. Commerce St., Elkhorn, WI. 53121. This is in the old Aurora Clinic building off of Hwy. 67 just east of Interstate 43. Their phone number is (262) 723-4488.

Please visit: www.timeisnowtohelp.org