

# FAR AWAY FROM HERE

## PREFACE

Michael Patterson, age 24, was born into your average, middle-class, nuclear family. They lived in a desirable area of Long Island, New York, seemingly a world away from the gangs and crime of the inner-city. His parents loved and supported him and there was never any physical abuse in the household. Besides the inevitable trivial arguments, there were never any heated or long-lasting quarrels. Mike even had a close relationship with his younger sister, Melissa. But it is here, beneath the Brady Bunch-like façade of suburbia that lays the true ground zero of the never-ending, pandemic known as drugs. And Mike Patterson has become but one of the tens of millions of victims of this nondiscriminatory demon.

As is often the case, Mike's experimentation with drugs started off as teenage curiosity. Even when Mike first started getting into trouble, it was all seemingly, harmless fun. But like with so many others' stories, what started off as curiosity and harmless fun, morphed into something more serious. Smoking joints and cutting class turned into snorting cocaine and dropping out of school, then came selling drugs and getting arrested. Before he knew it, Mike had been cast into an all-consuming black hole. At the other end of that black hole laid prison and a lifetime of regrets. For after a drug-laden, anarchic journey, culminating in a dark night that would haunt him for the rest of his life, Mike was arrested and would spend five years in a New York State penitentiary.

While in prison, Mike Patterson had plenty of time to delve into his soul and into the past, which ate at him like a cancer. He thought long and hard about the choices he had made and how they had not only affected his life, but the people closest to him: his family and ex-girlfriend that died the night he was arrested. But it was through this soul searching that Mike decided to

turn his life around. He made a promise to himself that once released he would walk the straight and narrow and try to make amends for some of the things he had done. Now, after serving four years and eleven months, the time has come to put that promise to the test.

Upon release from prison, Mike Patterson is ready to put the past behind him and start anew. He is ready, even eager, to get a job and become a productive member of society. But perhaps most of all, he is ready to finally reunite and reconcile with his mother and teenage sister, with which he will now live. However serious Mike is though, he will find out that the ghosts of the past are not so easily relinquished and that some things cannot be atoned. He will also learn that even if he might be able to survive his own battle with drugs, the war wages on, always eager for its next victim. And its next victim might be closer to him than he ever could have imagined.

This is a novel, but to file it under pure fiction would be a mistake. Though the characters in this book are, for the most part, fictitious, they very well could be your neighbor, co-worker, brother or sister, friend, son or daughter. And the story itself, with perhaps only minor changes is being played out everyday, not only throughout America, but across the globe. Those that have battled addiction – whether it is narcotics, prescription drugs or alcohol – as well as their loved ones that have become unwilling participants in their plight do not need statistics to know how easy, and sometimes quickly these demons can rip a family apart. They do not need statistics to tell them how often there is no climbing out of rock bottom. They also know all too well that even if there eventually is light at the end of the tunnel, it is almost always a long and arduous journey.

However, it is important to note that this is not just a story about drug addiction, but also about life in general. It is about the choices we make, the way they affect not only ourselves but the ones around us and the price that everyone is left to pay. Like life itself, it is a story of love and loss; happiness and pain; survival and defeat; beginnings and ends.