

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a dirt path that winds through a field of dry, yellowish-brown grass. The path starts in the lower left and curves towards the center. The sky above is a clear, bright blue. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

So...

Whatcha

Think?

An Interactive Book

An emotional experience is
a journey down a path that can
sometimes lead to unexpected places.

Brooke Ryter and Paige D. Ryter

FIC003000FICTION / Anthologies (multiple authors)

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Everyone has an opinion.
Everyone is entitled to their
opinion. Sometimes hearing
different opinions gives one
greater wisdom.

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THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING THIS FREE CHAPTER.

SO, WHATCHA THINK? IS AN INTERACTIVE BOOK. AN OPEN DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE READERS AND THE AUTHORS.

This file contains one chapter from the book.

Below is a description of the book.

Have you ever felt numb, lost, alone? Have you ever felt spectacular, joyous? Have you ever felt so in love that it was fantastic and a bit scary? Have you ever felt so much sympathy or empathy that you hurt? Have you ever felt sadness so deep you could hear an echo? Have you ever experienced a day when your emotions ranged from one extreme to the other because of the events and interactions of that day? With each of these emotional experiences did you find yourself feeling alive? Emotions are what drives us, what can guide us, and what can drop us to our knees.

This book takes you on a series of emotional journeys through all these and more. There is blind love, sadness, fear, hatred, joy, desire, anger, happiness, deceit, control, freedom, peace. Many of these are intertwined in complex situations. You will have an opinion or two about the characters, their choices, and the outcome. Paige and Brooke want to know what you think and feel with each emotional experience along these journeys. The conversation is open and the emotions are real. So, read, allow the

book to take you down an emotional path, and then join the conversation about what affect the journeys had on you. In other words, you are asked the question...So, Whatcha Think?

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Brooke - [Twitter](#)
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Mark your calendar!

Anticipated full book publish date – December 2012

DEDICATION

Brooke's Dedication-

This book is dedicated to my husband, Andru. He always believes in my dreams, helps nurture my ideas, and is my biggest supporter; even when the rest of the world thinks I am crazy. This book is also dedicated to my kids. When they were young, I tried to teach them to see the magic life has to offer. Now that they are grown, they show me the magic of life. And of course, my sister Paige. She understands me like few do. She shares my strange sense of humor and understands not only who I am, but who I want to be. All these people love me and accept me for who I am, faults and all.

Paige's Dedication-

This book is dedicated to my wonderful husband Bryan, who has always supported everything I do. Thank you for always having my back even when I couldn't see it. I love you so! To my two amazing boys, who have become the godly men I knew they were as soon as I laid my eyes on them. I am so very proud of you both! And to my sister Brooke, who I can cry or laugh with until milk spills out of my nose. You are an amazing woman who can do anything you set your mind on. "Sisters by Chance, Friends by Choice." -*Author Unknown* This motto has been a constant through our childhood and into our adult lives. Thank you for being my friend and dancing down the aisles of the grocery stores with me.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	i
It Won't Be You I Hurt	1

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To our editor, you are the best! We could not have found a better grammar curmudgeon.

This is a fictional story based on a true life experience. Any similarity to actual people or events is completely and strictly coincidental.

CHAPTER 1

IT WON'T BE YOU I HURT

She packs up quickly so she can get out the front door of her office building right at 5:00 o'clock. She has to get home before he does. Every day is a challenge to get home first. Traffic seems to be getting heavier and the stoplights longer.

She walks briskly to her car, throws her briefcase and purse across the front seat, and slides in with her keys already in her hand. After she leaves the parking lot, she is caught at a red light at the first intersection she encounters. Her fingers tap the steering wheel nervously as she bites at the fingernails of her other hand. The light finally turns green after what seems like a lifetime.

The on-ramp to the freeway is backed up. She gauges, would it be quicker to take the surface

streets? Maybe the freeway? Surface streets? Freeway? Traffic starts moving again so she decides to take the freeway. It doesn't take long before she realizes that maybe the freeway was a bad decision. All she can see is a sea of tail lights and traffic is barely moving. There must be an accident up ahead and the next off-ramp is at least a mile away. She is trapped.

Panic sets in and her hands start to shake. She begins talking to herself, "Maybe he will get stuck in traffic. Maybe this will clear up in just a second. Maybe he won't get home first. Please, please, please let me arrive home first!"

She finally makes it to her neighborhood, turns down her street, and she sees what she fears the most. Her heart skips a beat and her breath is caught in her throat. Her shoulders sink and tears begin to blur her vision. His truck is in the driveway. Every day he gets off work at 4:30 and picks up the boys from daycare on his way home, but today he made it home first. About a year ago, he informed her that he had replaced her name with his mother's name on the authorized child pick up list at the daycare. His words were, "You are a horrible mother to my boys so I did what I felt was in the best interest of the boys and changed the form. I am sure you agree, right?" She knew he had been baiting her for a fight. What was in her best interest was to happily agree, which she did.

As she pulls into the driveway she tries to take a deep breath, but she just can't. Her ribs won't

expand. As if being squeezed by an unseen force, she can breathe no deeper than small, short breaths. She tries to steady her nerves as she puts the car in park and turns off the engine. She looks at her face in the rearview mirror and tries to stop the tears and put on a calm face. It isn't working.

She gets out of her car and walks toward the front door. She pauses for a moment with her hand outstretched; hovering above the doorknob with her hand shaking. She wants to run. To hide in any shadow or crevasse she can find, but her babies are inside the house with him. There is no way she could leave without them and she knows there is no way she can leave with them. He would kill her. She manages to take a deep breath, wraps her fingers around the cold doorknob, turns it slowly, and opens the door. He is standing on the other side of the couch to be sure she could see him when she walks inside the door. He is waiting for her. His face is twisted with anger. He is a large man with an ominous presence. Anyone who has met him has the impression of a charming, pleasant, friendly, even a fun-loving man. No one but she sees the mean, ugly side of him. A side that terrifies her, haunts her dreams, and threatens to end her life.

He takes several quick strides toward her and screams, "Where have you been bitch!?! Who have you been with!?! Who is it that makes you late getting home every single day!?!"

She tries to answer but she is only able to get out, "I am only five minutes", before he shoves her

up against the wall. His hand is around her neck and he is squeezing hard enough to make it difficult for her to breathe, but not hard enough to leave any marks. He has perfected not leaving marks. She can feel his hot breath on her face as he whispers through clenched teeth, "I am so sick of you. I am so tired of you disrespecting me. I don't know why I don't just get rid of you. You keep pushing me and pushing me. If I ever catch you so much as talking to another guy...I swear to God, you will pay!!"

He presses her harder against the wall. His eyes are wide and crazed. She tries to speak but her words are blocked by his tight grip. She mouths, "Please. I love you. Please, I will never disrespect you again." Her eyes begin to fill with tears and she tries to stop them. He hates tears. He feels they are an act and they make him so angry. She can't help the tears though. It breaks her heart that he constantly accuses her of being unfaithful. She has never cheated on him, never wanted to. She rarely talks to any man, regardless of whether they are a stranger or a co-worker. She has never given him a reason to doubt her faithfulness, but he has been obsessed with believing otherwise for years now.

Out of the corner of her eye she can see her two little boys standing in the hallway. They are staring, watching, learning. Learning from Dad how a dad and husband is supposed to behave. She knows they are being affected by this. She worries about them. She doesn't want them to grow up watching this or to grow up to be like him. She doesn't want

them to live this way. She doesn't know what to do. She manages to whisper, "the boys." He lets go and starts to walk away. She tries to catch her breath while trying not to breathe heavily. She knows that if he hears her breathing heavily it would spark another fit of anger.

He walks to just in front of the boys and stops. Looking down at them he says, "Your mother is a cheating bitch! Neither of you had better grow up to be anything like her." He turns around and faces her. She hasn't moved. She is standing straight and trying to look calm.

He says to her, "You better watch yourself, keep your mouth shut, and behave. If you don't, I promise you, it won't be you I hurt." His eyes dart towards the boys without his head moving. She understands very well what he means but prays the boys at 4 and 6 years old are too young to understand.

He stomps off towards the living room yelling, "Make me some dinner, bitch!"

Her boys run to her. They hug her legs and the youngest whispers, "I love you Mommy and I hate Daddy." The oldest is holding on to her tightly. She sends them off to play in their room so their Dad won't see them hugging her.

She knows they are afraid. Her heart breaks for them but she doesn't know what to do. She doesn't see any way to get them out of this. He controls all the money. He watches her every move. She called the shelters and they are all full and they informed her that unless she can prove he has harmed the

boys, they cannot legally hide them from their father. She can't prove a thing. There is no proof. All she has is her word against his. She has nowhere to go, nowhere to hide. If she leaves, where would she hide? There is no doubt that he would come after her. He would hurt her; hurt her little boys. Her daily prayer is always the same, "Please God! Please help me! I don't know what to do." She makes her way to the kitchen and begins dinner.

During dinner, he put his hand on her forearm, "I'm sorry for getting so mad. My boss has been really hard on me lately and that is why I get so angry. Let me take you out to dinner tomorrow night. I want to make it up to you for getting angry. What do you say?"

What could she say besides yes? If she said no, that would make him angry. She wasn't sure which she hated most, his anger and abuse or his attempts to do something nice to make up for his anger and abuse. It was a cycle that goes round and round. When he is in the nice part of the cycle, it only reminds her of how much she misses the man he used to be. At least when he is in the angry part of the cycle, she doesn't miss him anymore.

After the dinner dishes are done, she begins her evening chores. She keeps busy cleaning, doing laundry, and other duties so she doesn't have to be in the living room with him. Watching TV with him is something she doesn't do anymore. They were watching TV the first time she saw his ugly side.

They were watching the news. She can't remember what story the reporter was talking about, but she commented on it. He said that he disagreed and stated his opinion.

"Well, that's ok, we can just agree to disagree." she said.

Before her mind could process that he had stood up, he was standing over her. He had a fistful of her hair in each of his large hands. He lifted her up by her hair. There were several inches of clearance between her body and the couch cushion beneath her before she began to feel the intense pain of her hair being used to suspend her above the couch.

"You are my wife! A wife NEVER has a different opinion than her husband! My opinion is your opinion! Got it!?!!" he growled

She was terrified. It was surreal. She had never seen behavior like this from him. She was confused and scared.

"GOT IT!?!!" he yelled.

"I, I got it," she said almost inaudibly.

Suddenly, he released his grip on her hair and she dropped to the couch. He returned to his seat at the other end of the couch as if nothing had happened. She didn't say another word, didn't make a sound. She just sat there terrified, staring at the TV.

That was nearly three years ago. In the time that passed, she learned what triggers him. What to say and what not to say. When to say "I love you" to

calm him even though she doesn't mean those words anymore. The love she had for him is gone. She has come to realize that the man she married, the man she loved so much no longer exists. The man she lives with, who looks just like the man she fell in love with, is a cruel, mean, hateful, heartless man. The love she had for him has long since been replaced with fear, resentment, hate, and anger. Anger for the way he makes her feel worthless, ugly, and that she would be better off dead.

She has days where she feels that death would be a blessing. She ponders the idea of death. There are days when she feels death is the only path available for her to get away from him. The questions linger; how long before she must take that path? What will happen to her babies when she takes that path? Will that path come at her own hand or at his? The thought of her boys is the only thing that keeps her dancing this dance every day. Her life has become this careful dance. A dance of purposeful movements and steps he expects. She understands her dance and she performs it well. She must perform it well, as the consequences are frightening and painful.

Every night for more than two years now, she has locked the bathroom door when she showers before bed. The first time he noticed that the door was locked, he was extremely angry. She explained to him that she had to lock the door because she didn't want the boys to walk in the bathroom while she was in the shower. The locking of the door was

to keep them out, not to keep him out. His reply, "That's a good idea. Don't want to screw up their entire adult lives. Don't want them thinking all women are as ugly as you are naked." Those words should have hurt, but they didn't. It meant she would have 15 or 20 minutes of peace every day. It is the only time she feels safe. She is able to stand under the hot water and cry.

Tonight she is crying so hard that she can barely breathe. She backs into the corner of the shower and tries to steady herself. Her knees fold and she slides down the wet tile wall until she is sitting on the floor of the shower sobbing. She wraps her arms around her legs and buries her face between her knees. She feels so alone and lost.

"How did I end up in this mess? How did this happen? I must be a horrible person to deserve this. Why did I bring children into this? Oh my God, what am I going to do? I can't live like this forever. Fourteen years before the youngest turns 18 years old. I can't do this for 14 years. I won't survive that long." Her desperation felt overwhelming.

Usually he is already in bed asleep when she is finished with her shower. Tonight, instead of going straight to bed, wrapped in her robe she wanders into the living room. As she stands there in the dark, looking around at the pleasant furnishings, she thinks about how this should be a happy place. There should be laughter and love in this room. Instead there are intimidation and fear. She walks to the window and slightly pulls back the curtain. She

can see the stars shining brightly. It was a clear night with just a sliver of a moon. She looks up at the stars. When she was a child, she would wish for a pony or a trip to the amusement park. Now she wishes to survive long enough to watch her children grow up. She stands there for a long time wishing upon a star.

She goes back into the bathroom to brush her teeth. She stands before the bathroom mirror. Her eyes look haunted and dark circles are beginning to form.

“Well, that was a good cry.” she talks to the gaunt woman looking back at her from the mirror. “You can do this. Tomorrow is another day. Everything will be fine. You just need to be nicer to him. Stop making him angry. Things will be just fine, you’ll see.”

After she has brushed her teeth, she climbs very cautiously into the bed. She must not wake him. If she wakes him he will want to have sex. She finds his touch to be nearly unbearable, but when it happens she puts on the expected act so he doesn’t get angry. The dance must be danced to perfection. He doesn’t stir.

She lies still, staring at the ceiling. She wishes she could leave, but she can’t. She has no money, nowhere to go. She needs to devise a way to make this life better. She is determined to find away to make him a happier man.

“I can deal with this, I know I can. He only picks on me. He doesn’t pick on the boys. I can take it! I

SO, WHATCHA THINK?

can! When his job gets better, he will be in a better mood. Things will be fine.”

She rolls to her side and relaxes. She can go to sleep without having to be intimate with him, or fear that he will be upset with her for waking him, and she has once again found strength for another day. She feels a little at peace.

The next day, she gets up and goes to work. Then 5:00 o'clock comes, and the race to get home first begins again.

*Would you find it easy to stay and live every day a nightmare? How can she get away? What can she do? Can she protect her children? What options are there?
So, Whatcha Think?*

If you or someone you know needs help getting away from domestic violence, please contact:

National Domestic Violence Hotline at

1-800-799-SAFE(7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224

Or visit their website at

<http://www.thehotline.org/>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Brooke Ryter

Brooke has always been a story teller. Bedtime stories for her children rarely came from a book. She would begin a story and have the children help create the rest. So, instead of reading a bedtime story, a story was custom made every night. Even simple emails to her friends and family usually have a story in it somewhere.

She has always been a person who sees the bright side and looks for the good in all situations, even the bad ones. "It could be worse" is a common statement. She went to great lengths to teach her children to see the magic everyday life offers. Now she tears when she hears her children teaching their children how to recognize and enjoy that magic. Sharing her magical view of life with others has always been a part of her life.

She began her first book more than a decade ago with her Aunt. Many hours were spent by the two laughing until they cried during the creation of the novel outline and much of the content. When her Aunt was diagnosed with cancer and became very ill, the project was shelved. In the years since,

her Aunt has battled cancer four additional times and every time has survived. Brooke has attempted to bring the project off the shelf a couple of times, but Auntie is too busy living life and enjoying the magic of every day. Brooke has learned through her Aunt's journey that nothing is impossible, the odds are what you make of them, and living life to the fullest and laughter are the best medicine. That book will be completed one day, just not today.

She is currently working on *So, Whatcha Think?*, an interactive novel with her sister, Paige. She is also working on the *My Friend, My Hero* children's book series and the novel *Where the Ocean Meets the Sky*.

She currently works full time as a technical document editor. She organizes art events, paints, and writes as much as she can. She gets up early every day to get in some writing before she heads off to work. She carries a spiral notebook with her so wait times for appointments do not go to waste. All of her stories begin in that spiral notebook. The story outline, or skeleton, as she calls it, is completed longhand before she sits down in front of the computer.

SO, WHATCHA THINK?



Paige D. Ryter

As a child, Paige would pretend all the time. Her imagination was something to be reckoned with. She was filled with stories. For example, as a child one of her chores was to do laundry. She felt it was terribly boring work, so to make it interesting she turned that chore into a completely different world. The clothes in the washing machine were alive and the dirt on them was killing them. She would stand on a step stool so she could see into the washer, and she would talk to the clothes. She was their doctor and was about to save their lives. Many stories were born through her imagination...the wonderfully active imagination of a little girl.

As an adult, her imagination is still as active as it was when she was little. Her children grew up listening to her stories and playing along in a wonderful world filled with magical things only an imagination like hers could create.

She truly hopes you enjoy the stories she and Brooke have created for you.