

The background is a vibrant blue with abstract, flowing white and light blue lines that create a sense of movement and depth. A prominent feature is a path of small white dots that starts from the top left, curves into a loop, and then continues towards the right. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and futuristic.

Sarah's Story

Sarah's Story



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Sarah's Story



Sarah had no problem getting dates in high school. With her sunny smile, shiny long blonde hair, shapely build, and cheery disposition, she easily captured and held the attention of her male classmates. But it was Sam Spencer and his playful ways that once-and-forever won over Sarah during the first semester of their senior year of high school.

Sam and Sarah met on the tennis courts at a local park. Sarah was just beginning to learn to play tennis and was awful at it. "You have to keep your eye on the ball, dingy," Beth yelled from the other side of the court.

Sarah had just proudly returned the tennis ball over the net when Sam and his partner showed up on Beth's end of the court. Sam mimicked Beth by putting one hand on his hip and with the other hand pointed his index finger at Sarah. Watching Sam instead of the returning tennis ball resulted in a smack in the eye for Sarah.

Sam immediately rushed to Sarah's side and apologized. Upon seeing her red, swollen eye, he dashed to the concession stand for some ice, and wrapped it in the bottom of his T-shirt and gently placed it on Sarah's eye. Sarah was embarrassed of the awkward closeness of their bodies that this presented, but she was grateful for the soothing ice.

When Sam found out that Sarah had ridden her bike to the park, he insisted on putting her bike in the back of his classic Chevy truck and driving Sarah

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home. "It's the least I can do after acting like a clown and causing you to get hit in the eye, while you were trying to play tennis."

Embarrassment caused Sarah to hold her tongue all the way home, except to give Sam adequate directions. When they entered the housing division where Sarah lived, Sam pulled to the curb and shifted the truck into neutral. He reached for the note pad that was sticking out of the ashtray and wrote his phone number. "I'm really sorry about your eye. If there's anything else I can do, please give me a call."

Sarah took the note and smiled. "Thank you...for everything." She opened the door and slid off the seat. Before she'd walked three steps up the driveway, Sam was at her side.

"I know you don't know me. But we're practically neighbors. I live just one street over, on Benson. We moved here last month from California. I was wondering if we could go out some time."

Sarah continued to look at the ground as she fiddled with the piece of paper Sam had given her. After a few seconds she glanced up and caught the anxious expectant look in Sam's eyes. She pointed to her swollen eye, "Is this how you usually get dates?"

The anxious look on Sam's face was replaced by a big smile. "Well, did it work?"

"I suppose it worked *this* time." Sarah smiled. " But I'd try to find a different method for the future if I were you. Um...how would you feel about going to the Sadie Hawkins dance next Friday night?"

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After their first date, Sam and Sarah were inseparable for their entire senior year of high school. On graduation day Sam asked Sarah to marry him. They set the date for the following June. In the mean time, they planned the wedding while settling into the life of being college students.

Even though they had been busy, active high school students, the fast-paced college life caught Sarah and Sam off guard. They found they had less and less time for the activities they had enjoyed in high school, such as taking long walks, playing tennis, playing volleyball, snowshoeing, swimming, and skiing and hiking in the Cascade Mountains. Instead, they spent their days in class and their evenings and weekends were spent hunched over thick text books at the library, often after they'd grabbed a fast-food dinner or quick slice of pizza from the cafeteria.

By the end of the first term, Sarah noticed her clothes were feeling tight on her. "It's the infamous Freshman 15!" giggled Beth, Sarah's best friend. "Don't worry about it. It happens to everybody—even perfect Miss Sarah! Besides you have some wiggle room to gain a few pounds and *still* look great. Most of us don't have that good fortune and the Freshman 15 is disastrous."

Sarah was in a constant state of stress as she studied, attended class and planned her wedding. For the first time in her life, she allowed herself to indulge in comforting chocolate bars and caffeine-laden sodas to keep her awake and alert for late-night studies. Instead of eating the balance diet that she had adopted as a high school athlete, Sarah ate whatever was fast and easy. There

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just wasn't any time for cooking balanced meals. When Sarah wasn't at school or studying she wanted to spend time with Sam, not in the kitchen.

In early May, Sarah wrapped up all the last-minute wedding plans and tried on her wedding dress, which she'd purchase the previous November. She was horrified when she found the dress was difficult to zip, and was obviously too tight. Sarah ran to the bathroom and got on the scales. Her weight had increased by twelve pounds since she'd bought the dress. No wonder she could barely get it zipped!

Sarah burst into tears and immediately went to the phone and called Beth. "What am I going to do? I don't think the dress can be altered. I never dreamed of gaining weight before the wedding. What is happening to me? How did this happen? "

Beth teased, "Are you sure there aren't *two* people trying to fit into that dress?"

"Beth! Come on! This is very serious! I can't possibly buy a new dress at this point. My parents would kill me if I even suggested it."

"Well, it's not like you're Miss Fatty or anything. Twelve pounds is nothing."

"Twelve pounds is *not* nothing! It's keeping me from fitting into my *wedding* gown. Beth, you should see it. It looks just awful! How could I have been such a pig to gain ten pounds right before my wedding? I thought women were supposed to gain weight *after* they were married, not before. "

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“Okay, calm down. I’m coming over. I know of this crash diet that my sister is doing. I’ll bring the book. You can start the diet tomorrow and lose the twelve pounds before your wedding.”

Sarah followed the crash diet exactly as listed in the book Beth loaned her. She monitored her weight with daily weigh-ins. Two days before the wedding Sarah tried on her wedding gown again and it fit as well as it had when she bought it. The weigh-in showed she’d lost exactly thirteen pounds while on the diet.

After the wedding, Sarah’s days were fuller than ever. She was very excited about her future with Sam, and Sam seemed very happy. After about four months of marriage, Sarah realized that she had gained weight again. But keeping up with her share of cleaning the apartment and doing laundry and cooking, working part-time, attending class all day and studying well into the night, was a little overwhelming to Sarah. She decided that she wasn’t mentally or physically up to another crash diet. There just wasn’t time to always prepare the right foods or even be at home at the right time to eat what she was supposed to eat. She figured she’d let the extra pounds slide for a while until she could gain control over her diet later. Besides, with Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays coming up, Sarah knew it would be impossible to diet. She had always truly loved the special treats of the holiday season. There would be parties and family dinners and ...besides, Beth was right, she did have a little wiggle room. There was nothing to worry about. Sam said he loved her just the way she was; surely a few extra pounds couldn’t change that.

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Sarah bought a few new sweaters and some size ten jeans to wear to class, just until she could lose a few pounds and fit back into her other clothes. She would worry about shopping for dressier holiday clothes a little later when she had more time.

Before she felt like she'd even blinked, Sarah found herself ripping the November page off her desk calendar, and exposing the December page. She filled in the empty squares of the calendar with times and places for holiday gatherings that would take place during the holiday break from school. Sarah had been procrastinating, but she knew she needed to go shopping for new clothes for the holiday events. Because her other clothes no longer fit, she'd been living in the larger jeans and sweaters she'd purchased in September, even though they were also fitting quite a bit snugger than when she'd bought them. When Sarah had gone down town to take care of some business, she had spotted a beautiful red satin holiday dress in the window at Roberts Department Store, and she had saved enough money to buy it so she could surprise Sam when they dressed for the first holiday party.

Sarah thought she was being overly generous when she took the size ten dress to the dressing room at Roberts. With the exception of the jeans and sweaters she had recently purchased, Sarah had worn junior size five since high school. She was quickly disappointed when the size ten dress clung to her stomach, hips and thighs, revealing every bulge and not giving any leeway at all for movement. Sarah thought of the crash diet she had used in order to lose weight before her wedding. But she knew that she only had a couple of

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weeks before she would need to wear the new dress, and knew she couldn't lose enough for it to fit right, that quickly. She sighed and reluctantly asked the sales clerk for the same dress in size twelve. She promised herself she would go on the diet again in January.

The clerk returned and informed Sarah that they did not have the dress in size twelve. Sarah spent several hours going from shop to shop, looking for a holiday evening dress that looked right on her. She was not accustomed to dealing with the extra pounds, and she found it irritating to have to spend so much time searching for something that looked good on her. Finally Sarah made a purchase and arrived home two hours later than she had told Sam she would be home. Sam had prepared a beautiful dinner for the two of them, that was now dried out from staying in the warm oven too long.

Sarah snacked her way through the holiday season, enjoying treats and all the homemade foods she never had time to cook for herself and Sam. In the back of her mind remained the nagging knowing that on January first, she would have to begin depriving herself of all goodies and comfort foods in order to lose the weight she had recently gained. Sarah watched Sam eat to his heart's content at every party they attended. He too, had gained a few barely-noticeable pounds that made his jeans fit a little snugger since they'd been married, but it didn't seem to concern him at all.

January came and went without Sarah starting the crash diet. She justified not starting the diet by stating that it was natural for everyone to put on a few extra pounds during the holiday season and winter months. She told herself

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she would take it easy on the snacks for a while, and then officially start the diet in early spring.

The day before Valentine's Day, when Sam got home from school, he announced that he had a surprise for Sarah. "We're going...wait, drum roll first, please... We're going skiing tomorrow!"

"What?" Sarah screeched as she grabbed the Mt. Bachelor Ski Resort special event passes out of Sam's hand, as he held them over her head and danced around her. "Where did you get these passes for the Valentine's Day Ski Ball?"

"My buddy Dan. You know, from the chemistry lab? Anyway, he bought the tickets for him and his girl for a special date, but it turned out they couldn't go. They're only good for Valentine's Day. I offered to pay him something for them, but he gave them to me! Can you believe it? These passes cost \$200 each. Boy, do I owe this fella! I thought we wouldn't be able to ski at all this season. But hey, we'll get a day in before the season is over!"

"But, what about school?" Sarah asked.

"We'll have to miss. I will, if you will. We've never cut classes before. We can do it just this once for this special occasion. This is just too good to pass up. Okay?"

Sarah and Sam planned how they would get up early, eat breakfast and pack a picnic to take to Mt. Bachelor with them the next morning. They packed all of their ski gear and clothes that evening. As she faded into slumber land

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that night, Sarah thought of how much fun it was when she and Sam used to ski and snowshoe together at Mt. Bachelor, when they were in high school.

It was a perfect ski day at the mountain, lots of sunshine and no wind. Sarah was giddy with excitement as she entered the locker room and unzipped the nylon bag that contained her ski bib and the clothes that fit underneath the bib. She couldn't wait to strap on her skis and glide down the mountain.

Sarah struggled to get the bib top over her thighs and to her hips. Once the bibs reached Sarah's hips she realized she had a problem. She sucked in her stomach until she was red in the face. She giggled, thinking she must look like the Pillsbury Doughboy™. She pulled and tugged to loosen the fabric just enough to get it to submit and reluctantly slide over her hips and stomach. Finally! Sarah knew Sam must already be outside the locker room waiting for her. She quickly pulled the straps over her shoulder and clicked each one into place, exhaling, thinking it was now safe to let out her stomach and take a deep breath of much-needed air. When Sarah leaned forward to grab her socks off the bench, she heard the unmistakable sound of ripping fabric. She didn't need to look to know that her bibs had just split down the back. Sarah tried to sit down on the bench, but she couldn't manage, even with the extra room that the ripped back afforded her. She thought about taping the rip back together, but she couldn't even bend over or sit down in the bibs, there is no way she would be able to ski.

Sarah leaned her forehead against the metal locker. She realized it had been a full year since she'd worn her ski bibs. During that year she had moved

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up the size chart two times. Whatever made her think she could fit into her bibs that she'd bought while in high school? Think? Sarah knew she had not thought about her weight at all. She was not used to needing to think about her weight or how her clothes fit. Sarah cried. She knew she had blown the perfect opportunity for a beautiful day of skiing and a romantic fun time with Sam.

Sarah told Sam what had happened and insisted that Sam spend the day skiing while she relaxed and watched TV in the lodge. "You ski. I'll be fine here in the lodge. I'll read magazines. I haven't had time to read magazines in forever, and you know I love reading magazines," Sarah had pleaded with Sam. But Sam would not have it. "This was supposed to be a special day for *both* of us. It's Valentine's Day. I won't leave you here alone in the lodge. How can sitting in the lodge reading magazines ever compare to a day out on the mountain?" Sam retorted.

In silence, they ate brunch at the lodge, as their special tickets included a meal. The ride home was also a silent one as Sarah tried to cope with her guilt for ruining Sam's special day.

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Three years later

By the time graduation day arrived for Sarah and Sam, Sarah was six months pregnant. Even though she and Sam both wanted to have children, they had planned on waiting a few more years to give Sarah time to get solidly

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established in her marketing career. The unexpected expectancy caused Sarah to put her career on hold. "Just until the baby is a year old," Sarah told Sam.

Sarah told herself that since she was eating for two, an extra snack in the afternoon and maybe another extra one at night wouldn't hurt anything. She always felt hungry and didn't think a couple of extra snacks per day would amount to much. She talked herself into believing that most of the weight she was gaining would disappear when the baby arrived. But Sarah was devastated when she came home from the hospital weighing 45 more pounds than when she had gotten pregnant. *I'll lose it all, very quickly*, Sarah promised herself.

Sarah did manage to lose a few pounds within a few months of Emily's birth, by cutting back on snacks and being more careful about what she chose to eat.

When baby Emily turned one Sarah couldn't bear to put her in daycare and go to work, as she and Sam had agreed she would. Sarah's energy level was so low that she didn't think she was up to a full-time job. Working part time would barely pay for daycare and not provide her with any benefits. Sarah had also not lost more than ten of the 45 pounds she had gained during her pregnancy, and she felt frumpy. She was not comfortable in business attire. The stylish fitted skirt suits that were considered appropriate business wear for her age group emphasized her protruding hips and stomach. Sarah had convinced herself that people think of overweight people as being lazy, and felt it would be difficult, at her current weight, to get a position in the visual marketing industry. "Looks do matter in some industries," Sarah told Sam.

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Even though it wasn't easy to manage it, Sam conceded and worked out the finances so Sarah could continue to stay home without working for another year. That additional year turned into two years and then with the arrival of a baby boy Eric, Sarah knew she was probably at home for good. She loved being a stay-at-home mom, but about the time Eric turned six months old, she began to feel depressed and bored with her world of non-stop diaper changes and mountains of laundry. Sarah started baking as a hobby to fill her time during Eric's naps.

Over the past few years Sarah had lost track of many of her high school and college friends who were either still single or married career women with no children. Sarah chuckled as she told Sam that her friends had stopped calling because they weren't interested in spending time with an old married woman with two kids, but in reality they had stopped calling because every time they called to invite Sarah out, she turned them down, making up some excuse about how busy she was. Because of her escalating weight, Sarah was ashamed and did not want her friends to see her. Out of fear that someone she knew would see her, she stopped going out of the house, except when absolutely necessary. Even though Emily loved walking the two blocks to the neighborhood playground, Sarah stopped taking her there because one of Sarah's high school classmates had started walking her dog there. When Sarah noticed the woman and realized who she was, she approached her and said hello. The woman stared at Sarah's face, obviously trying to figure out who was greeting her. When Sarah told her who she was, the shock on the woman's

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face exceeded the previous confusion she'd shown. The woman tried to be kind, but Sarah knew she was thinking, *you've gained so much weight that I did not recognize you!*

Sam had also put on a few extra pounds, and while it slowed him down a bit, he continued to live his fun-filled life, the way he always had. He begged Sarah to go out with him, to ski and hike with him; but she wouldn't. She felt she couldn't. When Sarah thought about skiing, she imagined herself a huge blob of bib-clad fat, tripping and rolling down the slope like a ball, while everyone stood on the sidelines and laughed at her. She felt clumsy and wouldn't take the risk of falling. She had also not forgotten the last time she went skiing with Sam and ruined his day because she had out grown her bib.

Sarah felt if she went bowling with Sam that everyone would be focused on her large behind as she bent over to send the ball down the lane. Not a pretty scene. Sarah felt she couldn't participate in Sam's friendly Sunday afternoon softball games at the park because she couldn't run around the bases without becoming severely out of breath. Besides, it was embarrassing when she jiggled as she ran. It was easier for her to not participate than to worry about these things. Sam didn't understand. It wasn't the same for him.

Sarah confided in Beth. "Sam wants me to do these active things that we used to do. I know they're important to him, but he doesn't realize that I feel like I'm trapped in an old fat woman's body. I don't feel capable of doing the things we used to do. I feel embarrassed to even try."

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Not wanting to endure the lectures about how being overweight could affect her joints, heart and “not to mention diabetes,” Sarah stopped meeting her mother for lunches out. She stopped going shopping with her sister to avoid having her sister find out what size she was now wearing. Sarah even skipped family events to avoid the tsk-tsk looks from her mother and sister. “Dear, we only mention it because we’re concerned about you. You just don’t look like yourself anymore. And you couldn’t feel very good carrying around all that weight. You know that overweight people get arthritis at a young age and are at much higher risk for heart attack. We don’t want anything like that for you, Sarah. Is there any way we can help you?”

Sarah missed her times with her mother and sister, but she couldn’t bear the shame she felt when she was around them.

Sarah’s emotions were all over the board. One day Sarah would be convinced that her isolation was fair enough punishment for allowing herself to gain so much weight. The next day she would feel angry and tell herself she had every right to be fat if she wanted to be fat. But she knew she didn’t really want to be fat. She knew being overweight truly was hurting her. She kept promising herself that she would do something about the weight that was a constant embarrassment to her and hindrance in her health and life. But it seemed the more she thought about trying to get the weight off, the more she snacked and ate sabotaging foods. Sarah didn’t understand what was happening to her body, or why food had turned on her and become her enemy.

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At night, when Sam, Emily and Eric were finally sound asleep, Sarah often lay awake and quietly cried to release the grief, sadness, and disappointment she felt. She grieved the loss of her special times of doing activities with Sam, the loss of her career, the loss of her friends, and the loss of her life as she had dreamed of it being. She hated that she had let the excess weight control most aspects of her life. She also felt it unfair that she had gone from being a beautiful fit woman, to being flabby, overweight and unfit. Sarah knew she wasn't one who pigged out on huge amounts of food or snacked constantly; and yet, because of her carelessness she had let the pounds pile on, ten pounds at a time.

Sarah had tried several diets, which helped her take off ten or fifteen pounds at a time. She couldn't manage to stay on any one diet long enough to lose a significant amount of weight, so the dieting was a temporary solution. As soon as Sarah dropped whatever diet she was on, the weight instantly began to come back and usually within three to four months she would gain back the weight she had lost plus five or ten more pounds.

Sarah was literally sick and tired of always feeling like she was dragging around a heavy bowling ball. Her lower back hurt, her knees ached, and she had no energy. Ironically, Sarah snacked on cookies and coffee or other sugary foods when she had no energy, to try to get a quick boost of energy to get her through her afternoon tasks.

It was getting more and more difficult for Sarah to even think about approaching a new diet. Most of them didn't seem suited to her. She had

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endured so many failures that she had no confidence in herself to stick with any diet. Sometimes something would inspire her to go out and buy a new diet book and the specific food to start the new diet the following Monday. But by Monday morning she was no longer inspired and the special food remained in the refrigerator until it went bad and Sarah tossed it in the garbage.

For a while, Sarah's high school friend Beth tried to help her. "Sarah, this weight gain is seriously affecting your life. You are going to have to change your thinking and do something that works for the long term." But rather than heed Beth's advice, Sarah pushed Beth away. *She just expects me to eat nothing but lettuce and carrots like she does. I am not her! She weights 100 pounds dripping wet, and I can't sustain my body on rabbit food like she can.*

Sam was also gaining weight, five pounds at a time and moving up the clothes size ladder. Sarah blamed herself for Sam's weight gain too. She feared the meals she prepared and the snacks she brought into the house were the reason for Sam's weight gain. She felt she was not only failing herself, but failing Sam too.

After Emily and Eric started school, it became more difficult for Sarah to remain completely isolated from the outside world. Because of Sam's busy work schedule, it was sometimes necessary for Sarah to drive Eric and Emily to school, attend parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, or serve as parent volunteer in the classroom. Doing this encouraged Sarah to continue to

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volunteer at the elementary school, even after Emily and Eric had passed on to junior high school.

One spring day, Sarah was the volunteer parent in a third grade classroom. The children were out on the playground and it was Sarah's responsibility to monitor the children while the teacher took her lunch break in the teachers' lounge. Sarah was enjoying pushing one of the girls on the swing set when another girl ran up to her and yelled, "Help! Mrs. Spencer, Adam can't breathe. He's on the slide and he can't breathe. He doesn't have his puffer."

Sarah struggled to get to the slide as quickly as she could. Her knees ached each time she bent them, from early-onset of arthritis due to her weight, and she was having difficulty catching her breath while she ran. She felt like she was moving in slow motion—like her heart was willing her body to run, but it would not obey. As she got closer to the slide, Sarah saw Adam flat on his back at the top of the slide. When she finally reached the slide, Sarah realized the stair case leading up to the top of the slide was too narrow for her to fit inside. She could not fit her body inside the narrow case well enough to go up the steps the normal way and she could not manage to turn sideways and go up the steps. "Hurry, Mrs. Spencer! Hurry! Adam's face is blue!" a student yelled from the top of the slide.

Sarah panicked and tried to gain access to the top of the slide by getting on her knees on the curvy slick slide surface and pulling herself up. But Sarah couldn't do that either. Sarah grabbed one of the girls who was standing next to the slide and told her to run back into the school building as fast as she could

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and get the first teacher she saw, even if she had to run into a classroom and interrupt the teacher. "Tell the teacher where Adam is and to get here as fast as they can. Say that it is an emergency because Adam can't breathe! Go, now!"

A few seconds later, Sarah watched a teacher sprint across the school yard and up the stairs leading to the top of the slide. The teacher quickly examined Adam and immediately took her cell phone from her sweater pocket and dialed 911. She yelled and motioned for Sarah to come up and help her with Adam. Sarah stood at the bottom of the slide crying.

The paramedics arrived and treated Adam. Fortunately, he survived the asthma attack without severe consequences. Sarah somehow endured the looks from the teachers and paramedics as they talked about what could have happened if even a few more minutes had passed before help reached Adam. One paramedic brought up negligence on the part of "the playground monitor," but Sarah was numb and in shock, and did not hear the conversation.

Someone called Sam to come and get Sarah and drive her home. Once she was at home, Sarah climbed into bed with her clothes and shoes on, and did not leave the bed, except for bathroom purposes, for three days. Sam brought her water to keep her hydrated. He begged her to eat something and to talk to him, but she would not say a word to anyone. Her heart ached beyond any ache she had ever experienced. All she could think of was what would have happened if the paramedics hadn't reached Adam in time. Sarah hated herself for being incapable. Sarah cried until she knew there were no more tears in her to expel.

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On the third day of being in bed, Sarah felt weak and shaky from having not eaten anything. When she thought about it, she was shocked that she had been able to go for such a long period of time without eating. Sarah managed to get up, bathe and groom herself, and walk downstairs to the kitchen. She drank a glass of orange juice and made a chicken and vegetable salad without any dressing, and ate it. Then she went to the garage where she had packed away all of her diet books in boxes.

One at a time, Sarah took out each diet book and read the jacket flap and testimonies. She chose one of the famous diets that had supposedly magically taken people from 220 pounds to 110 pounds in just a matter of a few months. "If they can do it, so can I!" stated Sarah to herself. "I *have* to do this. Never again will I be put in a helpless situation because of my weight!"

When Sarah told Sam about her new diet plan, he encouraged her to do something else instead. "You've tried the crash diet books before. They are just temporary fixes. Don't you want to do something that will be permanent? If you're really determined to lose the weight, there must be a better way. You've tried this so many times before and it just ends in disappointment. Besides, every time you buy a new book and all the food it tells you to eat, you end up wasting a lot of money that could be used for something else."

Sarah glared at Sam. She felt sad that he had lost all faith in her ability to lose weight. At this point he didn't take her seriously at all and it seemed he had just resigned to being overweight and to having an overweight wife. He'd lost respect for her word when it came to dieting. Frankly, she couldn't blame him.

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How many years had she been saying she was going to get the excess weight off—only to lose fifteen pounds and then a few months later, gain back thirty pounds?

The diet Sarah first tried did not work for her. After just three weeks on the unusual diet, Sarah had actually *gained* five pounds. She switched to another crash diet and got quick results. Within two weeks, she'd seen a five-pound decrease in the number on the bathroom scale. The quick results encouraged Sarah and made her feel like she could stay with the diet. Sarah further encouraged herself by imagining that she would lose enough weight to be thin and fit again. She dreamed of putting on a size ten ski bib and gliding down the mountain with Sam, ending up at the lodge, where the guys all smiled and winked at her like they used to. She dreamed of shopping sprees with her sister where she could find and wear smaller sizes than said sister, in the latest cute styles. She saw herself dancing at the holiday parties, slim, flexible, and perfectly dressed. She imagined running into old classmates while out and about, and having them be in awe of how great she looked. Sarah thought about how her mother's mouth would drop open when Sarah showed up for Thanksgiving dinner wearing a size ten fitted dress. Sarah thought of how good it would feel to walk without feeling her thighs rub together, and without feeling pain in her knee joints. Most of all, Sarah dreamed of seeing that look in Sam's eyes again—that look that said, "I'm married to the most beautiful woman in the world, and I'm so proud of it."

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Sarah dieted her way to a fifteen pound weight loss. She knew from previous experience with diets that once she lost the first fifteen pounds, the real difficulty began. That was the point where the weight seemed to dig in its heels and not want to budge. "That's because the first several pounds that you lose on these crazy diets are just water loss," Beth had instructed Sarah.

Not one to use medication unless it was necessary, Sarah had never used diet pills before, though she had been tempted to many times. Beth, who was a nurse, warned her of the dangers of diet pills. But to help her get past the difficult point, Sarah bought some diet pills. She took them only twice before she had a severe reaction to them, and had to stop using them.

Sarah continued with her crash diet. Every time she was tempted to cheat, she made herself think about Adam, unable to breathe, and her inability to reach him because she was too fat to use the stairs to get to him. Within three months Sarah had lost 45 of the 65 pounds that she wanted to lose. She had never before been able to stick to a diet long enough to lose that much weight. But the diet was starting to take a toll on Sarah. She was always tired and irritable because in order to avoid the calories, she wasn't refueling her body with energy-producing foods that contained many of the nutrients she needed. Sarah found she was having a difficult time concentrating and felt spacey and light-headed a lot of the time. She was forgetful, and that caused problems.

Sarah knew the diet was harsh and was meant to be used only temporarily to drop the first ten or so pounds. The book had made that perfectly clear. But Sarah was desperate. She felt losing the weight was the only way she could

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redeem herself from almost letting Adam die; the only way she could get back the life she wanted—the life that being overweight had stolen from her.

When Sarah arrived at her mother's house for Thanksgiving, her mother was amazed at how much weight Sarah had lost. "But you don't look very healthy," she added.

Sarah rolled her eyes at her mom. "You wanted me to lose weight. I'm losing weight, so be happy for me."

It was Sarah's plan to remain on her crash diet throughout the holiday season. She knew if she could do that, she would be at her ideal weight when the New Year rolled in. But when the mashed potatoes and gravy were passed to Sarah at the Thanksgiving table, she took some of each. She also decided that she would allow herself to have the pecan pie which her mother made *only* one time a year, at Thanksgiving. Sarah relished the taste of the food. She had not had such tasty food for four long months. She did not want to deprive herself on that special day.

After tasting the great food at Thanksgiving Sarah relented a little on the diet. She allowed herself to enjoy a few cookies and eggnog at holiday parties, and even started eating the same foods such as pasta and bread, as Sam, Emily and Eric did for their meals at home. At first she was careful to take small portions and didn't take seconds. She skipped dessert most nights.

Day by day, Sarah's resolve weakened, just as it had so many times before, and she abandoned the diet completely. She slowly increased her portion sizes of high-calorie foods at meal time, and didn't hesitate to partake of dessert or

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before-bed ice cream bars. By February, Sarah had gained back 25 of the forty-five pounds she had lost. By that summer she had gained back the entire forty-five pounds, putting her at an unhealthy 65 pounds over her ideal weight.

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Getting the invitation should've been the highlight of Sarah's day. But as soon as she read the embossed note, she quickly tucked it safely into the desk drawer. She would have to decide if she would tell Sam about it or not. If she did tell Sam, he would definitely want to attend their thirtieth high school reunion. Sarah knew what that would mean for her.

Just to confirm her thoughts and keep herself from starting to dream of going to the reunion, Sarah walked over to her closet and slid the door open. The whole truth was right there in front of her, dancing on the hangers, taunting her. Three-fourths of her closet was filled with size twelve clothes; the largest of the "before" clothes. The other one-fourth of her closet housed two-pair of plus-sized, elastic waist jeans, three oversized tee shirts, and one pair of black slacks and matching blouse. She knew the last time she'd worn the black slacks they were too snug. The elastic waist jeans were stretching at the seams to contain her ever-expanding thighs. Mostly, Sarah had succumbed to the loose-fitting sweat pants that were neatly folded and placed in the bottom dresser drawer after each frequent washing. She remembered the very large woman she'd seen in the grocery store the day before. The woman was

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wearing a tent-style dress. Sarah knew that would be her next step for clothing. She had crossed the line.

Nope. Sarah knew she couldn't go to the reunion. She could never go to these events that required dressing up and looking nice. She had stopped going several years ago. She decided right then that she wouldn't even begin the horrifying, exasperating process of trying to find something that looked nice on her to wear to the reunion. The reunion would last three days; it would be impossible to find three outfits that fit right, including attractive evening wear for the dances and ceremonies. Sarah had long given up on finding stylish feminine clothes in her size.

Sarah flopped down on her bed and cringed as she noted the incredible dent she made in the mattress. How many events had she missed because she didn't want people to see her this way and because she could never find anything decent to wear to any event? How many excuses had she made? How much fun and laughter had she missed? Sarah thought of the way she had insulated herself by shutting out all of her friends and family members. This meant she was also isolating Sam. She wondered how long it would be before Sam couldn't take it any longer. He had been avoiding her and distancing himself from her for quite some time now. She felt it; she knew it. He had been through years of this struggle with her. He was probably just as tired of it as she was.

Sarah had never dreamed that her seemingly harmless casual overeating and failure to exercise could cause so many problems that affected every area

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of her life. Now, after a long struggle and battle with her weight, it seemed it had finally won. It had beaten her beyond recovery, and she would have to deal with the carnage. If only she had been wise enough to follow the good advice she had been given when she was young and first started putting on extra weight, she wouldn't be sitting here now, crying about what should have been a happy occasion in her life.

Epilogue.

How very, very sad. Sarah epitomises hundreds and hundreds of young and middle aged people who have fought and lost "the battle of the bulge". The problem is a big one, endemic in the Western World for a number of reasons. Sarah is typical of the person who tries diet after diet, regime after regime and always ends up back where they started. So why does it happen, what's it all about?

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Dieters fail not because they are not committed, not because they lack will power, they fail because they make the same mistakes again and again. They fail because they don't know that diets actually program their body to put on weight! They fail because they end up fighting their body not working with it. If you fight you're bodies programming their can only be one winner, and it won't be you. To lose weight successfully you must know how to turn on the body messengers that tell your body to stop hoarding weight but to lose it instead.

Work with your body, not against it.

If you want the smart way to lose weight, if you want to know how to reprogram your body to lose weight so that you can do it successfully and permanently without stress and in your own time then go to

www.feelgreatbylosingweight.com where you can take a look at our flag ship weight loss program and if you like what you see, do yourself a favour and order a copy.

Even if you don't want to purchase anything, www.feelgreatbylosingweight.com is full of free information to help you with your weight loss and fitness issues, so why not give it a visit.

Wishing you every success in your weight loss quest.