

*Giving Up God*

This one time I broke up with God.

I can still picture my face that day, red and blotchy. Standing in front of my bathroom mirror. Telling this guy I'd been with for six years:

“I can't do this anymore.”

But let's back up two days. The weekend had started the usual way Pentecostal retreats do: Greetings and hugs. Singing and prayers. A digestible sermon, followed by more singing and prayers. Except today the sermon wasn't so digestible. At least not for me.

Every time the pastor put the words “condemned” and “homosexual” in the same sentence, I wanted to disintegrate through the floor. But there were still hours of singing to get through.

Mid-song, my friend Jack sat next to me.

Jack had recently been kicked off our Christian fellowship's leadership team. His crime was telling the pastor he wanted to “reconcile his faith and his sexuality.” You see, Jack had fallen in love.

“What's wrong, Linda?” Jack asked me. I put on a smile, ready to pretend I didn't know what he was talking about. But he wasn't fooled. “Please don't lie to me,” he said.

And I couldn't. I didn't want to.

“I don't think it's right — what the pastor said.”

And then right before my eyes, this Cornell senior, whose confidence and charisma I'd secretly envied for the last two years, this senior who always seemed so together and sure of himself, just fell apart. He melted into my shoulder and sobbed and hugged me. I'd never felt so needed. So loved.

“Thank you, Linda. Thank you. Thank you,” he kept saying over and over. “You don't know how much this means to me.”

I knew everything was going to change then. And I was terrified. I had already signed a lease to live with two other Christians for the next year. My whole social circle revolved around Christians. I didn't know who I was going to be without Bible study and PG movie parties.

Jack drove me home after the retreat and dropped me off at my apartment. We talked for an hour, and it was like drinking water after a long hike. But then he had to go and I was alone. And I hated being alone.

It just wasn't fair. There were all kinds of people willing to show you how to ask Jesus into your heart, but no one to show you how to ask him to leave. After an hour of feeling terrified, and pacing around my apartment, I went into the bathroom. That seemed like as good a place as any to have "the talk."

Leaning against the wall I let it all pour out — tears, fears, and one last request.

"Please don't hate me, God. I still love you. But I just can't do this anymore," I sobbed to the person I had talked to every day for the last half decade.

Then I heard a key at the door, which meant my Christian roommates were home and it was time to stop crying.