

TOPEKA RESCUE MISSION MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2021

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TINA'S JOURNEY: PART 1



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Born five minutes apart, from the first moment Tina and Sherry appeared in the world they shared a bond unlike any other. They were born into a family of ten girls and two boys, but as identical twins their bond sometimes felt like it was just the two of them in their own world. They played games no one else knew about. They finished each other's sentences. They often knew what the other was thinking or going to say before they said it, and in a kind of sixth sense, one twin always knew when the other needed them and always appeared by their side in an instant, ready to help.

Their early life had many challenges. Tina was born with a heart murmur, complicating her early years. Their father worked as a farmhand on the property they lived on, working long hours in exchange for shelter and food for his family. When Tina and Sherry were two months old, the property owner found the twins alone on the floor of the house they lived in, both of them beaten almost to death. Their mother had taken all their possessions, beaten the twins

and left them on the cold floor, leaving her husband to raise the twins.

Their father had a strong military background and rose to the challenge. He continued working hard to provide for his family and added being a single parent into his workload. Their grandmother joined in to help raise the children. As a professional cook, she began training Tina and Sherry in the kitchen when they were 10

years old, teaching them a variety of recipes that could feed many people at once. She taught the girls how to use simple ingredients they grew themselves or had on hand, and how to stretch ingredients and triple recipes to feed their large family.

Eventually their family began moving around frequently, traveling through the Midwest and the South to find work wherever their father could. The family ended up facing homelessness while in

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Kansas and became guests at TRM for a period of time, giving them a chance to get back on their feet. But despite the impermanence and uncertainties in their lives, Tina and Sherry constantly found new ways to adapt to their challenges and changing situations together. They remained best friends, experiencing everything simultaneously and always there to comfort and encourage each other, and as they grew up they became more closely connected than most people ever experience.

So closely connected, Tina could feel Sherry's pain even when they were separated in adulthood. Tina describes a time in her 20's while living several states away from her twin that she suddenly began experiencing excruciating pain. It came on out of the blue and lasted multiple hours, only to disappear as suddenly as it began. An hour later Sherry called to say, "Tina, I had my baby!"

Tina was in the room for the birth of Sherry's second child and became a second mother to Sherry's two girls, Cagney and Lacey, caring for them like she cared for her own children. That time of their lives was full of love, but like many women who have faced great challenges in life, Sherry ended up in a relationship with a man who became abusive.

When Tina first met him she had a strong gut reaction that

something was very wrong. Although he was charming on the outside, she felt something inside him that frightened her. She told Sherry, "You have to get rid of him. He's going to end up hurting you."

Sherry took her advice and broke off the relationship, but the man kept coming back and abusing her and her two young daughters. When Tina found out about the abuse she stood up to him and tried to protect her twin from him like she had always done throughout their lives - always coming to her sister's aid whenever she was needed.

But when she was 27, the police showed up at Tina's door on a Saturday morning. Sherry and her two young daughters had been brutally murdered by their abuser, their bodies burned.

The years after losing her twin and her nieces nearly destroyed Tina. The grief she felt at losing family members was compounded by the sudden and intense isolation of losing her best friend, her constant companion and her other half. Studies throughout the decades have shown the lifespan of one identical twin after the other dies is often very short, as the surviving twin is unable to cope with such profound loss.

Through the years Tina had to navigate caring for her children and her family while feeling impossibly alone; trying to survive a kind of grief and isolation most people could never understand. It caused her to question everything - did she have a purpose in the world

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without her twin? Could she even survive it?

At TRM we encounter people with overwhelming, seemingly impossible stories like Tina's every day. While the basics of our mission are to provide shelter for the homeless and food for the hungry, we know we have an equally vital role to provide a safe space for those who have experienced trauma and brokenness and have no where else to turn. It would be many years before Tina found her way back to TRM again, but her story doesn't end here. Next month we will continue to join Tina on her journey to hope, purpose and the wonderful ways God is using her life today to minister to the many hurting in our community. †



Check back next month for the rest of Tina's Journey and how it led to her current job at TRM!

Psalm 13:1 & 5

1. How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
5. But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

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