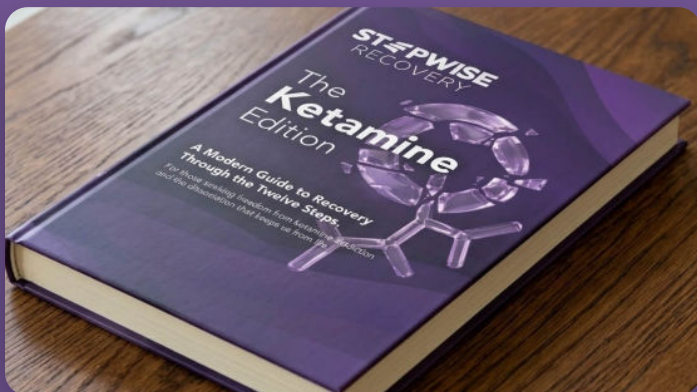


STEPWISE RECOVERY

FREE PREVIEW · NO EMAIL REQUIRED



The **Ketamine** Edition

A Modern Guide to Recovery Through the
Twelve Steps

This preview contains the full contents pages and the complete Chapter 2 — *My Story: From Emptiness to Recovery* — exactly as it appears in the printed book.

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Chapter 2: My Story – From Emptiness to Recovery

The Beginning

I need you to understand something before I tell you my story: I didn't plan to become a ketamine addict. No one does. I was just a kid who felt different, who couldn't quite fit the mould, who discovered that powder could make the world bearable.

Growing up, I always felt like I was wearing a costume that didn't fit. Trying to be who everyone expected, when inside I was drowning. That feeling (of being fundamentally wrong, of not belonging in my own skin) is what ketamine promised to fix. And for a while, it did.

First Contact

Eighteen years old, first year of university. Everyone was doing drugs: pills, MDMA, the usual student experimentation. But ketamine was different. That first line didn't make me energetic or loved-up. It made me absent. And that absence felt like home.

“Finally,” I thought. “Finally, I don't have to feel everything.”

The progression was textbook, though I couldn't see it then. Weekend use became midweek use. Midweek became daily. Daily became hourly. Within eighteen months, I was that person: the one who always had it, always knew where to get it,

always pushed for one more line when everyone else was done.

The Escalation

By twenty-one, I'd dropped out of university. Told everyone I was taking a gap year, finding myself. What I was finding was new depths of isolation. Moved back with my parents, got a job in a call centre. The kind where you can be completely kettled and no one notices because everyone's dead inside anyway.

My routine became mathematical: Wake up. Line. Shower. Line. Work. Toilet cubicle line. Lunch. Car park line. Home. Continuous lines until the K-hole took me.

The tolerance built faster than I could afford. What started as a gram lasting days became a gram before lunch. Then two grams. Then whatever I could get my hands on. I discovered you could order it online like ordering groceries. Bulk discounts. Next day delivery. The postman became my most important relationship.

The Physical Destruction

The K-cramps started about two years in. At first, just discomfort I could ignore. Then pain that made me double over. Then agony that had me crying on the bathroom floor at 4am, praying to a God I didn't believe in.

But here's the insane part: the ketamine helped with the pain. The very thing destroying my bladder could make the destruction bearable. So I took more. To deal with the damage

that taking it caused. That's addict logic.

The progression was relentless:

- **Year 1:** Party drug, spiritual experiences, feeling special
- **Year 2:** Daily use, isolation beginning, first K-cramps
- **Year 3:** Hourly use, blood in urine, complete social isolation
- **Year 4:** Incontinence, wearing pads, weighing eight stone

I remember the first time I pissed blood. Bright red in the toilet bowl. My first thought wasn't "I should stop." It was "I need to Google if this is normal." Found forums full of people saying it happened to them too. Somehow that made it okay. We were all pissing blood together.

The bathroom became my second bedroom. I'd spend hours in there, timing the waves of pain, dosing ketamine between attacks. Developed a whole ritual: hot bath to ease the cramps, line on the toilet seat, back in the bath. Repeat until unconscious or until the water went cold.

My family thought I had some mysterious illness. In a way, I did. But I was both the patient and the poison.

The Isolation

Ketamine isn't a social drug when you're deep in it. It's not cocaine where you want to talk to everyone. It's not MDMA where you love everyone. It's the opposite. You want everyone to disappear. You want to disappear.

I stopped seeing friends (too much effort, couldn't use freely). Stopped answering texts (what would I say?). Stopped leaving my room except for work and to score. My parents thought I was depressed. I was, but that wasn't why I was locked in my room for days. I was in K-holes, exploring what I thought were other dimensions but were really just the inside of my own disconnection.

My family would knock: "Are you okay in there?" "Yeah, fine." "You haven't come out in two days." "Just tired."

They'd leave food outside my door like I was a zoo animal. I'd wait until they went to bed to retrieve it. Couldn't eat much anyway. Ketamine kills your appetite along with everything else.

The loneliness was crushing, but people were worse. Every interaction was an obstacle to using. Every conversation was time away from ketamine. I chose the drug over humans every single time, then wondered why I felt so empty.

The Money

The debts piled up faster than I could track. Payday loans at insane interest. Credit cards maxed and defaulted. Catalogues for electronics I'd immediately sell. Get a laptop on credit for £1000, sell it for £400 cash, worry about consequences later.

Within a year, I owed twenty grand. Twenty thousand pounds I'd literally pissed and snorted away. Debt collectors calling constantly. Court summons I ignored. Bailiffs I hid from.

When legitimate credit ran out, I got creative. Stole from my

parents (just coins at first, then notes, then anything valuable). Sold everything I owned. Designer clothes my parents had bought me, gone. Gaming console, gone. Jewellery from my grandmother, gone. Each time swearing it was the last time, I just needed to get through this week.

Then came the real desperation. Things I can barely write about even now. Escorting. Selling myself to fund my habit. Telling myself it was temporary, just until I got back on my feet. But you can't get back on your feet when you're spending every penny on the thing that knocked you down.

I became someone I didn't recognise. Someone who could smile at strangers while dying inside. Someone who could disconnect completely from their body while it was being used. The ketamine helped with that too. Always the solution to the problems it created.

The Mental Collapse

Four years in, my brain broke. Not metaphorically, but it literally felt like it snapped. Had been up for days, took acid on top of the ketamine. Five drops one night, then four more the next morning without sleeping. Something shifted, tore, separated.

Eight months of psychosis followed. Convinced everyone was talking about me. Heard voices discussing my thoughts. Saw messages in car number plates. Thought strangers could read my mind. The terrifying part? The only thing that quieted the psychosis was more ketamine. The medicine was the poison was the medicine.

I became two people: one screaming horrible things about myself, calling me worthless, telling me to die. The other trying to function, go to work, pretend to be human. Both of them were me. Neither of them were me. I was lost somewhere between them, in the dissociation.

The paranoia was unbearable. Couldn't leave the house without feeling watched. Couldn't speak without thinking everyone knew my thoughts. Couldn't exist without ketamine to blur the edges of this fractured reality I'd created.

The Relationships

I had a girlfriend through some of this. She loved me, genuinely loved me. But I was a ghost to her. She'd talk and I'd be calculating how long until I could use. She'd touch me and I'd be planning my escape to the bathroom. She'd cry about us and I'd be thinking about ketamine.

"You're here but you're not here," she said once. "I know. I'm sorry. I'll change." "You've been saying that for two years." "This time I mean it."

I meant it every time. That's the tragedy. In the moment, I always meant it. But ketamine was my first love, my primary relationship. Everything else was just noise between lines.

She left eventually. Took her stuff while I was in a K-hole. I came to and she was gone. Part of me was relieved. One less person to hide from. One less person to disappoint. One less obstacle between me and oblivion.

The Family Breakdown

My parents aged ten years in the four years of my heavy use. They went from concerned to frightened to defeated. My dad, who'd been my hero, couldn't look at me. My mum cried every time she saw me: skeletal, grey, vacant.

"You're not my child anymore," she said once. "I don't know who you are."

She was right. I wasn't anyone anymore. I was just a vehicle for ketamine consumption. A ghost haunting my childhood home.

They tried everything. Tough love (changed the locks, I broke in). Soft love (paid for private therapy, I went high). Interventions (I agreed to everything then used the same day). They were fighting an enemy they couldn't see with weapons that didn't work.

My younger brother was the hardest to face. He was using too by then — we'd got into it together — but he never fell as far or as fast as I did, and he looked at me like I was already dead. Started referring to me in past tense: "Remember when he used to..." Like I was a memory instead of standing right there. Maybe I was.

The worst part was seeing their hope die. Every time I'd promise to stop, I'd see a flicker of the parents I used to have. Then I'd relapse and watch that light go out again. Eventually, they stopped hoping. That's when I knew I'd lost them completely.

The Failed Attempts to Stop

There were countless times I swore I was done. I'd flush a bag down the toilet at 3am, shaking and crying, convinced that tomorrow I'd start fresh. But by 10am I'd be calling a dealer, praying they answered before the withdrawals and panic swallowed me whole.

I even managed a few months clean here and there. But "clean" wasn't really clean. I swapped ketamine for weed and alcohol, convincing myself I'd found balance. Nights blurred into hazy drinking sessions, mornings started with bong hits instead of bums. On the surface, it looked like I'd stopped. In reality, I'd just traded one crutch for another.

And the truth? It never lasted. The weed and booze eventually opened the same door back to ketamine. Within weeks I was right where I'd left off, only more convinced that I was broken, that nothing would ever really work.

I tried every version of "stopping."

- Cutting down to weekends only (by Tuesday I was already back at it).
- Swapping one drug for another (always ended up adding ketamine back in).
- Locking myself away without money or contacts (always found a way out).
- Promising my girlfriend, my parents, my brother "this time it's different" and meaning it in that moment. But it never was.

Each failed attempt chipped away at me. It wasn't just the

relapse; it was the crushing shame of breaking promises, the look of disappointment in people's eyes, and the belief growing stronger every day that I was beyond help.

Addiction is cunning. It let me believe I was choosing to stop, then convinced me hours later that one last line wouldn't hurt. The truth is, I never had control. The drug was driving, and I was just a passenger pretending to hold the wheel.

The Physical Collapse

Eight stone. That's what I weighed near the end. Six feet tall and eight stone. Bones visible through skin. Clothes hanging like they were still on the hanger. People staring in the street, not with judgement but with pity. The look you give someone terminal.

My bladder was destroyed. Capacity down to maybe 50ml. That's a shot glass worth before the agony started. I wore adult nappies to bed, sometimes during the day. The shame of buying them, of wearing them, of needing them at twenty-four years old.

But shame was a luxury I couldn't afford anymore. Dignity was gone. Pride was gone. Everything was gone except the need for ketamine.

The K-cramps would last hours. Curled in a ball, sweating through clothes, begging for death. And you know what I'd do when they finally eased? Take more ketamine. Because for those few minutes before the pain returned, I felt nothing. And nothing was everything I wanted.

The Final Days

I knew I was dying. Not in an abstract way, but bodily knowledge. My organs were failing. My mind was gone. My soul, if I ever had one, had long since departed.

Woke up one morning (afternoon, evening, I'd lost track) covered in my own piss and blood. Couldn't remember the last three days. My dealer was calling, worried I'd died owing him money. My parents had given up knocking. I was alone with my destruction.

Tried to stand and collapsed. Crawled to my stash, hands shaking so badly I couldn't open the bag. Managed to get some up my nose. The burning was comforting, familiar. This is it, I thought. This is how I die. Twenty-four years old, alone, covered in piss, desperately snorting the thing that killed me.

But the cramps started again, worse than ever. Like my insides were being pulled out through my penis. I screamed, actually screamed. My parents must have heard but didn't come. They'd learned not to.

In that moment, something cracked. Not my mind this time, but the wall I'd built around the truth. I saw myself clearly for the first time in years: a skeleton in a pool of bodily fluids, choosing death over life, choosing ketamine over everything.

The pain got worse. I took more ketamine. It didn't help. Took more. Nothing. The magic was gone. Even oblivion wasn't oblivion anymore.

That's when I knew: I'm going to die. Not maybe, not eventually. Soon. And the worst part? Part of me was relieved.

At least it would be over.

The Surrender

Crawled to my brother's room. He was a week clean himself (we'd been using together, but something had clicked for him first). Dropped to my knees and said words I'd never said: "I need help. I can't do this anymore."

He didn't say anything. Just held me while I sobbed. Not the ketamine tears, not the self-pity tears, but real tears. The tears of someone who'd finally stopped fighting.

He took me to my first meeting the next day. A community centre on the south side. Sunday morning, 2nd of January. He knew where to go because he'd been going himself for a week. He told me not to say I was new, not to mention ketamine. "They'll all share at you," he warned.

But when I heard them speak (about feeling different, about the obsession, about the desperate need to escape themselves) I knew I was home. They weren't talking about ketamine, but they were telling my story. The substance was different; the disease was the same.

When they asked if anyone was new, I ignored my brother's advice and raised my hand. Got my newcomer keyring. Got a hug from someone who'd been where I was. Broke down completely. Not the ketamine tears, not the self-pity tears, but relief tears. Hope tears.

"Keep coming back," they said. "It works if you work it."

I didn't believe them. How could not using be better than using when using was the only thing that made life bearable? But I was out of options. It was recovery or death, and some small part of me, buried under all the destruction, wanted to live.

The Truth About Ketamine

Here's what I know now: ketamine is a jealous god. It promises escape but builds a prison. It offers peace but delivers agony. It says it's medicine while it's poisoning you from the inside out.

Every bump you take, every K-hole you enter, you're not getting free. You're getting more trapped. Your brain rewires itself to need dissociation to function. Your bladder degrades until you're pissing blood and tissue. Your life shrinks until it's just you, the drug, and the bathroom you can't leave.

I used to think I was exploring consciousness. I was just running from it. Used to think I was treating my mental health. I was making it infinitely worse. Used to think I was different from other addicts. Turns out I was just an addict who happened to prefer ketamine.

The physical damage might heal (my bladder's better, though not perfect). The psychological dependence is harder. Learning to exist without an escape hatch, to be present in my own life, to feel feelings without dissociating. That's the real work.

But it's possible. I'm proof. Two years clean as I write this. Living a life I couldn't have imagined in that piss-covered bedroom. Not a perfect life, but a real one. Present for it, good and bad. Connected to people who know me, actually know

me, not the ghost I used to be.

If you recognise yourself in this story, if you're reading this between trips to the toilet, timing your next dose to avoid the K-cramps, justifying your use with Google searches about therapeutic benefits, you're not alone. You're not uniquely fucked. You're not beyond help.

I thought I was. I was wrong about that too.

There is a solution. And to understand that, you need to hear how thousands of us found our way out of the same K-hole you're in now.

That's what comes next.

If you see yourself in this story (the progression, the desperation, the defeat) know that recovery is possible. Turn the page to discover the solution that has worked for countless others trapped in the same cycle.

Ready to go deeper?

What you've just read is one chapter of nineteen. The full book walks the complete path — from understanding what ketamine does to the body and mind, through every one of the Twelve Steps, to finding the way back.

- 19 chapters, 356 pages — written by people who have recovered from ketamine addiction
- The complete Six-Lens Framework applied to every Step
- A medical chapter covering dissociation, bladder damage, and what doctors now understand
- Practical tools, honest stories, and a quick-reference crisis guide

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