# Rhiannon’s Story

Life isn’t easy, it’s a challenge. I wake up every day in a world of poverty, violence and drug addiction. Every day is full of decisions. Here is a decision I’ll never forget.

“What is that?” said Z; one of the town’s most famous drop outs.

“Looks like a bird puked feathers all over her head,” said one of Z’s minions.

I remain silent. I couldn’t think of anything they wouldn’t just use against me. I walked past them as I heard laughing in the background. As I walked the halls I heard, *“Hey, feather head, did any birds puke on you this morning?”* Z’s comment this morning already got around school. It was awful. I ate my lunch in the bathroom, anything to get away from the harassment. I couldn’t take it anymore. Every comment felt like a punch to the stomach. I didn’t understand why everyone made a big deal about my mohawk anyway; I’ve had it since I was six. *Was it the color? Was it the height?* Their comments shouldn’t matter anyway. Half of them probably have no idea what they’re saying anyway because their mind is set on getting more heroin, which isn’t anything new.

Here in Darvel, Scotland, heroin addiction isn’t uncommon. Everyone you see is on it. People buy it the alleys behind the apartment buildings. The people who aren’t on heroin aren’t much better. They join gangs, like Z’s. Most of them drop out of school to join the gang and roam the streets. Gangs give their members comfort and make them feel like they belong. They rob everyone, but the people they rob normally can’t give them much anyway because everyone’s in poverty.

Later in the day, after school, Z and his minions approach me again. This time instead of calling me feather head they surround me in a circle. I know what’s coming. I look for an exit out of the circle; but there was none. I brace myself the best I can. Then, it happens. After they run away I hear, Have I nice night, feather head.” When I finally think I have enough strength to walk home, I start to crawl out of the sewage drain. I had been knocked into the sewage drain; they probably hoped I was dead. That would have been one more thing for their gang cred. As soon as I got out of the sewage drain I realize I have a huge, gooey, deep, swelling cut on my right arm. I start looking and find I have these all over my body. I sigh and begin walking home.

Once I make it home, I decide not to tell my parents about the cuts. They couldn’t do anything about it anyway. We can’t afford a hospital, or to drive to one. Telling them would only make them feel horrible that they didn’t even have enough money to help their child. I doctor the cuts the best I can. Then, I grab my guitar and start to strum. I love music. I find relief in the beat of a drum or the strum of a guitar. While others find relief in heroin and turn to gangs for protection, I turn to music. It’s my only escape from this messed up world.

The next day, Z finds me again. This time I swore things would be different.

“Feather face, how was your night?” asked Z as he grinned.

“Just fine, thanks for asking,” I snarled in response.

“Okay. Listen here, Puke Head,” threatened Z.

“No, you listen Z; I don’t have to listen to a drop out who can’t even spell his own name,” I said. I was done with him; he humiliated me and beat me up. No more.

“Okay, Feather face,” yelled out Tarzana, Z’s head minion.

“No, because I don’t have to listen to you either, Tarzana; do you even know where you are or are you too focused on when your next break is so you can get some more heroin?” I yelled back.

I stood there. All of their mouths were wide open. I walked the rest of the way to school and was never bothered by Z and his minions ever again. I felt like I was on top of the world. This was only one decision of many, but one I’ll never forget.