

I still remember the first time I wanted to take my own life. A relationship I had fought to keep for many years was finally over. I woke up every day and couldn't get out of bed. I didn't want to go outside or talk to anyone. I didn't eat. I couldn't contain my emotions and would cry uncontrollably. There was a weight...an inexplicable pressure I physically felt pushing on me, like I was carrying bags of sand on my shoulders. When I was in public I thought everyone who looked at me was secretly judging me and I avoided all eye contact. I began to think of ways I could end this pain.

One night I was sitting in my living room with my parents. We had been silent for awhile. Looking down at the floor I finally spoke. "I don't think I can do it anymore. I want to kill myself." I remember they didn't freak out. They didn't judge. They barely reacted. It was strange. I looked up at them. "We can't imagine what you're going through and we totally understand why you would feel that way. No matter what, we're here for you." As I cried in my bed like I had many nights before, I felt a small amount of that weight lift off of me. For the first time in years, being vulnerable did not end up causing me more pain.

Fast forward 5 years. When the opportunity to direct and produce "Unseen" came about it was initially terrifying. I knew I would have to go to some dark places and relive some things I did not want to relive. In January 2017 during a research trip to Ireland, Eric Epperson (writer/producer) and I sat with Bob Carley and discussed his mental health journey. Bob is a pastor and mental health expert. He was very open about his past pain and how he still can be overcome by sadness. "You never get over it. You get through it." The truth of this resonated with me very deeply. It helped me to understand why I still feel the way I feel. It gave me permission to not feel like I have to be fine all the time. It reminded me of hope...that while my wounds do have a profound effect on my life, they don't define me or determine my future.

Our hope with "Unseen" is that anyone struggling in the dark would have the courage to bring their pain into the light. I took my experiences and my pain into the collaborative process and worked with Desmond (Owen) and Bob (Alexander) to tell a story that rings true to those who have dealt with depression or suicide. I would love to say that my thoughts of suicide have completely vanished. That would be a lie. The feelings of hopelessness can come rushing back with the right combination of circumstances and dark thoughts. But I've learned through counseling and a family who loves me, ways that I can push back the darkness with light. I know for certain and I tell my oldest daughter frequently that while I don't have all the answers, there is one thing I know for sure. God won't waste your pain.