

Christella Monteau – her own story

In the morning it had been a day like many others...

I woke up at 5:30am; it was a beautiful day in Carrefour Haiti. It was sunny as usual. I woke up my 16 year old sister Medlyne so we could get ready for school. I fixed up my hair, and then did Medlyne's hair. Who would have thought Tuesday, January 12, 2010, would be the last time I would be able to utilize both of my hands. After I finish doing our hair, I plugged in the iron so I could iron our school uniforms. The colors of our uniform were baby blue and white. After my sister and I got dressed we went to the kitchen and mommy already had breakfast ready for us on the table. She made us egg sandwiches, with a banana on the side and a cup of orange juice. As my mom and dad wished me a happy birthday for the 4th time for the morning, we kissed our mom on the cheek and we walked out the door to flash down a taxi to get us to school.

My sister and I got to school at 7:55. We parted ways for our 8:00 class. As I was walking to class I heard one of my friends shouting out my nickname "Christou, Christou—Happy birthday". I was excited to come back to school, and see all my friends after our long Christmas-New Years recess. 1/12/2010 was our 2nd day back. My school was a Christian school, every 1st week of a new year from 10am - 12pm all the students, teachers and faculty go to the school chapel to pray and give thanks to the Lord for a great year to come. I was in my last class for the day, History; finishing up writing notes that my professor had written on the board; then I heard the bell ring.... Time to go home! I met with my little sister at our usual meet up spot in front of the school by the brick stairs, so we can walk home together. This was indeed a special day I was turning 18! I was beyond happy to be celebrating my birthday. I couldn't wait to get home from school so I can get ready for my birthday party that was being held at my house. The party had been planned for weeks. I invited all my close friends and relatives to come celebrate this special day with me. I'm easily satisfied, it didn't matter to me if I received gifts or not, as long as I was surrounded by my family and friends. All their friends and family were supposed to attend. My parents were busy running around getting things done for my birthday party.

By the end of the afternoon Christella and her sister were at home, it was almost 6 pm and time to get ready for the party.

I looked so pretty in my birthday outfit. My sister and I wore a pink knee length skirt with a white blouse. Getting ready to get my party started, my sister and I were so close, like twins, I wanted her to match me. The city I lived in was Carrefour, and my street was Mon Repos 42. As I waited for my mom to get back home with the soda she went out to buy for the party, my father went next door to our neighbors. I started to fix up my sister's hair for the party then all of the sudden.....

Eight miles below, enormous stress, building for hundreds of years as the North American and Caribbean tectonic plates collide, gave way in the Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault

system under Port-Au-Prince. The first jolt struck. The shaking was so violent; it was difficult to keep standing. All about, the noise of things falling and breaking grew and then like a hammer blow to her head their 3 story house collapsed on top of them.

I was confused of what was going on, as I lay face down on top of a metal door with half of my house on top of me, then I realized I couldn't move any parts of my body, all of the sudden my whole body felt sore, I was in so much pain, I couldn't tell which part of my body was hurting me the most. I couldn't see, everything was black as if I had my eyes closed. Each time I tried to open my eyes dust would get in them, Dust filled up my nose as I tried to breathe.

All I was able to do was cry, as I yelled for help, yelled for my baby sister, yelled for my parents, yelled for my older brother. As I heard other people screaming, I told my little sister that we were dying, then she started screaming from what I'd just told her, then she started crying. Minutes later the 2nd jolt which was the worst one struck. As I lay on the ground I felt the rest of my house falling on top of me and my little sister. I was quiet for a few seconds as I wondered and asked God if this was the birthday present that I deserved this year. I heard my little sister that was lying right next to me with her head on my right arm trying to gasp for air, her arm rested on my back. I asked her to hang in there with me, she said nothing, I called out her name and she said nothing, I said her name a 2nd time and nothing. All of the sudden I felt her arm shake on top of my back, the seizure increased, then she was still. I called her name again and heard nothing and that's when I realized I had lost my baby sister, my best friend.

For the 17 hours I lay there I didn't know if it was morning or night, trapped.

Her right arm was pinned by her dead sister's head and tons of rubble. The pain in her right arm was horrific, unexplainable,

... a metal pipe lay on my head with bricks and 3 big metal pipes lay on my right arm along with my little sister's head...

Christella knew her twin sister had died right next to her but there was nothing she could do. As the day passed, voices aroused her from her delirium...

As I continue to scream for my dad who was on the 2nd floor at our neighbors' house before the house collapsed, I started screaming some more for my father to come to my rescue. He heard me crying out for him but was unable to find me. I had no courage to scream anymore, no strength to cry, I was weak and in pain, I just wanted to lay there and die. As my father called out for me I lay there quiet because I was unable to respond; he cried out for me some more as I say nothing. I just lay there hopeless and heard my father say "I've lost her" and heard him cry.

Then I took a piece of brick and start banging it on the metal door that I was lying on, lightly since I was unable to really move any part of my body. He heard the noise and

came to my rescue. My little brother came home around the same time my father heard me knocking on the metal door. They were going crazy going around to find equipment to use to move all the bricks and metal pipe that covered me and my sister. It took them forever to rescue me. When I finally got out it was Wednesday, January 13, at 10am.

My dad took me to a nearby clinic to get treated. They laid me down and sent my cousin out to buy IV and pain killers. My cousin couldn't find what they asked him to get; instead he bought something similar. When he came back to the clinic the doctor said he had bought the wrong things, and what he bought would be no use to me. I stayed at the clinic overnight in pain with no pain killers, then the next day, Thursday morning, around 6am January 14, my father, older brother, and I left the clinic to go find a hospital that was able to treat me.

We walked to two hospitals and they were closed. My aunt knew someone who was going to Port-Au-Prince (the capital) and gave us a ride, which was 45 minutes away from my house. I was still in pain with no pain killers. As we walked around Port-Au-Prince we met up with the Cuban doctors who had come down to help us. A doctor told me that my right arm was infected and I had to get it cut or else I wouldn't make it. Six days later they went along with the procedure, and I was left with only my left arm.

About a month after my procedure a CNN news team interviewed me, and my family in Stamford, CT, and many others who knew me recognized me.

A CNN news team broadcast her interview, and relatives in Stamford Connecticut recognized her. For the next 4 months they exhausted every resource to locate and bring Christella to the United States for treatment.

Everyone in my family survived except for my little sister Medlyne who didn't make it. R.I.P. to her. Although I was in so much pain, God was with me on my birthday. My parents didn't name me Christella for no reason. When you break "Christ-te-lla" down, in French it means "God was here". And he definitely was, thanks to him I was able to come to the US for treatment, and I'm hoping and praying 1/12/2011 will be a better day for me than 1/12/2010. And after everything I've been through, I still rise!!!