**I lost 24 kilograms. After many years of therapy, I now know that it's not a success at all—I should cry rather than rejoice. Over time, I see how immensely it has impacted my self-esteem, private life, and everyday activities. I am no longer the same person. Tears come to my eyes when I think about how much I lost: friends, health, my family's trust. I constantly have this question in my mind: was it worth it?...**

I don't really know when exactly my eating problem started. From a young age, in my family, I was the "plumper one," "more built," "with broader bones"... I remember how my dad, seeing me eat something, would make snide remarks like, "…maybe instead of eating, you should jog in place!" "Take care of yourself and lose weight, or you'll have a hard life, no boy will look at you." It was hurtful, especially since I experienced this around the age of 13. I usually responded by defending myself and justifying that it was my life and they shouldn't interfere in it that way. The more I tried to make them aware of how much they pressured me about my appearance, the more I started to wonder who was right. I began to scrutinize myself and pay attention to my appearance. I lost confidence in myself.

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**Crushing Pressure**

I remember crying at night due to the pressure my parents put on me. They constantly made me feel that my younger sister was ideal and worth emulating. They would have gladly swapped me for another one—THINNER, as long as she wasn't like me. I felt like they already had a preconceived idea of how I should change and look. I felt like the uglier, worse one, not worthy of anyone's attention. The more they pointed out what I put in my mouth, the harder it was for me to stop eating. I should add that I didn't eat more than my sister. My mom always cooked and gave us equal portions. However, I had stomach problems for as long as I can remember. Maybe that's why I differed slightly from my sister. I wasn't fat; I had a slight overweight. In the first year of middle school, at 164 cm tall, I weighed 61 kg. Only when I fully entered puberty, my weight reached 78 kg at 167 cm tall, which is way over the norm. Meanwhile, my feelings and self-esteem hit rock bottom. I felt like a worthless, helpless girl. Crying didn't help me—the only solace I found was in eating. After arguing with my parents, I would secretly take food to my room, collecting it for a nighttime "feast." It reached a point where I was ashamed to eat family dinners. I was ashamed of every bite that went down my throat. I felt like they were watching my every move, bite, and swallow. I became paranoid.

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**Self-Deception**

My parents also eagerly helped me with "CUT diets." While shopping, they would buy vasa bread, multi-grain muesli, lots of vegetables and fruits. However, I didn't fully understand how such a diet should proceed. I would follow a strict fast for half the day, just to avoid getting caught taking one extra cookie, and at night I could eat half a kilogram of muesli dry or cornflakes with milk and sugar. I was deceiving myself.

The worst was when my parents argued about my appearance and weight. I was devastated. I sought solace in food. It was my way of coping with sadness. I ate. When an opportunity arose, being alone at home, I ate as much as I could. The only thing that mattered was filling that emptiness tearing me apart from within. It turned out to be the perfect way to handle any kind of worries... I gained weight.

Between the second and third grades of middle school, already fully addicted to food (because that's what I can call it now), I couldn't, or rather didn't know how to control it. I wanted to lose weight, to stop feeling that desire for a full mouth and stomach.

After finishing the 3rd grade of middle school, I went to a sanatorium during the summer holidays. There, I followed various diets and different kinds of exercises that helped me lose excess weight. In almost 3 weeks, I lost 6 kg. I finally felt attractive and confident. But it didn't last long.

After returning home, the old problems came back. So did my mom's cooking... As a result, I gained back the lost kilograms, and then some. It significantly affected my psyche. The arguments with my parents resumed, leading to more binge-eating episodes...

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**In the Grip of Food**

Previously, I wasn't aware of the seriousness of the situation. My health didn't matter to me; losing weight was the only important thing. Days, weeks, and months passed... I had been having menstrual problems for a long time, and my obsession with the compulsion to eat only intensified. It reached a point where I skipped school to take advantage of my family's absence to gorge and vomit peacefully. My academic performance suffered. Everything became difficult for me. I couldn't concentrate on anything. At school, all I thought about was food. I would calculate on the margins how many calories I had already consumed and how many more I could eat after returning home. I planned the menu for each day several days in advance. Everything was planned down to the last bite. If something didn't go according to plan, I would fly into a rage. I couldn't accept the thought of eating something unplanned. And yet, I would binge on food when my family was away...

Eating "normally," without bingeing, I never feel full. I could eat, eat, and eat until I filled myself to the brim and a bit more. The end of eating comes when there's no more space in my stomach, when the pain and nausea are so intense that I can barely crawl to the bathroom to ease it. Sometimes, after inducing vomiting, I would stop for a moment, get some water (to make "cleansing" easier), and go for more food... This cycle could repeat itself—depending on how much I needed to fill the emptiness, sorrow, and various emotions seeking solace and comfort...