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Tara N. Lengsfelder '07: Strength from fear

For Tara N. Lengsfelder '07, senior year at Brandeis includes one unusual extracurricular activity: publicizing her book. "Dancing in the Rain: The Final Cut," based on a true story, is her coming-of-age novel recently published by Pneuma Springs Publishing in Britain.

Writing as Tara L. Nicole (her middle name), she hopes that readers will gain a better understanding of self-harming behavior, what causes it, and how it is an addiction.

"I want people to acknowledge this problem so that we can face it and fix it," she says. "I also want people to realize that they can battle this part of their lives, that life can get better, that we all have more strength in us than we believe, and that you don't have to live with depression." In her novel she describes many aspects of her journey as she takes control of her life.

Growing up with her older sister and parents in Santa Barbara, Calif., Lengsfelder could easily have been mistaken for the quintessential well-adjusted middle-class teenager who had everything. No one would have suspected that she was cutting herself. Addicted to this coping mechanism that is easy to hide, her perceptions clouded by depression, she progressed until "I made a promise to myself to stop, and I really hate to break promises," she says.

"I think my strength also came from fear. I was afraid if I ever made another cut, I wouldn't be able to stop. It started as a way of regaining control in my life, and it got to a point where it had control over me." The hard-earned wisdom that she acquired and the realizations and choices she made are shared with her readers in her compelling novel.

An economics and business major at Brandeis, Lengsfelder spent junior year abroad at the Quinn Business School in Dublin, Ireland. She sent her manuscript to her future British publisher while there. Back at Brandeis she enjoys her involvement in philanthropy, and has taken part over the years in Brandeis Clubs including: playing the oboe in Wind Ensemble and Top Score music, racing with the ski team, and competing with the Mock Trial team. Currently working on her second novel, Lengsfelder hopes to get a job in human resources for a finance firm in New York or Dublin after she graduates.

She has always enjoyed the rain, and remembers splashing in the puddles with abandon as a little girl.

"But growing older brings caution – don't mess up your hair or ruin your suit," says Lengsfelder. Now she has retrieved her childish glee. "Instead of running to get out of the rain, I like to linger, dance, and just be happy to be alive."

