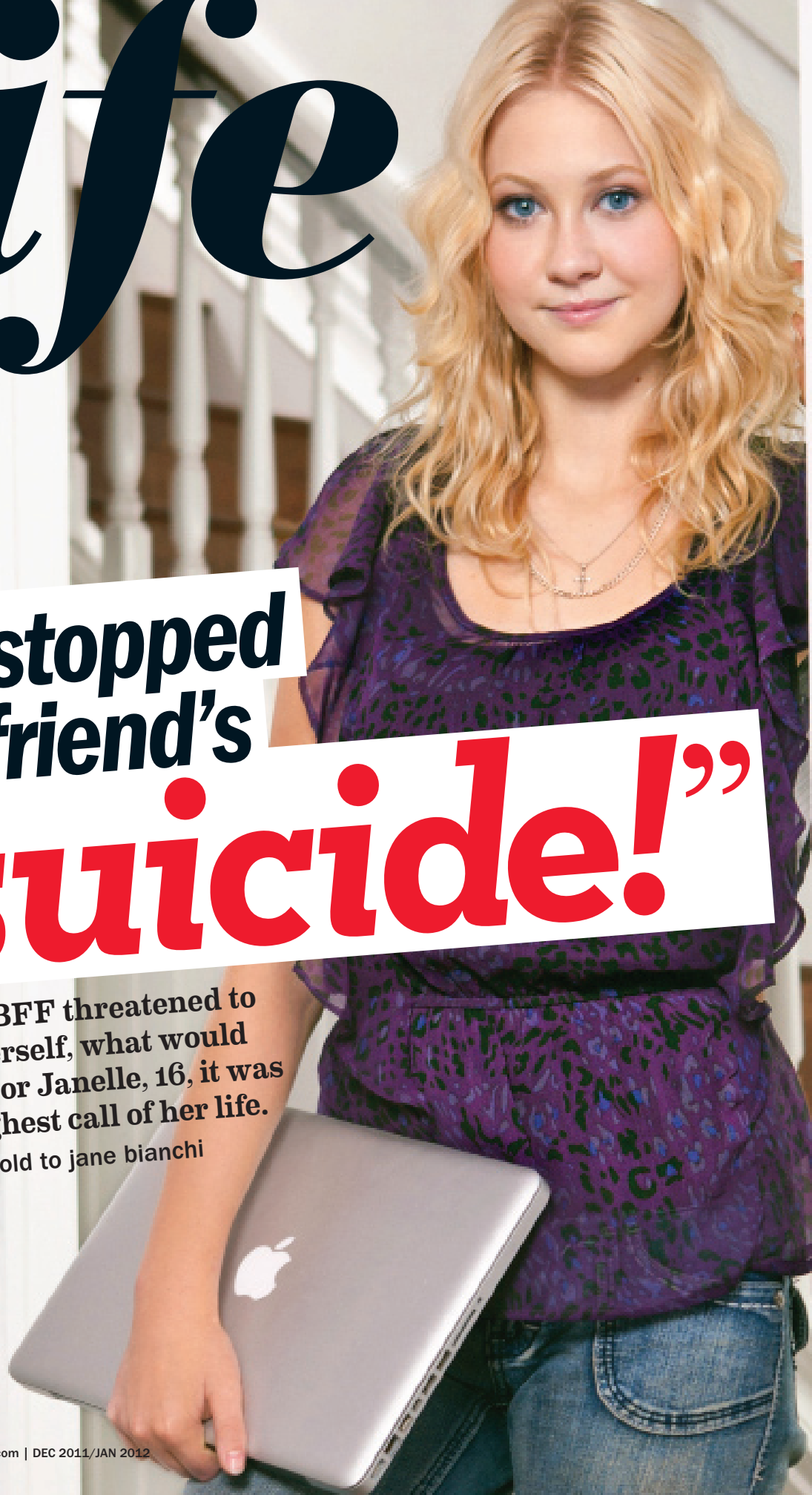


# Life

“I stopped my friend’s

suicide!”

If your BFF threatened to hurt herself, what would you do? For Janelle, 16, it was the toughest call of her life. as told to Jane Bianchi



It’s funny how things work. One day during winter break, I was bored, so I went to see a small movie called *To Save a Life*. I wanted to go only because the lead character was really cute, but as I watched him deal with his friend’s suicide, I wondered what I would do in that situation. Little did I know that just a few weeks later, I would find out.

### a new friend

I’d been doing online homeschooling since a clique of mean girls made my life miserable. It was better than facing my tormentors every day, but since I never got to see the other students, I was *lonely*. (The program was based near my hometown of Edmonton, Alberta, in Canada, but students logged in from all over the world.) One day I randomly IM’d a girl from school, Anna-Mae. We clicked immediately—she confessed that friend drama had also led her to online school. Soon we were regularly chatting about girly stuff: her crazy hair (she’d bleach it blonde and add pink and black streaks), the pop songs I’d write on piano, and, of course, boys. We never met in real life, but that actually made it easier to open up.

### a chilling convo

Anna-Mae became a close friend, and we chatted online all the time, even after we both went back to public school. One night, I quickly checked Facebook before heading out to my youth group. As soon as I signed on, a box popped

up from her, asking, “How many Tylenol do you have to take to die?” I stopped breathing—Anna-Mae had never said anything even remotely suicidal before. I felt dizzy as I typed back, asking how many she’d swallowed. She said four, but then every few minutes, the number would go up: “Five, now six...” I asked her why, but she only wrote, “Life sucks.” To this day, I still don’t know what set her off. I felt a wild mix of emotions. For all I knew, she was totally fine and just goofing around with another friend in her room. If I called the police, it could be horribly embarrassing. So I stayed online chatting with her,

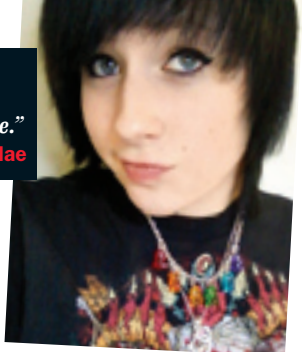
“She wrote: ‘How many Tylenol do you have to take to die?’”

trying to figure out if her threats were real. After an hour of chatting and trying to comfort her, I was late for my youth group and started telling myself, She isn’t really in danger. So I told Anna-Mae I needed to go and said, “Don’t take any more—you promise?” She just responded, “Yeah, whatever.”

### playing detective

But I couldn’t shake my sinking feeling that I she was in trouble. So I spoke with my youth group leader, who said we should call the police. Soon, three

“I don’t know where I’d be without Janelle.”  
—Anna-Mae



cops arrived and asked me where Anna-Mae lived. I had no idea. They suggested I go back on Facebook, but she wasn’t logged on. I was petrified she was dead! A half hour later, she finally responded—she was up to 10 pills! The cops told me to chat casually with her to get her parents’ names, so I told her how I turn my family members’ names into Flintstones ones, like my sister Madison is “Madistone.” I offered to do her parents’ names, too. It was silly, but it worked! The cops jotted down the info. At one point, she mentioned a community center where I’ve gone for family reunions. I lied and said, “My cousin lives near there. I wonder if you know him? What school do you go to?” I felt guilty for lying, but once she told me, the police got her address from the school’s principal and rushed to find her. I was so nervous!

Finally, at midnight, a cop called and said, “We found her and rushed her to the hospital. She’ll be okay.” I smiled so big!

### regaining trust

For months after, Anna-Mae didn’t respond to any of my messages. I was worried she felt betrayed by me. One day, she finally replied, “How are you?” I was so happy she was ready to talk! We chat regularly now. I’m glad I stepped in to help—even if she’d stayed mad at me, it would have been worth it. 17

## THINK FAST!

If your friend is saying stuff that worries you, take action.

68% of people ages 18 to 24 have a friend who has posted a cry for help online.

### IF YOUR FRIEND SAYS SOMETHING LIKE ...

### YOU SHOULD ...

“I feel like disappearing” or “The world would be better off without me”



Encourage them to talk to someone about their feelings, or call the toll-free 24/7 **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK)** to ask a counselor for advice on what to do and ways you can help your friend.

“I have a bottle of pills in front of me” or “I just took my dad’s gun out of the cabinet”



Treat this as a major emergency. Tell an adult and **call 911** immediately. If your friend is threatening to harm herself while you’re talking, there’s no time to waste.