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THE “LOOKING UP” TIMES

By Maine Survivors of Incest

With Guest Contributions from Survivors In Other States and Countries

Vol. 4 No. 2

Fall, 1988

Behind The Locked Door

They see
manipulation,
borderline tendencies
self-destructive behaviors,

Because she cries
and bleeds
and needs.

But when I look beyond the little window of this
locked door,
peering into her isolated alienation,
perhaps intruding upon her lost tears,

I see a woman of strength and courage
who has fought through years of fears.

— Sally B.

Fall 1988

Sketch by Eileen G.

YOUNG

Dear Roy,

I may be a teenager, but in other ways I'm a victim. I'm a victim of your sex acts with me when I was a child. You told me not to tell and that what you were doing was all right. I trusted and loved you. Mom and Dad never paid attention to me like you did. But something happened. You started doing things that were wrong. Like french kissing and playing with my breasts and saying you couldn't wait to get me in bed. Well, you didn't get a bed, but you had a ground and you used me to be your little sex girl and after a while I started watching some TV programs and listened to the radio. I heard about all these people who do bad things to boys and girls. I wanted nothing to do with you, but it still happened. You took my childhood and turned it into adulthood before my eyes. Now that I'm a teenager I don't like to be with boys (teenagers) or men because of what you did to me. In some ways I'm going through my lost childhood and other times I'm being an adult and I don't really know what it's like to be a real teenager. I have more than teenage problems. Sometimes I wish I was a baby so I could have someone to hug me and say it's going to be okay, but that can't be true.

Then I said something about what you were doing. I didn't know if I should. I did and now I'm living in hell. You may be able to live a nice life, but now I'm going to make it hell for you. You won't be able to feel as much pain as I do, but you'll be facing jail and other things. I don't think that this is enough, because I want you to be wanting someone to hug you because you're in so much pain.

I guess I'm really an adult now in different ways. I'm taking you to court and I'm trying my damndest to live with all this pain.

Your victim,

— Janet Badger
Age 16½

SURVIVORS

Childhood

Together we played, and you watched. You said no. Together we discussed and you listened, but didn't explain. Together we learned as did you, so I couldn't understand.

Together we walked. In your eyes you saw it all, for I loved him. Were you just pretending, or were we? For there was no love, and so much was done in a simple family. So much was hidden that we became blind, and I still blind it from myself.

For you said no by shaking your head, but didn't go on to explain. So I'm here, stuck without feeling, yet blinded.

— Anonymous

Please Hear Us

“Hey, Bastards, Asshole, Dad,

You had a lot of nerve to put me through all the pain, because I thought you were my friend. But I guess you proved me wrong. I still love you, but it was wrong for what you did to me. You really hurt me. You may realize, but the pain didn't stop and it will probably be there forever. You took advantage of our friendship and you laughed in my face. If it was my choice, I wouldn't have told, but I did and I'm glad that I did. Are you happy now that you have ruined my childhood and most of my life? Teach you to mess with me; I'm too tough for you to handle now! You tore my world apart and acted as if nothing happened! You said that you loved me and you would never hurt me. I guess it was another lie you told. My heart still bleeds with anger and pain. I hate you for all that it may be worth to you. You used me as trash in the worst way. Well, I've got news for you — you guys are the trash!”

— T.S.A.T.G.; L.A.Y.I.

A Group of Young Survivors
Ages 11-18

Driven Crazy

Carry on. That's what I gotta do, or so they say. The thoughts push like a steel bar being driven into the ground. Make something of yourself. Love someone. Have a life. But can I give love if it's never been given to me? And they say everything comes and goes, and comes again. So I'm struck heavily with the paranoia of thinking, of going through that hell again.

Carry on, they yell. Carry on. But everything is being pushed into me, like a steel bar being driven into the ground.

— Anonymous

TRYING TO

E X P L A I N

I Speak Out

my boyfriend makes me lemon meringue pie
from scratch
he washes my hair
like my mother used to do
like ivory flakes, like seal fur, like velvet
he speaks and seems to understand
like the morning morning morning sun
like sunset on roses
he calls me "Shirl"
and i sleep in the lullabye of his voice
i tell him i am sad
i am so afraid
he offers the comfort of the sun
with his arms
i trust
he runs his hands beneath my nightdress
and begins to take
i am no longer human i am reduced to rock shit
i do not speak i die
i am caught i am trapped i am guilty
i explode and scatter throughout the universe
i am holocaust i am hell i am betrayed
he is dead
i save my breaking heart for her
i take her the pieces of my dead body
i am aksed "why can't you say 'no'?"
my heart breaks in two
i speak out

— Aldyth

Flashback

Darkness during light;
Fear for no reason.

The kids are creating
Dinosaurs of clay;
Dinner is cooking.

Sounds and smells fade,
And it all comes back.

The trauma.
Fear.
Rage.
Pain.

And questions.
Why did he do it?
When can I recall it all
Only as a dim memory?

Will I be prone to these flashbacks
Forever?

— Ann D.

Memories fit through the keyholes of securely locked doors
and drift like ghosts through solid glass.
No matter how safe a place I create for myself,
it is never safe enough,
For memories dwell there, too...

— Lori D'Amico
9/19/88

Getting Through It

I am so tired
of the sting of my tears
on my flesh.
So tired of the blackened lines
that now carve my face
and shadow my smile.
Who knew my body
could become its own
sound-proof padded room.
My past,
its straitjacket,
My needs,
its torture.
I writhe with screams
silent to all.
Deafening, crippling,
terrifying to me.
For I am so small inside here.
— Mary Therese Duffy



Sketch by S. Gerry

Control

Control? I don't want control. I don't even like control. I hate the sound of the word, C-O-N-T-R-O-L. It sounds so controlling. All I want out of this life is for everything to follow its natural course of order. I don't want to be controlling and manipulative. I want life to work for me. If it doesn't, well I just have to help it along a little and if that's control, well...

Perhaps the reason I feel the need to have such control is the fact I never had any control as a child. Things were inflicted upon me in which I had no control. Dad forcing me to masturbate him. "It feels so good," he told me. I, a five-year-old, had the power to make my father feel good, even if I didn't like doing it. Then Daddy left me. He walked out without even turning around to say goodbye to me. I was devastated that Daddy didn't love me anymore. "Go upstairs to your room. Come downstairs and eat. You will feel better." Right Mom, food will take all the pain away.

Then Kenny began. Sticking pens and pencils up my vagina. "Doesn't that feel good? It's supposed to feel good. Don't tell anyone. Kenny committed the ultimate theft of control when he raped me, offering me a quarter and three Jordan Almonds if I didn't tell anyone. I told Linda. She told me not to tell Mom and asked if I was still bleeding. Control? I don't need control.

I ran away from home when I was fifteen. Went to New York City and lived on the streets. After two weeks, I was found and brought back home. Mom said "Why?" I said "Because you want too much." I ran away again and Mom said "you made your bed, you lie in it."

I got married at seventeen or was it sixteen? Rickey tried to kill me the night we were married. He had a gun. I didn't press charges. I wanted the institution of marriage to work for me as it never worked for Mom. But Rickey continued beating me. He killed Jade, my puppy. I got away and ran away, away to Vermont.

I fell in love with kenny r. We became engaged. I loved kenny r. and persuaded him to move to Maine with me. We were happy until he punched me in the face and broke my nose. I ran away again.

I went to Vermont and had a nice job with Sharon. I was happy. I was picked up hitchhiking by a relatively quiet, clean-cut young man who took me down a deserted road where he proceeded to rape me and tried to slit my throat. I got away from him and ran. The police did not believe I had been raped. Two months later he raped a fifteen-year-old girl. The police believed her.

I moved again, with Stanley. He was lovely. I had another wonderful job and became engaged to Stanley. He treated me wonderfully. But I began drinking too much with Martina. Martina and I liked to go the Sting and pick up foreign exchange students, fuck them and then compare notes. Stanley didn't know. He thought I was a good person. I wanted to be a good person. I ran away from Stanley. I was not good for him.

I went to Washington. I got my life in order out there. I gained people's respect. I had a fun job. Many jobs. I even modeled. I wanted more. I began drinking more. I was using more and more drugs. But I still had it all under control.

All I ever wanted was to be a nice person and live a nice life in a nice home with nice children.

CONTROL? No, I didn't think I have a problem with control. It has a problem with me.

— Anonymous

BUT WHY?

Age 10: For months after that summer vacation, I lived in terror of the hairbrush. There is something about me that makes my mother feel she has to use this weapon on me.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?

Age 12: I am so alienated from my peers that, seeing me a block away, a group of classmates point and scream names at me.

WHY DO GIRLS HATE ME?

Age 15: My sexual fantasies are of being tied up with girls, of escaping by diving into Parks Pond with the girl I love and never needing to surface.

WHY?

Age 16: I write a painful fantasy about a boy trembling as he walks under the malevolent glare of houses. In the woods he takes off his clothes, runs heedlessly through the slashing brush, and plunges bloody and sweaty into a stream.

WHY DO I FRANTICALLY SCRIBBLE SUCH THINGS?

Age 16: I am suicidal, often fantasizing of a painless fall from the high cliff over Parks Pond.

BUT WHY?

Age 21: The weekend of a formal event, many fraternity brothers have girlfriends staying over. I walk 10 miles to the George Washington Bridge, sit long on the Palisade cliffs looking down, walk the lonely miles back.

WHY?

Age 22: I am afraid to be in the same room with any woman my age. A friend's wife learns to tolerate my dumb presence, and I become utterly emotionally dependent on her.

BUT WHY?

Age 24: My first sexual relationship ends. I am hysterical, overwhelmed by a terrifying pain rising from within.

WHY? WHY?

Age 29: I become a father, and suddenly I cannot tolerate my sexuality. For years I rationalize about Gandhi-like celibacy, about abstention as needed in an overpopulated world.

BUT REALLY, WHY?

Age 34: I KNOW WHY. And I understand also why I forgot — how else could a 10-year old cope with being raped?

For 24 years my own maleness seemed ugly to me, as had my uncle's; I viscerally needed the love and feared the disapproval of women, as I had with my mother.

How old will I be by the time I heal the manifold reopenings of that wound?

— Stephen Bies



Sketch by Sally B.

Unleashed

Did you think that I was going to forget?
Forever?

Did you think that I would never, ever know
what you did to me?

Did you think it would have no effect on me?
That I was just a piece of meat with no feelings,
no heart,
no mind,
no soul???

Did you think I would remain silent forever?
Remain under the threat of pain,
humiliation
devastation you could inflict upon me
if I were to talk?

Just how fucking long did you expect me to remain
on the closet shelf?

Not kicking.

Not fighting.

Not screaming.

Not crying.

Not moving.

Just how long did you think I would stay there?

I have news for you.

You need to be aware.

Stay clear.

Because I am coming down from the shelf.

I am turning on the light.

I am opening the closet door.

And I'm kicking.

Fighting.

Screaming.

Crying.

Moving.

I can move mountains.

I can shatter steel.

I can destroy.

I can explode.

And the anger that gives me that power,
Has your name on it.

— P. Lorraine Cooke

Memories

Memories can't hurt you or so "they" say. Yet why do I feel that my memories can still hurt me very much. How often have I heard "But it happened **so long ago**, why can't you just forget about it?" or, "It really wasn't a big deal." I can't even count the times; they are so numerous. I've often wondered how parents, friends, and relatives would have felt if it happened to them or someone they loved. Because although they were close to me, they couldn't have loved me. Maybe they would have wanted the same understanding and support I still desperately need. I am angry and confused wondering how I am going to solve this curse put upon me by others. I guess by one step at a time.

But I look back on my life so far and realize I have survived. Maybe not great all of the time; I still have a long way to go. I am a relatively functioning, talented, and creative person that I have personally struggled to achieve against all odds. No one can take that away from me, except me. And I do try. But my memories stop me and I put myself on the right track again. That alone gives me the courage to go further. I feel calm that now, twenty-five years later, there is some help available. Perhaps not much, but it's a start. And life goes on...

— Stephanie

A WILDERNESS WITHIN

We are all born of this planet. Our roots stretch deep into the oceans. The pulse of the earth is the life blood that feeds and clothes us. The river beats a subconscious tune through my mind and body. I am experiencing the wilderness within myself. Yes, beyond that strip of wilderness on the coast where the air seems cleaner and the sun shines, brighter, there is a place deep inside me that is wilderness. I am made of earth, ocean, plant, air and animal. When I am very, very quiet and I listen to my inner callings, I can walk in the wilderness of myself.

To go out into the wilderness is sometimes scary. I don't know what I will meet. Storms, wild biting beasts or some other unplanned trauma. Other times it's disappointing when I see trash or when the trail is so worn I know I am not alone. These are the same problems I have in getting to and enjoying the wilderness hidden deep within me. I am scared of the unknown storms of emotional eruptions, the wild beasts of my fears and other personal traumas just waiting for me to stumble over them.

When I am so cluttered with the trash of unreleased emotional baggage, television commercials and being so used to ignoring my feelings, I cannot see my own beauty. Every once in a while, though, I focus on the exquisitely unique terrain that I'm climbing over and stop to smell the tiniest flowers just starting to bloom. I breathe deeply and feel that hum of living music all the way down through layers of wool, denim, doubt and fear. These are the moments I live for; when I let the sun shine down into my wilderness and remind me there is such a place within.

— Katey Branch

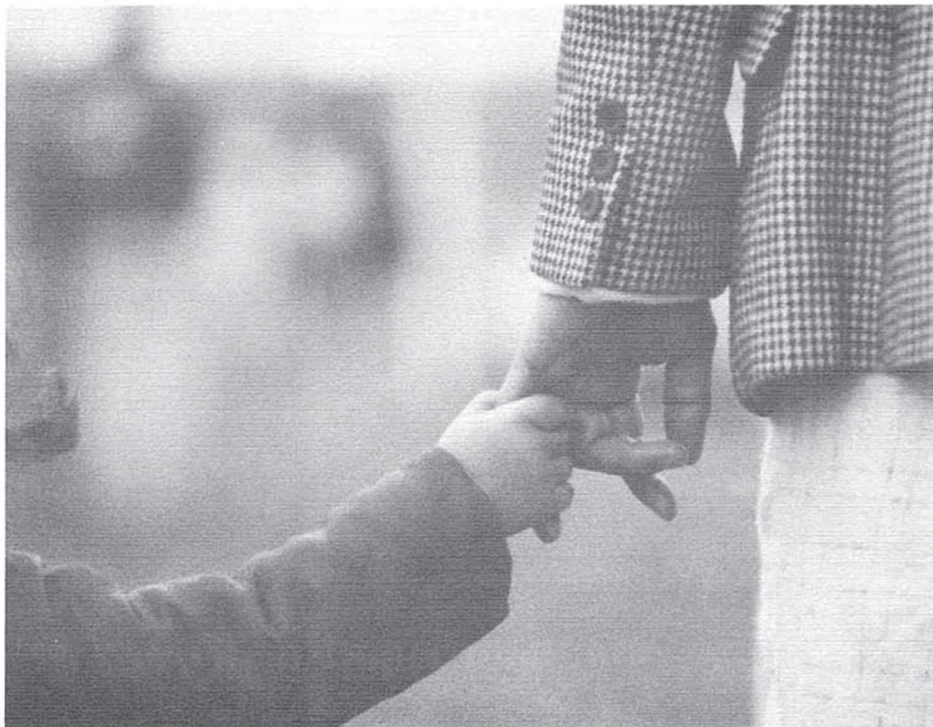


Photo by Nona Famous

MOM

You were always there,
So you thought.
You loved me,
So you say.

Why can't I believe?
Why can't I feel the things you say?
Is it me who doesn't know how,
Or is it you who is unable to love?

I tried to be good,
But it never was enough.
Is it me? I ask myself often.
Maybe it's you.

How do I know for sure?
I don't.

— Linda Dowe

The Girl On The Swing

Through a square hole
I watch white whispers form shapes
of fairy tale beasts:
my mother, my father,
and the girl on the swing.

She sits on my bureau, swinging,
laughing in time to a circus tune,
when my father opens the door to my room
at night.

She laughs even louder
when daddy tells me how much he loves me
as he pries apart my skin,
to the sound of the same circus tune.

After daddy is gone she swings higher,
still laughing, hissing,
"Little whore, Little bitch,"
while I bleed.

— Anonymous

Family Reunion

It's that time again.
Time to visit Mom and Dad.
I can't handle seeing him again;
my brother, not Dad.

My brother.
I hate him.
He used to be my idol.
But he ruined me when I was nine.
And now I find out he's done "it" to others.
My brother.
I hate him.

Will anything relieve me of
the horrible nightmares?
I can't take it much longer.
I feel like everybody knows; laughs at me,
And it's not fair to my family.
I'll never be whole.

God, you are merciful and just.
Please, would you enable me to have
one night free of nightmares,
a restful peace of mind?
Amen.

— N.L.

EMPOWERING

It's time to start writing about it. Incest. I don't know why, other than the time feels right. The aloneness is too great. And it's a lie, this aloneness. You are all out there.

Healing is a balancing act between pain and self understanding, fact and memory loss. And underneath this fine line is a chasm of unknown. Will we heal? Will we fall into it and die? Go insane with it, or shut down permanently? Can we feel? Ever? Will it always hurt?

Some of us drink. Some smoke. Some overachieve, some of us never achieve at all. We love too much, we don't love at all. We hold jobs, we marry, we raise children. We don't. We climb mountains. We walk, if we can. Or we shut ourselves in a room. Anything. Anywhere. Away. Alone. To be safe. Sometimes we're desperate, sometimes not desperate enough. Life has never been our own. So when do we start knowing it should be? When do we start knowing we can make it so? And when do we start doing it? and God — HOW?

We have only ourselves. There is power in that. Feel it? We have only ourselves. We have always had only ourselves. Nothing, nothing more. Not even a scrap. And we are here. Alive. With the help of nothing, no one, more than ourselves, we survived. God help us own the power and beauty in this simple and incomparable truth. We have had only ourselves and we are here.

So today I revealed to a person in my life where I am. That's what listening to this healing process did for me today. And it was OK. I lived through it. Albeit again. But it's OK. Each time I do, a chunk of denial crumbles to the floor leaving more of my own person standing before myself and whatever situation I'm in. Halleluia! I have days of, have had years of tears and tears looking for one small piece of me.

So I listen to this process. What's right? What's not? How do we learn to know? We survived by being so far away from ourselves. Our feelings, our thoughts, so numbed. Some of us are not even in our own bodies a great deal of the time. So when we do we know we're alive? When do we know we can affect something/anything? When do we know we are really here, in this space, at this time? And will we ever, ever feel safe with that?

Living outside ourselves. Who dares to ask why? How many times did we jump out? Out, out, up, away, gone, while perpetrators did what they would. We did what we could. We left our bodies. I am continually struck by the magnitude of this act by our inner caretakers. Continually struck by their strength, their wisdom and power to lead us away from the unspeakable. And they are US. This one simple fact has become so important to me in my healing. I now implicitly trust this giant of my own being. It is my guide, my motivation for my inner listening. She guided me then, she will and is guiding me now. And she knows how. If I can honor my scareds, and myself, by not denying, by trusting these same scareds and this inner giant, much will move out of my way and I will move towards wholeness. I know this, for this is what she stepped in for in the first place.

— Mary Therese Duffy

ANGER

Anger inside, so deep and so hard. Wanting to get out, but not knowing how. Bits and pieces I touch upon, but then become overwhelmed by it all. So, deeper it goes until it becomes unreachable. What do I do with it all? So afraid of it all.

Someday to destroy me; anger, how do I reach you, how do I touch upon you? Never to know you, experience you. I need to release you before it's too late.

How? How? I need to know. Please help me!

— Linda Dowe
7/31/88

Letter to my "Daddy"

How many times I've felt like crawling in a hole and
pulling it in after me.
How many times I've felt like running away.
How many times I've said "stop the world, I want to
get off."

All of these feelings are very recent,
All of them are a direct result of the pain you caused
and called it "love."

WHAT A JOKE!!!

You've left me on this earth to deal with your deep,
dark, terrible secret **alone**
And you called it "love."

The worst part is, I believe you really did love me,
and I Love You.

— Anonymous

Respect

he who knew her "shameful secret" and
her "terrible decision"
to keep on going
no matter what.

one day, over a cup of tepid coffee and
a danish,
he talked to her as if she were a
Saigon bar girl, a two dollar whore, and
he were a 42nd Street cheap hustle John.

She smiled, laughed nervously
because
she respected him and he probably
thought
one more thing doesn't matter,
but
it does.

— Maire MacLachlan

Forgiveness/Who Understands??

They can't understand our **ANGER**, **they** can't understand why **we** can't forgive.

They are looking for us to act on **their** needs **AGAIN**. That's what our abuse was about!!!

They want us to help **them** feel safe, that **their** world can't be this **CRAZY**.

TO THEM I SAY —

I need my anger, I need it to heal. I will be over with it in **my** time. **YOU** will have to wait. Use
this time to listen.

Your world is **NOT** safe, this **IS** happening.
WHERE IS YOUR ANGER?

I am **strong**, I **can** forgive. I will do it when it's what I need.
I will forgive for myself.

You will have to look for the forgiveness you seek from within yourself.
You have helped allow this to happen. You cannot ask me to make it unhappen. My forgiveness
is for me.

I have found some of mine.

Maybe you can hope for yours by finding your anger and helping us to **STOP** this.

— Karen-Renee Moore
Maine State House Speakout Against Incest
9/4/88

My Dad Died Twice

My dad died of a heart attack when I was 13.
It really hurt me, because he died.
Then my uncle came to town.
He treated me real nice.
My uncle was like a "dad" to me.
Then my uncle molested me.
I lost my dad again,
And this time he's never coming back.
— "Ben"

Pattern of the Night

First the question,
Should I try to sleep or just wait
for the inevitable?

Then the silence.
Maybe not tonight...
It screams, that silence.
It's broken by sounds
of a body moving behind walls, doors.
Your door opening ever so slowly.

Then the unspeakable, unbearable,
uncontainable terror.
As your covers, slowly
slowly so as not to awaken you,
are pulled down.

Your night clothes are
slowly, slowly pushed out of the way
(as if you **could** sleep).

Then that terror overwhelms you.
And you float up over your body
creating a false sense of
numbness.

Until he's through with your body
and CRAWLS back out your door.
And you cover yourself up again.
Embracing yourself in your arms thinking

If only I could die.

If only I could die I wouldn't have to be a
part of this

Pattern of the Night.

— P. Lorraine Cooke

Lil' Babes

As she rocks the babes her mother bore
to shush their screams,
she hears and feels a louder scream —
the one deep inside her.
That lil' one who screams, "where's my hug?"
and "keep him away from me."

Shush lil' one she says as she rocks the babe,
another brother, to sleep.
Don't you see little Hannah, my little girl inside,
I must take care of momma's sons — they are the
important ones.

As she rocks the babe, her brother to sleep,
inside the lil' one, she forever weeps.

— Jaci Hjelmgren
August 1987

A Great Impersonation

I am indeed a proud woman.
Proud and so defiant!
I walk among you
Who are so clean
And look you in the eye.
I dare. I dare.
I touch you all.
And you don't even know!
You do not see
The secret filth
That walks abroad
In daylight.
How proud I am
To fool you all!
A great impersonation.
I dare! I dare you
to defy
The lies that I have woven.
I dare! I dare you
Now to name
My truth —
Abomination.

— Alice L. Lewis

The Catch

The only thing I have is my awareness.
The less awareness I have,
the less I have
of the only thing I have.

And if I dull my awareness
to numb my pain,
Then the less I have
of the only thing I have.

— Jane Eggleston

The Silent Shout

Silently she lay, for few words were ever said,
When he sat down beside her on her little single bed.
She couldn't find the words to say, "I hate it when you smile."
So she closed her eyes and disappeared, him touching all the while.
He'd smile and say, "Does that feel good?" What answer could she say,
That would make him stop, make him care, make him go away?
Silently she fell asleep, her heart confused and sad;
He's married to her mother but does that make him a dad?
Still silently the little girl got up and dressed for school.
She put on lots of layers; she isn't anybody's fool.
For later when the man sits down upon her single bed,
It will take him so much longer that he'll walk away instead.
And when that doesn't work and he touches anyway,
She can go and wash it off, though some of it will stay.
And why doesn't she just get up and simply walk away?
'Cause she was scared, he was the boss, and what if he said "stay"?
Trapped, immobile, silent all alone, and so afraid.
What if she told and no one believed, would they send her away?
How can she find the words to say, that it hurts inside and out
When he touches her hidden places, and what happens if she shouts?
And what if that didn't work and he touches anyway?
Then she silently disappears for she has no words to say.
Yet deep inside where no one hears, her voice is crying out,
"You scare me 'cause you're so big, can't you hear me shout?
I don't like it, I don't want it, yet there's no place to hide,
From the dirt and the shame that you've given me inside."
But good little girls are silent, ever doing as they should.
Lullabye and goodnight, "I've been very, very, good."

— Mandy Mae Richards
from Seattle, Washington

Author's Note: I got to read this poem as part of a testimony that I was asked to share with our legislative committee in Olympia, Washington. We're trying to stiffen the wording in our laws to better label and prosecute the offenders.

Will I?

Staring through the enormous window, Alicia Marie wanted more than anything else in the world for her father to be here to talk to. For all the things he had done, she had finally forgiven him. Now that it was too late for anything to be done for either one of them.

The morning was just waking on this crisp fall day, but Alicia didn't feel the cold, for she was wrapped in her grandmother's last gift to her, a hand-stitched quilt made from the tiny baby clothes that Alicia had thought were thrown out. Each piece was a picture of all the years of Alicia's childhood.

Alicia tenderly touched each square and drifted into the scene. The first was of an infant lying naked on a powder blue blanket in front of the cabin. Her father was standing near the edge of the water, watching the child's movements, a King Edwards large cigar between his lips.

The things that happened to ruin the innocence of this perfect moment. Alicia still could not understand. Salty tears inched down slowly from hazel eyes. The terrifying thunderstorm of the night before was nothing compared to the raging storm that had been going on inside Alicia for years.

Alicia had many friends, but none of them knew her feelings from inside where it counted. She just couldn't let them get close, because they would find secrets that were too horrible to share with anyone.

"What can I do?" she cried.

Alicia got up from the sofa that was in front of the windows. Putting on her robe, she opened the sliding glass windows onto the front porch. Why not take a last swim before the season really ends? Hurrying to the edge of the small deserted lake, Alicia dropped her robe and ran, hair streaming behind. She dove under the clear blue water in one swift movement and surfaced just as quickly. Oh! The season was really over. The water was so icy.

— Pam

HI LITTLE GIRL,

You endured so much when you were growing up. Your Mom and Dad were cruel people. You didn't do anything to cause them not to like you. It wasn't your fault that they beat you, called you bad names, put you down and raped you. You're not stupid, homely, unlovable, or a bad person. You couldn't have done anything to stop them.

You had every right to be angry, to cry, to feel pain and fear. It wasn't your fault that you withdrew inside yourself. It was one of the ways you learned to survive.

I'm sorry you had to grow up thinking no one liked you, cared about you or loved you. Because I love you and I care about you. I will take care of you and protect you. I promise that I won't let anyone hurt you like that again.

You tried so hard to be good, quiet, to stay out of your Dad's way, and to always do what you were told. Even though they couldn't see that, I did and I'm proud of you.

I'm sorry your brothers and sister lied and caused you to be beaten for things you didn't do. I guess they watched you get beaten enough times and didn't want it to happen to them. Maybe they thought you wouldn't mind taking another beating since you were used to it.

I know your Dad hurt you when he raped you and I know how scared you were of him. I'm sorry you had to go through those bad things. I'm here to watch over you and protect you. You don't need to be afraid anymore.

— Love from Big Shirley

Serenity

Serenity —
Originally intended for us all,
denied me by parents
unable to cope with their own issues.

I must be bad, I felt.
It got worse.
Incest.
(Yes, it's called incest, even if
he used his fingers
instead of his penis.)

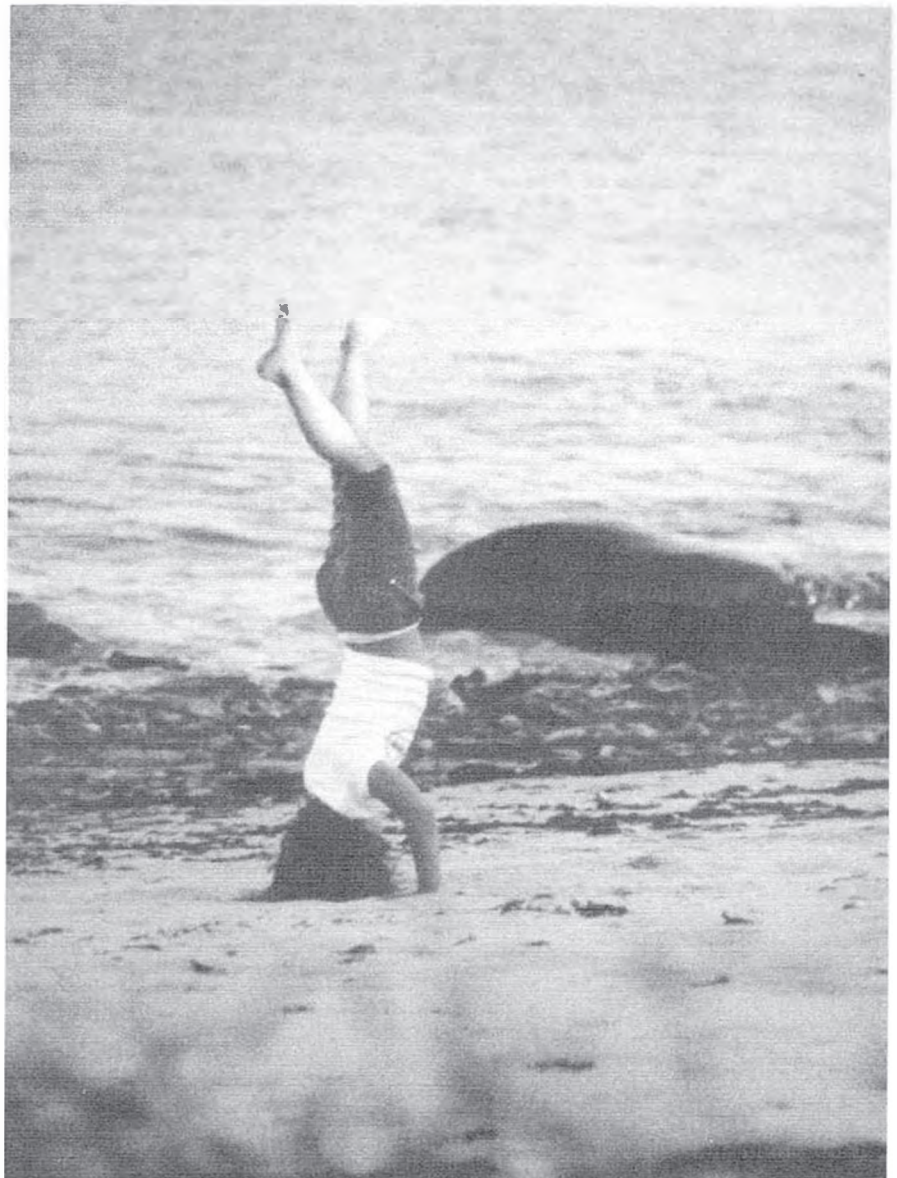
Terror, mixed with self-hate
I had been used and hurt,
instead of protected and nurtured.

I was a Victim.
I did not choose it.

Now I am learning from people I trust,
how to love myself,
how to reclaim my past so that
it no longer controls me.

Serenity comes,
sometimes when sought,
sometimes unexpectedly
on the wings of a butterfly;
a gift.

— Ann D.



Self Identification

I am the child prostitute, junkie, incest survivor, illiterate and ignorant, who became the honors bachelor nurse, Sunday school teacher.

The child hooker remains underneath. Sharing with you lets her out. She's had one hell of a journey. Star Trek of the soul.

— Maire MacLachlan

Nightmare on “Incest” Street

The opening scene was at my perpetrator's house, my sister Donna's • flash • I turned into Donna and a man showed up. At first I thought it was Bud. • flash • Sisters — Nancy, Donna and I were discussing fixing the house. Items were everywhere. • flash • It was a wedding shower. My Uncle Butch was sitting very near me and as he smiled at me I thought a camera flashed with a shotgun sound. My mother (?) explained he was having a problem with his eyes and that his right eye had just exploded. I looked at him and his eye was gone. I gently asked him if he could no longer see. Lots of confusion. • flash • Back at Donna's house, she had just painted some wall light blue-green, aqua; that color is so her. The kids had been left to tend to themselves and Nancy, Donna and I talked about the color of her walls. I took a piece of purple chalk and started writing on the walls. “THIS MUST BE A MISTAKE.” I felt terrible and guilty about messing her near perfect aqua walls and looked around and saw that the kids had a drawing on the wall, also. We had violated her. • flash • A man came. He was building steam like a pressure cooker and I was really terrified but strong! I stood strong until I needed to move away because he started threatening physical violence. He started to come towards me. When it was clear to him Donna was aware of what was happening in the room next to her, he became empowered and was more vicious and threatening. He was trying to corner me.

I awoke in vivid shock and paralyzing terror. I wrote down this symbolic nightmare and wrote the following to confirm my present reality and not let the ghosts of my past control me.

I AM NOT CRAZY! I'm ready to confront the issues. I am PISSED at Donna. SHE KNEW! GOD KNEW! THE KIDS KNEW! “THE WRITING ON THE WALL!!!” THE VISION FROM OTHER MEN WHO WERE ABUSIVE. WE ALL KNEW AND DIDN'T GET OUT OF IT.

I WANT OUT. I AM OUT. I DESERVE TO BE OUT. STAY OUT! SPEAK OUT! SEPTEMBER 4th. STAY SAFE. STAY HAPPY. STAY FREE. Nobody can take it away. NOBODY! DON'T FORGIVE. Just give. GIVE IT BACK. NOW.

—Bertelle Brooking

6/11/88

Upon returning from the “Looking Up” Gathering

REMEMBER YOUR HERITAGE

Little one so filled with tears,
How beautiful you are!
Born in time,
You are so much more
Than the child whom most see.

Remember your heritage.

Bruised and battered and broken.
Are not the parents of your spirit.
Earth bore you from her gentle womb.
Air fathered you in sustaining love,
E'er before you knew betrayal
By the surrogates who raised you.

Remember your noble birth.

A Higher Power than any flesh and blood
Could conceive
Forms the center of your being
Cradling your inner child with love
And tenderness.

Remember your divine spark.

The sun who enlightens your day
Is the brother within you named Courage
Who brings to light
The dark secrets of your abusers.

Water who cleanses and purifies
Is your sister within named Healing
Who brings peace and refreshment
To your troubled soul.

Remember your family line.

Incest is not my father
Nor abuse my mother at all.
They were a heritage of people
Not big enough or little enough
To be my parents.

I remember my heritage:
It is of nature.
I remember my lineage:
It is most human.
I celebrate my origin:
I am of God.

— Timothy J. Fleming
4/1/88

One Word of Hope

It digs a hole into your soul.
An unfillable one at that.
I realize that I'm not so optimistic that some day
That hole will be filled.
For you or me.

This void I speak of. . .
It's a hollow cavity,
An empty, bare, deprived vacuum.
It's the place that sucks up all that love and concern
You get from others.
And still need, need, need,
More.

As part of the human nature
I think everyone has a "void" in their soul.
Most people can fill it
with a God,
a love,
a tangible something.

But those who have been raped,
Sodomized,
Molested . . . at the tender age of four or seven or
whenever . . .
Their voids aren't quite so easily filled.

I think that's because they weren't easily created.

Right now
The only word of hope I have,
For you or me,
is Risk.

Take the risk of hoping,
Trusting,
Wanting,
Needing,
Loving,
Feeling,
Letting go,
Taking in,
Exposing,
Dying,

Take the Risk of Living.

— P. Lorraine Cooke
To my friend, Alecia

A Reason To Live

Am I worth the time, time people spend on me, to show me I can be cared about? I often wonder why. What drives them to care? To give me an **untouchable** comfort?

Can I be worth it? Why can't I believe I am? I need to believe! I can't live with this pain alone. Please share my burden.

Help me to trust, to love, to be me without fear. I'm so afraid, so very afraid. Please rid me of the pain that's so very deep. I need to believe this can be so. I need a reason to live.

Show me, please, show me.

— Linda Dowe

HOW WORKING WITH INCEST SURVIVORS HAS ENRICHED MY LIFE...
OR HOW WORKING ON MY OWN INCEST HAS ENRICHED MY LIFE:

I am in AWE of my COURAGE

...to break silence

...to choose to heal, which is choosing to follow a path of unfamiliar behaviors and unknown memories and feelings, and reactions of others' to my choice.

I ADMIRE my STRENGTH and PERSISTENCE

...in believing I deserve help and respect for my healing, even when faced with resistance from

my family, partners, friends, employers, and professionals

...in getting what I need in spite of sometimes life-threatening obstacles

...IN CHOOSING TO LIVE THROUGH THE ABUSE RATHER THAN OPT FOR ESCAPE

THROUGH DYING.

I ADMIRE my CREATIVITY

...in devising coping skills to survive the abuse

...in devising solutions to navigate The System, even in the face of handicaps.

I ADMIRE my WELL-DEVELOPED POWERS OF INTUITION and AWARENESS of

...others' needs

...my quick, decisive action and cool-headedness during others' crises.

I am in AWE of my WELL OF LOVE

...that I give to myself over and over again,

UNCONDITIONALLY

...that, after setting clear boundaries, I share with my parents

...that, in spite of my childhood deprivation, I actively seek to share with others to help them heal themselves.

— Diana Delach

[illegible]

Together Forever

Together we are born, forever we are sworn.

We are all looking for the same thing, all created from within.

A vision of disaster after disaster, speeding up, going faster.

My dear friend, you must see I know you know what shall be.

Let's hold on and turn it over. Come on, pick up that four-leaf clover.

Carry on, for we are the best; this life hasn't seen our test.

Walk forward, for it's us who are tame.

Walk around those people who brought such shame.

We are good people; that's why we are together.

Join our people and we can live forever.

— Terry A. Dooen

Hate

Hate is a cloud of darkness which hovers in your mind. It takes your heart and squeezes it until no love can you find. It makes you feel so angry, so terrible and alone. You feel as though it goes all the way to the bone. It haunts you late at night while in your dreamy flight and steals your thoughts right out of your head. Hate makes you wish the other was dead.

— Ree-Reet

It's O.K. To Be O.K.

Hey there lady with scars inside, why aren't you locked up, or floating in with the tide?

You have been used and abused, lied to and about. Why is there no hatred ooozzing out?

Why are you peaceful and happy today? Don't you know, says I, that it is o.k. to be o.k.?

A painful past doesn't mean I am doomed to a painful future. Just the opposite of what the world says, today.

I believe it is o.k. to be o.k. I've faced my pain; each ghost one on one. I've nursed each wound until they were gone, but not forgotten.

It is a chain, they say, never to be broken. It's o.k. to be o.k. and "you're my special girl" shall never be spoken.

No matter what anyone says, it really is o.k. to be o.k.

from my heart to yours,
— Catherine

No More

No more punishment for the woman I love.
She's threatened and afraid of the other world.
Beyond the hate and closed doors the angels dance,
taking care to guide.
She's watched for too long now believing she was a
sinner for her uncanny ways.
World's End sings these memories.
This woman goes beyond.
She's my friend now.
I was glad to meet her.
She's shared the same body with me for twenty-five
years now; this friend of mine.
No more punishment she says.
Angels guide her.
She holds a torch.
Her strength moves.
Her knowing creates.
While demanding to be known she spreads through me.

— Eileen G.
2/21/82



Sketch by Kately B.

The next issue of *The "Looking Up" Times* is scheduled for Spring, 1988

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IS MARCH 10, 1989

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Gayle M. Woodsum, Editor

The “LOOKING UP” TIMES

“LOOKING UP”

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“Looking Up” provides a variety of services to survivors of incest and those who care. Services include telephone/mail support counseling and referral; consultation and training; outdoor challenge activities; workshops and conferences; advocacy; and more. We are a non-profit organization which spends most of its money on direct services offered at little or no cost to participants. We depend largely on donations from the public to continue our work. Please donate what you can.

We invite all survivors of incest to send contributions for possible publication in the *Times*: essays, letters, poetry, artwork, anything of a literary nature. We edit for length, clarity, spelling and punctuation. Our intent is to publish survivors' own words and not to alter their meaning within these quality/length guidelines. If you have questions or requests concerning this editing policy, please let us know and we will be happy to discuss it.

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