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THE “LOOKING UP” TIMES

By Maine Survivors of Incest/Child Sexual Abuse
With Guest Contributions from Survivors Throughout The World

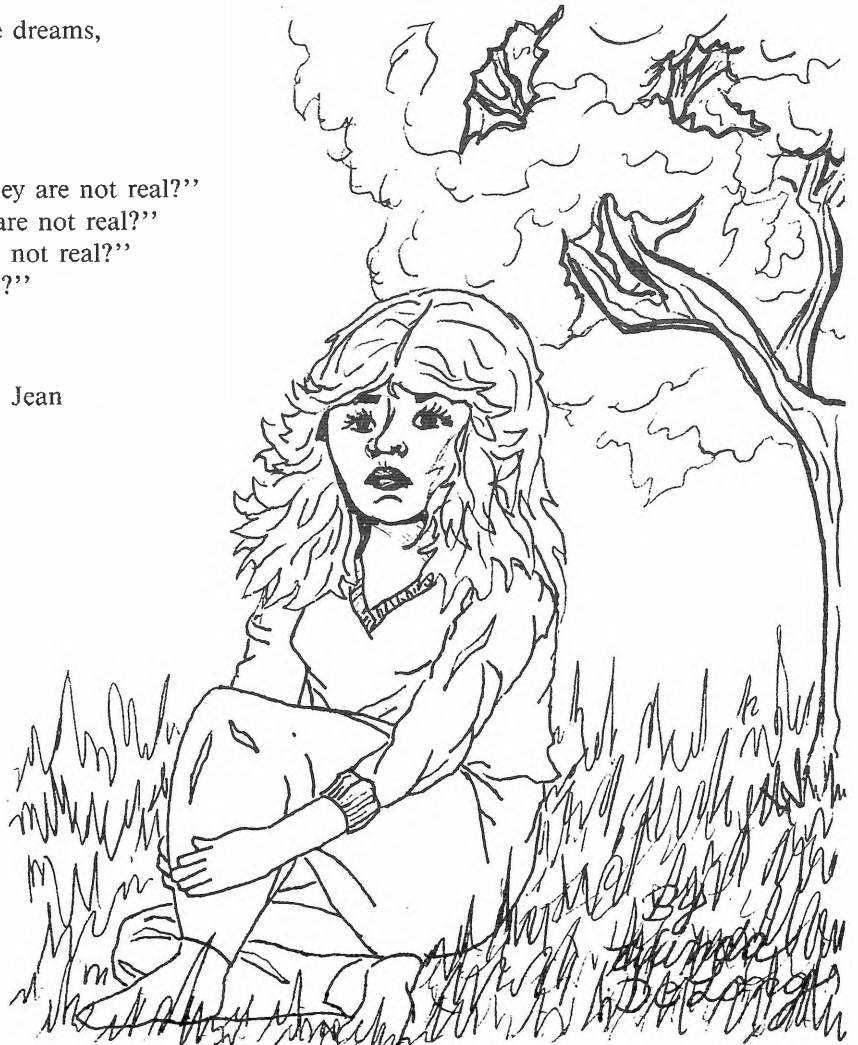
Vol. 7 No. 1

Spring, 1991

A Survivor

I am a Survivor.
It's not printed in the paper
for me to know in black and white.
It's not on the radio,
400 killed in bomb shelter in Iraq,
thousands injured in earthquake.
Yet, I know quiet headlines pounding in my chest.
Pain and tears
Lying awake in the night, dreams and more dreams,
remembering in the night.
No proof.
It's only a dream. Not real.
I wonder,
“Why do I keep dreaming the dreams if they are not real?”
“Why do I keep crying these tears if they are not real?”
“Why do I keep screaming this rage if it is not real?”
“Why am I still so afraid if it was not real?”
In the night I know.
In the day I try to forget.

— Debbie Jean



Sketch by Wanda DeLong

Sister Rage

Sister Rage
You've been on my mind
I've missed you now
for a long, long time.
You won't believe
the shape I'm in...
Where are you now
my angry friend?

I can't blame you for
hating me,
I left you there
between his sheets.

I did return
I was too late
I thought he killed you
Sister Rage.

I mourned for you
for many years
I hid the pain
I shook in fear
And how I wished that you were there
my precious Sister Rage.

Today I learned you were alive
I saw your glare
flash past my eyes.
Then I felt you near once more
as I got mad and slammed the door.

Sister if you only knew
just how much I've needed you
to curse my pain
to face my fears
to give me strength from year to year.

Could it be
dear Sister Rage
That you were hiding too
and that you also chose to leave
as he was touching you?

Sister Rage you've been on my mind
I've missed you now
for a long, long time.
It feels so good to have you home
Inside my heart
Where you belong.

— Holly Ann Robinette

Broken Window

cinnamon stick and vanilla bean
and yeast bread,
rising to heaven
the scents of my childhood
in the house I never lived in,
with the mother I never knew...
so if I have my bad days
of cigarette butts
and Morton chicken pot pies
well it's only because I grew up
in a house with all the shades pulled down,
and sometimes
even now...
I forget about the sky.

— C.S.

Refuge

Terror.
Why can't I run away from it?
'Cause there's no place to go.
Any adult will just send you back
And another kid can't hide you forever.

Oh, but there's places to go.
I could sail away to Gilligan's Island and be shipwrecked...
— Live in little grass huts
— Fifty ways to eat coconuts

I could be in New York with Lucy and Ricky and Fred and Ethel
or spying with Illya and Napoleon Solo.

I could be in Greenacres
Or Mayberry
Or Petticoat Junction

I could be in the jungle with Tarzan and Cheetah.
I could talk to Mr. Ed,
Maybe he'd hide me in his barn.

I could disappear into a book.
Tom and Huck knew how to runaway from grown-ups.
Nancy Drew could take care of herself and solve crime too.
The Boxcar children survived on their own.

I could run away in my mind,
for a time.
Then the bedroom door would open.
Then the terror would begin,
Again.

— Kerrie

Web

He embroiders a fine web around me,
a sticky substance filled with saliva and semen.
He manipulates his limbs to form the threads
that envelope me and hold me in place.
His teeth are sharp and I am trapped
but I snap and move quickly.
I fight, then cease.
He cannot completely secure me to this branch.
I try to sleep, to dream of freedom.
Awake, I see him sitting quietly
waiting for another
This is his instinct and he will survive.
But I will live forever in my cocoon
because he loves me.

— Rue Capri

Nightmare

I can't wake up from this nightmare
it follows me to bed
it follows me to work
it follows me with my friends.
Please friends, go away
You could never understand how bad
I feel today...

— Mara Best

Heave A Sigh

I've got so much anxiety inside of me.
It's hard to settle down
I breath a deep breath
Heave a sigh
And try to come around.

— Sally B.

As A Child...

No idle chatter,
No foolish dreams.
Can't be too giddy,
I'll split at the seams.
No carefree moments,
No restful sleep.
So many ugly secrets, I know I must
keep.
No beautiful memories
No future to be seen.
Just lay low and take it
Good-bye my self esteem.

As An Adult...

Try to weave the shreds together,
To make something soft and warm.
Something strong and powerful
To help protect me in the storm.
Try to get my life together,
On these ruins start anew.
Try to somehow find a happiness,
As a child I never knew.

— Michelle Wood

Hi God,

Remember me? I'm sinking again. I'm sinking. I feel so alone, so lonely. It hurts like when a pin is stuck under my fingernail. It hurts. I am exhausted from my sadness and hurt. I can't get up in the morning again. I have so many blessings now, but what I missed still outshines them and my grief stays thick. I wish I had a sister to talk to, who would talk to me and answer some pieces to my puzzle. I grieve for that loss, so alone in healing. Throw me your life-preserver again I'm losing ground and can't reach you. Please help me God, it hurts too much. At least I ask for help now. I know you're there. I'm here, make a bridge to me, quick! I know how you love me now. I'll wait for your help this time. Love too.

— Annie

Song of My Soul

I feel them flowing thru me, fine cords of music from my soul.
My tears fall like raindrops, releasing pain I cannot hold.
Like raindrops falling to music, my tears slip down my face.
My body resonates with feeling as the pain within escapes.
The very tears he shamed me with, now wash my soul so clean.
He wouldn't let me cry then, I held it all inside.
He ridiculed me and shamed me, each time he saw me cry.
He turned my tiny soul to ice and froze the tears inside.
In order now to reach them, I need to go beyond his anger, his ridicule and shame.
I need to go beyond, go deep inside to find, to touch, that tiny, frightened child.
To tell her that she was not wrong
Her feelings were her own.
Her feelings were so beautiful, and like her, a part of me.
I need to touch, to feel them now, to let them soar so free.
To let them rise like sunshine, the true and honest part of me.
No longer do I need, false smiles to hide behind.
I feel I need to integrate, my face, my soul and me.
When sadness and unhappiness bubble up from deep inside
My face will show these feelings, I have nothing more to hide.
The music of my soul, which brought me such disgrace
Is now the music of my soul, so beautiful to face.

— Florence Paine

Out of the Shadows and Into the Light

I grew up among the shadow people in a land where brilliant colors were unknown.
One day a child of truth came into my life and brought with her a sphere of light.
The shadow people shook with fear, and being one of them, I also was afraid, but as I turned to cling to the shadow people, one by one, they disappeared, until only the child with her sphere of light and I remained.
She and I walk together now, hand in hand, and I can never return to a shadowland, for I have lived the rage of red and the envy of green, I have cried the sadness of blue, experienced the glow of orange, and the warmth of yellow, and at last, my soul now knows the purity of white.

— Diana L. Fine

Remember Me?



Sketch by Annie

I Am A Male Survivor

I am a male survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and incest... How many times have I said that sentence in the past three years? The first time I spoke those eleven words in public, I cried. Such a relief for me. I was no longer a victim, but a survivor among men who gathered together for a weekend in Maine to support, to share, to encourage, to validate that men do survive and do become stronger. In a safe place, I was able to finally allow myself to feel emotion hidden within for so many years. I needed to know and to hear that I was not alone on this journey to recovery.

My perpetrators were men. Vivid memories surface... There are times today when I think I've finally put the issues to rest. I think of the years of therapy that have helped to resolve the pain and the anger. And then, when I least expect the emotion to come, a piece of music to which I'm listening, or a new movement in dance suddenly triggers something deep down inside. The eyes get moist and the tears begin to flow; tears of sadness, tears of relief, tears of joy. How do I convey to others around me the feelings of that terrified little boy inside me, the little boy who had to keep the horrible secret locked up for so many years? It's no wonder I have difficulty expressing feelings using my voice. I was told never to use my voice when I was three, four, five, six years, and older. And if I tried to reach out, I would remember having a piece of male anatomy shoved down my throat. Choking, choking, choking... No wonder the words, the feelings, even today, get stuck in my throat. Such an effort to express the pain...

I am a man. I am happily married, and I have a daughter. I am lucky. As a man, I needed you to see me as a strong, competent, efficient, loving human being. And I did just that. If you got close, I became distant. I detached from emotions. I learned to do that well. You never did see the overwhelming amount of energy I put into preventing you from seeing the weak, confused, rigid man I was for so many years; the man who was afraid to form close loving relationships with others. What a waste of so many precious years. But like you, I needed that time to heal. I needed that time to discover that I could finally trust another man, that I could slowly reveal to him how vulnerable I was, that I could discover that loving another man was a joy that I never was able to experience before. I could take my heterosexuality, love another man fully and intimately, and emerge with a new appreciation of who I am. The locked up emotions from my past could surface and be safe. I can never forget my past, but I can emerge from all the pain and the anger, and can survive as a much healthier and loving man than before.

Being sexually abused as a youth still influences my life daily in dozens of little ways. But I am more aware of why, and when, I do "detach" from people and situations around me. I now realize I do not need to run away from the past. I now have a choice, and I choose to move forward. I no longer am a victim of sexual abuse and incest. I am, like you, a survivor.

— Don

Keys To My Reality,s

They raped me of all my childhood souvenirs. Now I must remain there in my ocean of tears only to look back on memories of nightmares. It is like a disease that pollutes. So I tug at those souvenirs that bring me down through my years of tears. Now I will stand up and face the tears and all the fears.

What can a broken little boy say from the depths of a grown man? It is like a bountiful flower left to die in a dark corner deprived of water and no one is there to experience its splendor and tenderness.

I'm told, hang on to what I have, well, hanging onto nothing is something I have been doing for too long. How I suffer for my sanity and long for it desperately. I was molested my entire life. The judicial administration clearly wanted to put all those leeches behind bars, but now, what of me? Am I not behind the bars of this reality?

My hands are clinched in fists of rage. Do things get a little easier once you understand?

— Eddie Masten

The Place Where It Happened

Not just “a lake”; Parks Pond is a real place, 18 miles east of Bangor on Route 9.

You can see the cliff from the highway. Not just a “a cliff”; on this one I focused my teenage need to end all pain. The lake would sparkle as I launched myself from the top, scared free of the earth, and let go of even that sensation...

Highway 9 touches the north end of the pond. The stream enters at the southern tip, not accessible by road or trail. Not just “a stream”; this remains the hidden, lovely setting of hemlocks and large glacial erratics my uncle and I explored, when I was 10. I am still powerfully drawn to such woods, such discovery.

The boulder sets, car-sized, on a little rise 100 feet from the shore. Not just “a boulder”; I was crushed down onto the hood of this particular rock when my uncle raped me. Both of us could see the lake through the trees; he to watch for anyone’s approach; myself, as the light beyond the pressing shadow that suffocated me.

It happened, at this place. I could take you there, to see and touch the lake, the cliff, the stream, the rock.

And in my adolescent fantasies, escape meant disappearing underwater.

— Stephen Bies

You Too Me

I was laying in bed
smoking cigarettes drinking beers
the telephone brings
“Your mother’s dead”
You heard tears
that charted territories
to the ocean
You saw me fall
into an avalanche of ashes
We sat by a broken window
listening to the wind being cut
Our palms nodded together
life lines bleeding
like waves
in search of a shore

— James Pelletier

One Hour In The Life Of A Survivor

I walk into his office, expecting a repeat of last week. And I’m really tired of it; a little bored.

“How are things?”

We make small talk. I tell him how I feel that things are getting better and that maybe I can take a break from all of this stuff. It’s too exhausting, so let’s leave it for a while. I want to enjoy life. It’s too expensive anyway. And sometimes I get stuck in a storm on my way to his office. Maybe I don’t need this anymore.

“Are you stuck?”

No, I’m not. Everything is okay. Well, maybe just a little. But it’s nothing to get all excited about. It’s all the questions in Laura’s book about “How old were you?” and “How old did you feel when you did this exercise?” I find these questions frustrating. How the fuck do I know how old I feel? I’m not a fucking psychiatrist.

“And what’s the age?”, he asks patiently.

And I feel myself pulling back. My knees come together and the tears are surfacing. I hug my mid-section, reach for his Teddy Bear, hug it to my mid-section and I begin to rock and sob and moan and my lips quiver. My shoulders are hunched forward and my arms hug my knees and I curl myself up into a ball and look about me in terror. I’m bleeding inside again.

“You don’t feel safe, do you?”

“No. There are big people here. They’re all around me. I’m scared.”

“Who would you be safe with?”

“Just me. I want to be just with me, and quiet. I want to stop breathing and just be with me.”

“Where?”

I look around the room furtively, still rocking and tightening my grip on my little friend.

“Over there,” I whisper. And I rush to the corner of the room and I crouch down, staring out into the room at Allan. I’m moaning and rocking and whispering baby-talk to myself. And slowly, I begin to calm down.

I’m smiling a little now, Now, it’s okay. They can’t see me. My eyes are closed and I’m not breathing, so they can’t see me. It doesn’t hurt anymore. It’s okay. I’m okay. “You see these two walls?”, I whisper, “They protect me here and over on this side, and in the back, so no one can come up on me. So it’s okay. I’m okay. I’m okay, now. It’s okay. I’m okay now.”

And I’m very peaceful now, rocking to and fro in the corner, hugging a Teddy Bear, quietly and looking up calmly and with a child-like smile on my face. I’m looking up at Allan, who sits in his rocker across the room, nodding encouragingly to the little boy in the corner.

“Come sit over here,” he smiles.

And I walk back and sit on the couch, with my little friend. Allan and I laugh that I can now open up to him so much. I laugh and cry and whine and hug a Teddy Bear in front of an adult for the first time in my life.

— Joe

Death of a Hero

At five, I remember you dad, bigger and better than anybody else's dad. You traveled to far away places and brought home treasures just for me, your special girl. You were handsome and so smart. I wanted to be just like you when I grew up.

At five you were my hero, and I would have tried to walk on water if you had asked me to. I did your errands and tried so hard to make you proud of me. I tried to be a little man, even though I was just a skinny girl.

We began our secrets around that time. I could be your little man on our truck driving adventures, sit in the passenger seat with no shirt, just like you, until we got to the stop. Then it seemed that the secret was dirty, "put your shirt on, don't tell anyone, our little secret" — I didn't understand, and it felt bad in my belly, but only for a minute, and I buried it away, forget it you worry wart.

Our secret got bigger as time went on, and so much harder to put away and forget, but I did because you were my hero, and you loved me even though I was skinny and ugly, while no one else did. But, another part of me was born. Aside from the innocent skinny kid. This part knew what you wanted, and remembered how you acted different, had a different look on your face, a different voice, and how you hurt me over and over. That other part of me began to hate you.

Our secret grew over the years, but that innocent skinny kid still kept you as her hero, it is how she succeeded. You told her, when you were not being a monster that she wasn't skinny and ugly, that she could be whatever she wanted to be, because she was beautiful and so smart. The skinny kid worked so hard for your approval, so hard so that you would stop hurting her, but it just didn't ever happen.

While the skinny kid worked so hard for approval, the other part of me grew angry and bad, taking risks, living on the edge of trouble, and thinking of ways to fight back, instead of just being resigned. She fought back once, at twenty-one. Hard and angry, a dirty street fighter, digging with nails, kicking with feet, but you won anyway.

Now I am growing. The skinny kid memories are mixing with the angry kid memories and I am healing. But as I heal what little of my hero that was left is dead. I am so saddened that I cry without stopping for long periods, alone. Do I cry for the dead hero? No, I cry for the loss of innocence, and trust, that should have been mine.

— Vicki P.

Old Man

Daddy is at work all of the time. Mommy is miserable with five kids to care for (what about me?). Big brother #1 was always a spoiled brat, Big sister #1 was always in trouble, Big brother #2 touched me once in that private area and still can't look me in the eye. Baby brother #3 is just a baby (what about me?). Daddy's drinking, Mommy's crying, so much sadness (what about me?). Grandpa, hey, he loves me. "Let's go shopping sweetheart, what can I buy you today? Don't tell Mommy. You are so special princess, want to play a game? Don't tell Daddy. You get more beautiful everytime I see you. I love you so much that sometimes I need to touch you to show you. Don't tell anyone this is our secret love. Hey sweetheart, if you do this small thing for me I'll give you twenty dollars. You could buy anything you want. One hand washes the other, doll, you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back. What do you mean **no** sweetheart, we been playing this game for eight years, now you want out. I don't think so. If you tell anyone slut, I'll tell your Mommy and Daddy that you charged me for it just like a whore. That's right, you heard me, you are a no good tramp. You're ugly, nobody wants you, nobody can ever love you like I can. Anyway, sweetheart, think of the family, you don't want them to find this out do you?"

Men, sex, drugs, booze, I am a tramp. **Anorexia** I am ugly and fat. **Anxiety attacks**, why am I so different, I am a martian from outerspace.

Help my sweetheart, I've just committed suicide because of my guilt. I'm floating face down in the pool where I used to get a hard on watching you swim. I really need to talk sweetheart, I really need to say I'm sorry for what I've done.

I think it's too late old man. Drown, Drown, Drown!

— Lori Croken

Child Abuse

"**Pick up the toys!**" "Shut-up the noise!" "Can't you do **anything** right?" "You look like a sight!" "I **wish** you were someone new!" "Get out of my view!"

Not feeling loved; not knowing "Why". Feeling nervous; forever shy. Neglect endured throughout the years. A tight lump; swallowing the tears. Needing to talk. "**Go take a walk!**"

Out on a date. Boy's can't wait. A soulful kiss. Forever bliss. Oh God; "NO!!" I just didn't know.

Boyfriend is home; drunk. Beaten again; spirit is sunk. Dishes, housework; I'm forever dumb. Baby number five does come. The bottle tastes good. My son has become a hood.

The years do pass. I've learned not to sass. Gray hair; a rocking chair. Not wanted there. Must stay out of sight. Still can't do anything right. Soul seeks a protected shelf. Defeated; withdrawn into self.

A new child is born. Tears on the face; a look forlorn. "**Pick up the toys!**" "Shut-up the noise!" Oh God, "No!" The world is a hated foe.

The cycle repeated. Arguments heated. What is the use? People discuss child abuse. What can be done? I don't know, Hon.

— Carol

Do You Know My Pain?

(Poem given to abuser)

When we were very young,
We used to have much fun.
You the leader
I the follower.

You taught me many lessons,
How to throw a baseball,
How to be like a boy,
How to be your friend.

I followed you everywhere,
I did everything you wanted,
Yes, I was your little slave,
I took pride in being your sister.

But in many ways that all changed.
On those days when you took
What shouldn't have been yours,
You took a part of me,
That wasn't ready to be taken,
And certainly not by you.

You were the one I trusted the most.
You betrayed me,
Maybe you didn't know my pain
But how could I tell you?

I feared too much
That I would lose
That special love
The love that a brother
And sister share.

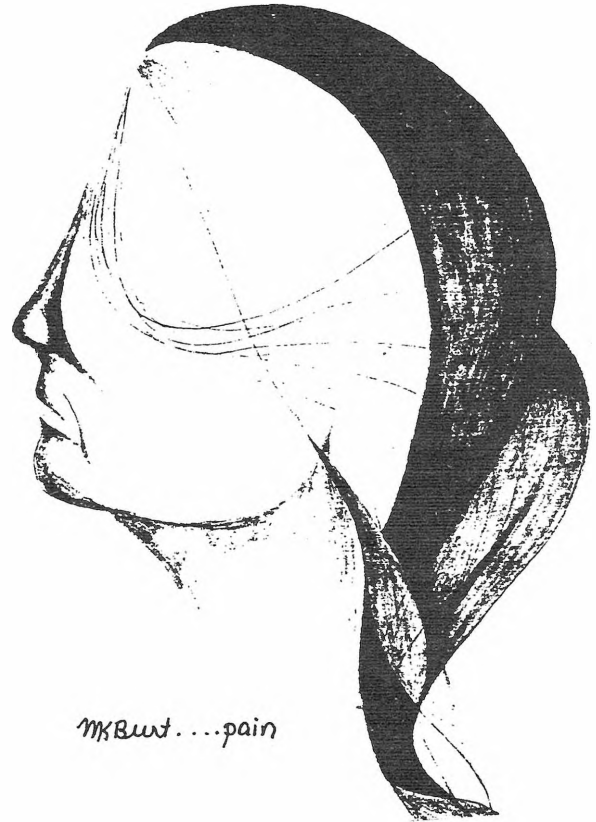
You took that love,
And confused it,
No, I didn't say no,
And I didn't fight you,
For I always gave you everything.

But this was too much,
And not yours to take,
I lost an innocence
That can never be replaced.

I no longer trust,
For fear of being betrayed again,
So I go through life,
Not being touched
And not sharing who I am
With others.

For years I didn't let
Myself feel the pain,
But now I do,
And I need you to know
About my pain,
About feeling betrayed,
And about being touched before my time.

— Ellen M. Cullen



Hope

as a child
little and defenseless
there were catastrophies
caused by those who are heartless
bruises and broken bones
burns and scrapes
physical and sexual abuse
beatings and rapes
then one day I realized
that this was not right
I wanted to get away from it
and I struggled with all my might
I thought I'd be the lucky one
if I could get away
he has haunted me for seventeen years
the victim is the one who pays
the flashbacks of the reality — the pain
the scars that will always burn
suicidal thoughts and attempts
empathy is all that I yearn
but today I know I'm a survivor — I am healing
there is even a support group I attend
achieving this took hope, strength, trust, and support
from a few very special people and my best friend

— J.D.

Sunrise

I am sitting on the beach, facing east; towards the ocean. It is not quite sunrise. There are few clouds in the sky and the day promises to be a beautiful one.

I am alone on the beach; as I am alone in life. Except for the occasional jogger, all is quiet, everything is still. The only sounds are the seagulls and the gentle lapping of waves on the shore.

Everything is peaceful; except me. I come here seeking peace and I find it, if only for a brief moment. I think about my life, hoping to find some answers.

Trying to find some positive to outweigh the negatives in my heart. But I find no answers; only more questions. The sun is starting to rise; I can see it peeking out on the horizon.

And it seems to say to me: "Be patient, the answers will come in time." "Just as surely as I rise every morning, you will find lasting peace in your life." The sun is up and it is the start of a brand new day. My peace is gone now.

I must put on my "face" and make it through yet another day. For I can never let on that I am not happy. Thank you sun, for allowing me to be what I am, and for giving me a glimpse of what life can truly be, peaceful.

— Sue Hamm

Giving Life to Myself

Let me become
as a chestnut
growing safe and
high in my own strong
branches. Let me
grow within a thick-
shelled globe of spikes until
I no longer feel the
need for such protection. Let me fall
straight and without
fear from the husk,
and let my eyes
be freed. Let me find
myself whole and without
scar. Do not let the
squirrels take me. I
want to fall deep
into earth — sleep
and dream away all
memories of abuse, of
older hands on my green
body as it grew, of the ax
scars on my trunk and of
the poor soil I grew in
I am full height now, I
produce life — whole, round
and without scar. Let me
give life to myself this
time, and I will show
you how I should have been.

— Angela Bouchard

Survival

I love the sun!
Its warmth has soothed me many times.
It has been my savior.
Its brightness fills my body with warmth.
I love to lie and let its healing rays beat on me.
I want to soak it all in like a sponge —
savor every ray!
It brightens my insides — making the darkness go
away.
I want to capture and hold it inside — never let go of
that warmth.
It makes me feel alive!
It rejuvenates passion, passion to live.
The beauty of the earth makes me feel alive and
good.
There is beauty inside.
Waiting to come out, come out to share.

— Jayne Barnes

Water

A mountain stream,
A glorious waterfall,
A pond of water lilies,
Yes, even a teardrop.

All water of pure beauty,
See it as it sparkles,
Taste it in its freshness,
Feel it with its powers.

Water that cleanses the soul,
It keeps life alive,
By its nurturance,
It helps to grow and heal.

— Ellen M. Cullen

My Child's Safe Place

The spot under the towering weeping willow in my grandparents' yard was a place where I would go to erase my painful realities for just a little while. The long meandering branches of the willow swayed in the breeze gently. The freshly mowed, green grass under my body always scratched my bare legs as I lay. The sun's hot rays beat on my skin warming my body all over. I could lie for hours tuning out the rest of the world.

I loved listening to the sounds around me, birds chirping, bees buzzing, and water rushing over the falls in the distance. I'd look up through the willow branches at the deep blue sky with its massive, fluffy clouds that resembled huge cotton balls. I like to envision myself jumping up and down, immersing myself in their softness.

Another vision, floating, slowly, gently, up, up. The earth around me and the sky above me all come together sandwiching me in the middle of all its wonder, all becoming one.

Beyond the little hill just past the willow was a big open field leading to a river lined by woods. A small opening at the end of the field where I could sit in the clearing and dangle my feet in the cool water was a beautiful sight. So much room to be alone. Peaceful, safe, free.

— Jayne Barnes

Recovery From Sexual Abuse?

Recovery, healing, moving on! Does such a state exist for a survivor of childhood sexual abuse? Today, I think not. Besides the physical pain of remembering, the untapped rage, the anger, the endless tears, the grief that surges in and out like the tides of the Atlantic, I cannot escape the questions that flood most of my waking and sleeping hours. Is it possible to reclaim the curiosity, innocence and wonderment that is my birthright, stolen from me at six years of age? Stolen at a time when I should have been skipping and romping and peeking through the colorful lens of a kaleidoscope? Will I always shrink with fear at the body of the man who loves me and longs to hold me close again? Will I ever share bits of joy with the therapist who has witnessed my pain, held me, encourage me to explore my own hidden depths, gently nurtured my lost trust, and loved a wounded child? Will I ever be capable of loving the woman who denied my reality for forty years and closed her heart and turned her back on my silent cries to be heard? Can I know forgiveness? Will this body ever feel the surge of awakening adolescent sexuality? Will my life ever move from one week to the next without the compelling need to sit closely with six other women and share the secret shame of have been violated? Will I ever feel the blood rushing through my veins and smile upon the body I flagellated with food for so many years? Is there really a God?

The answers to these questions elude me. I only know that I have an intense need to hold the fantasy of healing before my eyes and in my heart each morning. But always, always in my own safe internal hideaway, I send the same unanswered question out to the universe: Is there wholeness after abuse?

— Annie M.

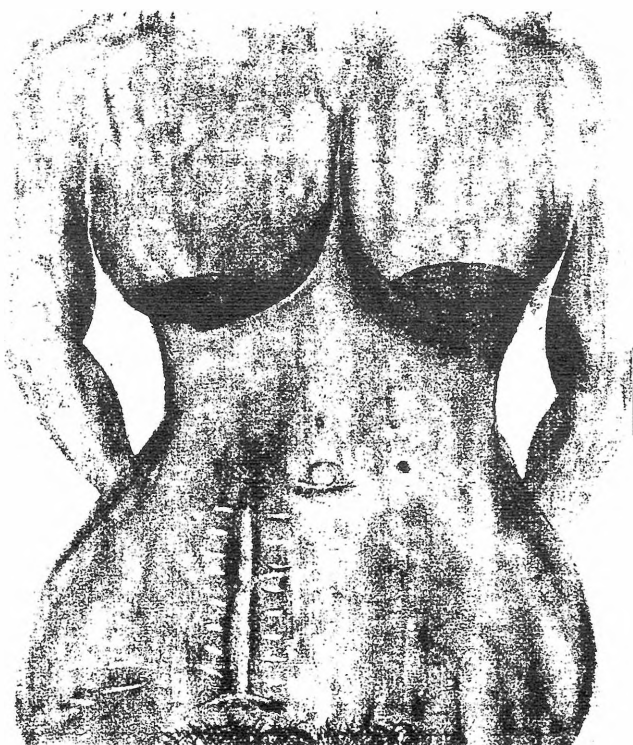
This was written at yet another bottom in my recovery. I did not stay in that space forever. The writing itself was cathartic and the healing process continues in my life, albeit at a snail's pace!

My Story Behind The Picture

I viewed my body with self-hatred. I always blamed myself for it. You see one of my breasts is much bigger than the other. I had thought it was because my brother who is 9 years older used to pay me to let him grab at them, pulling, pinching and sucking on them. He always played with one more than the other and that's why I blamed one being bigger onto myself. This happened when I was 11 or 12??? He used to pay me for lots of other things like him touching and kissing different parts of my body and me his. This went on for awhile until one day he tried to put his penis into me. The pain was awful. I screamed and cried and bled. He let me go but later as the scar represents I found out he gave me VD. At 15 I ended up having emergency surgery for what I was told was acute ruptured appendicitis. For about 3 years I carried VD around in me. It caused me great pain. As it got worse I would double over in pain even at the point of passing out in school having to be brought back with smelling salts. The pain was unbearable. Towards the end I was taken to 3 different doctors in a year's time. Each said it was something different causing my stomach aches. Finally my body was in so much pain I couldn't even breathe without it hurting, resulting in surgery. While I was in the hospital for 10 days I had to have penicillin shots every 4 hours to cure the VD. Now at 33 I got and read my hospital reports. I found out the truth. I never had acute ruptured appendix. My left fallopian tube was so badly infected that it caused me excruciating pain. They did take out my appendix but that was only because I was already opened up for it. My hideous scar is a daily reminder of my past and what my older brother put me through or I should say what he paid me for and at the time I let him so I have always felt it was all my fault and I deserved it!

— D.J.

The Picture



Sketch by D.J.

Healing

Now at 34, I've been in a survivors group and private therapy for over 1½ years. I came to understand and know myself quite a lot. I know now why I abused my body with alcohol, experimented with illegal street drugs, smoked pot, got hooked on prescription drugs, I tried to commit suicide 4 times almost succeeding once and keeping my body fat for protection from people. I would like to say I once hated this body and blamed myself totally for it. I drew this picture and was able to tell my story in my survivors of incest group. By doing so it has made a great healing impact. Now I no longer blame myself or abuse my body. I am learning to accept my body and to take better care of me. To start I have lost over 30 pounds and I'm beginning for the first time to love myself. My hope is to continue to grow and heal. By sharing my story here at the gathering I know it will give me courage for my upward growth. Empowering my spirit with the strength needed to journey down the painful future roads I know now I must travel to reach my eventual freedom from haunting childhood incest issues that has kept my soul a prisoner in my past. By moving forward I can be set free to really begin to live and enjoy a happier life which I now offer to all of you here reading this the hope and courage for your growth for I have found with time the healing gets easier because we are all survivors. So as the song goes by: Nancy Day, "Stand Up Tell Us Your Story." May peace soon be within you!

— D.J.

A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR BEING FEMALE

Part One

There is a woman who wants to get out. A woman who wants to get free. A woman (the stranger) who wants to look and feel great about herself. There is a silent, hidden woman who wants to emerge from bondage, who wants to come alive, but, she is afraid. Afraid to let others see the real person that she is, or, thinks she is. She is confused and in a lot of pain.

This woman wants to wear beautiful clothes. Clothes made of material which will move and swirl around her body. Material that is soft and silky. Material that feels wonderful against her skin.

This woman wants to feel safe in emerging. She is afraid because some men will look upon her as a sex object. Some men will think she is a whore. She will be misunderstood. They will think she is a tease and will want to hurt her. To show her that she isn't anyone special. Show her that she has no right to look nice and no right to feel good about being a woman, being myself.

She will be looked upon as someone to use and abuse. To use her body as they so choose and when they choose to do so. If she doesn't give herself freely to them they will forcefully take what isn't theirs to have.

She will always have to look over her shoulder to scour her surroundings for hidden danger. She will always have to keep her guard up whenever she is out of her safe place. It takes so much energy and drains her soul to remain in a state of safeness.

To be a woman is to be vulnerable to man. A target for his unhealthy desire for control and domination over females. His power to limit and destroy what is rightfully mine. My body, my soul.

— Brielle Daniels

Part Two

To become thin again would bring me face to face with my own sexuality, its terror, my feelings. Questioning the fact that maybe I won't be able to trust myself. Will my feelings overtake me? Will I do things which will be against my beliefs about myself? At this point I am not so sure I know what my beliefs are about myself.

The intensity of my feelings, back then, always frightened me. I would unconsciously close myself up for protection. I craved human touch, a gentle kind touch. My craving caused me a lot of pain, in my mind and in my soul. I would silently scream, "why can't someone love me?"

As a teenager I was promiscuous, somehow equating sex with affection. Thinking I had to give my body in order to deserve a few minutes of feeling good while that person held and kissed me. Then he would take me and I would close myself off, dissociate, feel like a mummy.

I always pretended I was a virgin, it was my first time. Of course that was a lie, an illusion, because my father stole that precious part that belonged only to me. It was mine to give away when I got married. It was mine to give to the one I chose. He didn't have any right to take away that precious part of me. That loss has left a big deep black hole in my soul. How does one repair that kind of damage? Is this type of loss one of the "necessary losses" of growing up? In our male dominated society it certainly seems that way. It is a high price to pay for being a child and for being a female.

— Brielle Daniels

Old Poem

She said, "I must've slept with over a hundred men."
I thought, "Maybe that's because your Daddy was the first."
— C.S.

Refuge

Anger is my refuge now. Years of numbness, oblivious to my SELF, I lived a life defined by patriarchal base brutality. Early on I donned a mask, a smiling, pleasing little-girl facade to hide the fear and shame that grew inside. Anger, an alien housemate, moved in after numbness was awakened and had packed her bags to leave. The unconscious path I trod (I could not bear to feel the pain); until I courageously changed my course and fled the gruesome scene, and was free at last. Then the truth of violation was almost too much to bear, was so clear. The pain of self-denial and self-hatred erupts in wrath and ardent self protection now. I learn each moment that I cannot afford to subject myself to one more hideous encounter with the undeserved abuse.

My anger keeps me live, a vigilante for my soul, saving me from violation that for a lifetime I believed was my inheritance. No more!! Guerilla warfare, a grassroots activism fed by rage, a healthy sign, this fight for life. Last autumn I wished for cancer; wintertime I prayed for deadly accidents; this spring, drowning. Anything to end the pain. Now it's summer and I'm crusading for my SELF, my own reality. I'm through living out my father's shameful lies, my mother's unsparing betrayal, my partner's(s) brutal words and deeds, they almost took my life. Now when fear and shame take hold and coil their moist, familiar tentacles around my gut, I remember my precious child and fierce protection takes the helm. Protection, long denied, never experienced in parental care must be taken on by me. I scream out my rage and hold that child to my breast.

So, for this all-consuming point in time, anger is my refuge until I have reclaimed my beloved child, my glory, my life. Then perhaps forgiveness and compassion will find a place to grow in ground made fertile by my rage.

— Cynthia Diamond

The Perpetrator

There we were just he and I, he touched me, he forced me, I wanted to die. His grip was tight when he looked in my eyes, "quiet," he said as he thrust himself between my thighs.

The pain was so great I told him I would tell, he said if I did I would rot in hell. He forced me to touch him as he did with a smile, god it was awful, disgusting and vile.

His breath was heavy, both dry and wet, I was his victim, his mind was set. His attacks progressed more violent and obscene, when would he stop, I wanted to scream. Why did he do this, this act of disgust, he hurt me for life, he shattered my trust. Why did he continue his acts of aggression, did he think I sought his deviant affections?

I live my life with fear and pain, caused by his attacks, brutal and inhumane. I broke his secret that caused such pain, he violated me, and they say **I'm** insane?

Now he's moved out with a family of his own, I can't help but wonder, does he leave his own kids alone? There will be those who'll say these are lies, because they are fooled by this man's disguise.

— Ann J. Grenier

China Doll

She was as beautiful as a bisque china doll, the way her lips turned up when she smiled or when she did not. Her eyes were wide with chameleon colors, the lashes were long and rested on her cheeks, and often they stared with a haunting emptiness. The little girl's hands were those of an artist. Her skin was soft, and the down on her face made you want to reach out and touch her cheek, run your fingertips down the side of her face, down along the strong jaw line to the underside of her chin and stop, poised there. She carried herself this moment with grace, had a look of dignity, as a ballerina before her performance. She leaped before my eyes, leaving the ground arching her back with her chin up, hair flowing behind her, toes pointed, arms outstretched, her hands a picture in themselves, fingers separated in a delicate stance, bent at the wrist. She remained poised in midair for what seemed an eternity. To my utter dismay, my breath caught in my throat...in that eternally fleeting second, I watched as she arched to the floor and shattered, the pieces of her delicate body strewn about. I stooped to pick the pieces up, tears spilling down my face at the brokenness...my brokenness.

— Joan Grady Mickus

Winning The Battle

Where were you Momma? All those times I begged to go shopping with you so I wouldn't be left alone with him. I used to yell and cry, "Please take me with you, don't leave me here." All the time he was yelling, "You don't need to go with your mother, you can stay with me."

But you would leave me Mom, and the hell would start all over again. Sometimes in the garage, sometimes in the bathroom, or my room. The pain was so horrible that I'd stare at something and lose all feeling in my body. When it was over he'd tell me what a good little whore I was, and if I ever told anyone he'd kill me.

If any of my girl friends came to visit me, he'd attack them. I can see them crying now, and running down the road. Since I was nine years old he terrorized me, my life was his. I used to wonder what was the matter with me. I always felt crazy and scared, but never knowing what I was scared of. I created fantasy worlds, and sometimes got lost in what was real and what wasn't. I became an accomplished liar because lies were easier than the truth. Even my brothers wanted me to keep my mouth shut and go along with everything.

Today, at the age of thirty, I have horrible nightmares. I still feel the earth is going to stop at any minute. I have terrible panic attacks. I am quick to snap at someone before they snap at me. I can feel excess energy flowing through me all the time, and the scary feeling that goes along with it. I have done a lot of bad things in my life, always running somewhere but never knowing where. I have hurt a lot of people along the way, and destroying myself in the process.

I finally found someone who I can trust, she is my therapist, but most important she is my friend. With her help I'm beginning to think that maybe there is a life for me. I have a long way to go, but I am going to do it. Because DAD you didn't win. This letter is also for other survivors, please don't give up. Every minute that you can say "It wasn't my fault. I am a good person." You are winning the battle against your abuser. Good luck to you all.

— Lois Snow

Broken Heart

My mother has always been jealous of me, but I don't know why. She screams at me, "you're so damn ugly, you look like your damn daddy."

When I was about six years old she came home drunk, the alcohol was smelling loudly on her breath. I tried to help her because I see she's throwing up, but all she does is scream at me saying, "get your ugly ass out of here." I then start to cry because I'm so hurt that she's screaming at me. Then she comes in and backhands me, telling me to shut my damn mouth.

At the age of 10, 11, 12, and 13 I was brutally beaten. My mom kicked me in my stomach, my sides, my ribs. I had busted lips, swollen limbs. I still went on loving my Mom.

At the age of 16 I left home. I later prayed and asked God to give me a baby that I could love and could love me. I long to have some type of affection. I vowed to myself never to treat my kids as I was treated.

Today, I am a woman with a broken heart because I long for my mother's love which I never receive. She tells me she loves me but I think it's because I'm in prison.

— Angie B.

Incest: The Lost Child

A child is born, what can she expect,
to be loved and cuddled and her innocence kept.
Did she have warning that her dreams would be shattered,
never once did she think that her feelings wouldn't matter.

Year by year and little step after little step,
one by one her needs were not met.
She began to grow up, her love for her parents undaunted,
and never once did she think "maybe I wasn't wanted."

They moved once again which was the norm,
and at age seven she began to weather the storm.
Her dad told her how perfect and special she would be,
and because that was important with blinders she did see.

Day by day he took away part of her dream,
she knew it was wrong but she could not even scream.
He said "Don't tell mommy, she would be very upset,"
and so the secrets began to be kept.

She was daddy's special girl and only that was worth
mattering,
she would withstand the incest and even the battering.
They played the game and he destroyed her innocence and
trust,
because keeping daddy happy was always a must.

This little girl grew up and became a wife and a mother,
while all the time her needs were always smothered.
She knew in her heart that things weren't right,
but she was confused and mostly full of fright.

She sought the help of a therapist or two,
and one day it started to surface, out of the blue.
She put it together although she felt brittle,
& started to remember what had been blocked out since she
was little.

The suicide attempts and the thoughts of running away,
are still ever present, she hopes they'll not stay.
To confront is an issue she decides she must do,
and everyone assures her that they'll see her through.

Denial and hurtful rage is what came to pass,
her father and mother would not validate the past.
"You're a liar, you're sick, this could never have happened,"
and the doubts began to build and the world began to
blacken.

So many pieces have come together now,
and if she'll get through this she doesn't know how.
With husband, friends & therapists to lend their support and
unconditional love,
soon she'll be at peace with herself like a white dove.

More therapy and group support held her together,
and the support of her husband made her feel very much
better.
A relationship between child and parents forever gone,
but the bond between husband and children will grow ever
fond.

Where the future lies for this once innocent child,
they say over the rainbow and off in the wild.
To know that there is help always near,
has made all the difference, the sky now begins to seem clear.

— Roni B.

Is It My Fault?

I lie in the dark,
It is cold and dark.
Everything is scary.
The sky opens up;
The rain comes down.
At last the lightning begins.
The thunder roars
Diane screams and Mom comes running.
I am scared also, but do not say a word.
At last Mom hears my snuffle and asks what is
wrong.
In hopes that she will let me lie with her I tell her,
"Mom, I'm scared, too."
She takes it the wrong way and yells, "John"
Dad comes and takes me away,
Away to the big bed,
Away to hell.
He puts me down, and I lie so still.
He tells me to get under the covers, so I do.
I cannot see over the footboard and feel trapped.
He moves closer, I bite my lip.
He touches me, I go numb.
He removes my underwear.
I can see an open grave.
He places his big hand on my bare skin.
I feel my body descend into the cold grave.
He climbs on top of me.
Dirt is coming down, trapping me in.
His mouth is on mine, sucking the air from my
lungs.
I am suffocating and dying.
He gets off, but everything remains dark.
As dawn's light comes through the grave,
I begin to come alive again.
I don't want to, but the choice is not mine.
I wake and pretend nothing has happened.
The only consolation I can come up with
Is that I was not selfish,
And did not make Diane sleep with him.
It hurts to move, it hurts to walk,
It hurts to think, and it hurts not to.
The pain builds up and I feel like I should tell
everything,
But I don't.
I keep the secret.
I keep the silence.
I reinforce the behavior.
Is it my fault?

— J. Fitzpatrick

I Wasn't Born Aggressive

I wasn't born aggressive.
I was born with an exquisite tenderness that I spent decades learning how to squelch.
I wasn't born objective.
I was born with an extreme sensitivity in the aimless wanderings of the Celtic Welsh.
I wasn't born knowledgeable, like the poet, the prophet or the Ph.D.
I buried my wisdom in the sands of the sea.

And so, all of the things that I was born with were lost
as I covered them up to pay for the cost
that the tender sensitive soul will pay
to keep from freezing on a cold summer day.

And found myself with a hard shell and no more.
No joyous laughter, no burden I bore
no love inside for the child who was me
no sharing, no caring, and the kettle's empty.

But somewhere along the road I learned to grow beyond
and reclaim those things of which I am fond.
I learned how to reject the perilous maze
and how to see through the tangled haze.

Perseverance, discovery and the will to be free,
building a bridge over the gap that was me.
All of us learn things in life we can take
to blend with our essence, to mold and to shape.

I wasn't born aggressive but with tenderness see
what a lovely combination the two can be.
I wasn't born objective, but used sensitively
I view a clear precise picture of high quality.
I wasn't born knowledgeable but with wisdom have found
that knowledge used wisely plants seeds in the ground.

— Sally B.

The Pearl

Children murdered in their sleep
while others choke, their secrets keep them sane
Dream sweet baby, dream down deep
Where evil tortures cannot reap bright pain.
While your body breaks under the weight
Your voice is silenced; you learn to hate in vain.
Don't let them kill you dear sweet child
Their hands of grease their faces vile after they are
through
Burrow something way down in,
A life, a fledgling, which can begin anew.
They never owned you, lovely girl
They took the shell, you kept the pearl for you.

— Mareike

Genesis

Our battered soul awakes, and its cry is agonizing to all who listen. The pain of our abuse is exchanged for pangs of a chosen birth. Our new life, shrouded in clothes of ageless depravity, is chaffed and raw. The stench of their foul acts still pierce our tender nostrils. Our chest feels weighted down causing us to gasp for breath, and we choke and we gag. Our body throbs with memories of untended wounds, and our ears burn, sometimes for hours.

Our innocence is forever lost, and our new life permanently marbled with knowledge of their crimes. Their rage, their neglect, their denial, their fears, their shame was our inheritance and fostered our abuse. But now we are learning about choices and about claiming our rights. We no longer need to endure the torture of mere existence. The memory of our abuse is now awash with the splendor of our true inheritance, as precious children of God. We are awed by the loving tenderness that welcomes us into renewal, and we marvel for the language spoken here is laughter.

— Sarah R. Montgomery

Fear O Fear

You left me with one foot heading for the grave. the other in the past and just like oak it took root in your toxic soil and the cost of leaving you would be earthquake heartrending upheaval. o you taught too well lessons of cover of dagger the o so pain of walking away gut wrenching soul wrenching o so wrenching.

Fear O Fear

Your keening shriek drawing sifting determined countenance stubborn stance bitter piper melodies enticing with familiar notes an ugly unworthy tune bloodless promises of pale bloodless futures to exploit horror of past warfare of o so bloody annals with deceit lying oaths swearing binding to sangrine arenas serrated sand. forever or until I can untangle from bloodless lures. Forever or until...

Fear O Fear

Where in the world did I hide my o so fractured heart from your chilling clutch or did I travel the stars to secret my last undefiled treasure? sheltered in the shimmer of Alpha Centauri or the shadow of some darkening nova. seeking regeneration re-creation eager for o so wonderful star lessons refracting heaven's light. hoping for redemption at last praying for another chance.

Fear O Fear

Constant and hated companion counselor advisor whispering umber tomes. like sepia septic sweetheart. words compounding poison like lead's deadly weight. hiding death's sugared tones. or accurate world accounting of growing shadows haunted by all manner of monster and suffering.

Fear O Fear

Enough whispers no more dark utterances! Silence! You take too much time too much energy. I long for sunshine of a fool's paradise far from gathering cloud of acid and sulfur. ancient runes foretold let me live in a world where hut is palace and crust daintiest cake. let me alone put away the grey dulling brush blunting the o so beauty and brilliance of shining world.

Fear O Fear

I must live in this world with or without your trodding foot on my throat it is I who must journey carrying on my weary back battling you o thief so greedy grasping. sending images of my o so past to grab haunt entwine ensnare my future. courage learned cringing at your knee allows survival but I need o so much more to live to thrive.

Fear O Fear

What if earthquakes were endured? bloody wrenching roots o so long ago planted filtered deep entrenched wrapped tightly. ripped up laughing at the ruins cutting my losses. like sheWolf fearing for new beginnings new life o so tender o so fragile. chewing off her own foot barter for freedom from the wicked trap. her own my own blood dripping from jagged broken teeth her teeth my mouth facing life crippled hindered footless bloodied but free. facing life.....Fear.....O Fear.....free.....Fear

Facing Life O So Free.

— Dolores Marquez

Bonds of Love

We were born helpless
and totally dependent on imperfect people
So we are not perfect

At any age, love is the solvent
that transforms imperfections into uniqueness
and gives our spirit wings

Acceptance and forgiveness are love's right and left hands
For we only feel truly loved
if our faults are accepted with our gifts

But love does not always use two hands.
Fear or pain
can bind them until they cannot embrace

Yet your hands are free.
Two hands to untie another
so both may fly on spirit wings.

— Linda S.

Finally I Sleep

(Song Lyric)

I've been told I shouldn't talk about it
That there is nothing now I could do
But this feeling bottled up inside me
Doesn't stop it from being true
It should not have ever happened
There are things one must never do
I know I wanted you to love me
But not the way you wanted to
I carried it for years, I hid it very well,
I never told a soul, I kept it from myself.
Daddy... Daddy...
And now that I am strong, no longer do I keep the
memories in my head,
stolen from my sleep. Daddy... Daddy...
I have broken the chain of silence
And the link that held me to the past
I see my life through different eyes
Free at last, free at last.
Know that I am not alone
My strength comes from God above
And what he gives to me
Is not your kind of love
I carried it for years, I hid it very well,
I never told a soul, kept it from myself.
Daddy... Daddy...
And now that I am strong, no longer do
I keep, the memories in my head,
Finally I sleep, Finally I sleep.

— Jean McBride

Divorce

He told me
the news today
while I was
ironing his shirt.

“She's never wanted
to be a wife and mother,”
he said.

And I understood
like no one else could.

Tears fell
on the pale, gray fabric
and steam rose
to heat my face,
as I ironed them
into his shirt.

— J.R.C.

SuSu

SuSu is a small pink teddy bear that was given to me three years ago as a solstice gift. When I first saw the bear, I was taken back, a **pink** bear, yuck! However, she rather quickly won my heart and began to develop her own personality. I named her SuSu. I went to the thrift store and bought her some clothes, I felt a strong need to protect and cover her. The clothes also somewhat humanized her. Her favorite outfit is a green gingham playsuit. Pink is the color that opens the heart and green is the color that heals it, so her combination of pink and green seems very appropriate.

It soon became clear that SuSu represented the rebirth of my own inner child from whom I had been separated for thirty seven years. We laughed, played, cried and slept together (and still do). I assured her that I loved her and that now as an adult I would be there to protect and care for her. SuSu also began to speak. She fluctuates between the ages of one and one-half and four years old so her speech can vary. She can't say her L's, she pronounces them like W's and she often puts an extra “ed” on the ends of words. SuSu is free to speak as she does.

I began to take SuSu to my incest survivors therapy group. SuSu actually spoke in group several times and I really learned some things from her. One woman also had a bear and eventually everyone in the group had a stuffed critter that they brought to group.

SuSu says that she is not going to get any older than four because she doesn't want to go to school. She writes using my left hand, she does a pretty good job! The left hand represents the unconscious mind. I have learned a lot about my inner child from SuSu's writing.

I became concerned for a while about this separation that I had created but it seems to be a healthy way for me to become reacquainted with my inner child. By separating her out, I can hold, comfort, protect and assure her. I often feel closed down sexually. SuSu wants nothing to do with adult sex (very appropriate) so when I want to be sexual, I take SuSu out of the bedroom (she loves to spend the night with my daughter). This allows me to not have to worry about protecting my “little girl” while I (the adult) am being sexual.

I find it beneficial to use crystals and stones for physical, spiritual and especially emotional healing. I got a small pouch for SuSu in which she carries a piece of lapis (helps one speak about intense things) and rose quartz (helps one speak with and feel self love).

I would encourage any survivor who wants to get more in touch with the inner child to be open to working with “the critter of your choice.” Everyone who has ever met SuSu has really liked her once they understood who she was. I know that my inner child is within me, but having SuSu represent her externally has enabled me to recognize her and has brought tremendous healing to us both.

— Susan

Each Day

Each day
as I wake
I remember.
My life is
no longer
the same.

Each day
it lives
inside me.
My unseen source
of shame.

Each day
the weight
grows heavier
as I realize
who is
to blame.

— J.R.C.



Sketch by Wanda DeLong

I Want To Scream

I want to scream, I want to scream
I need to talk
But I'm afraid of you and me.
I need to talk to you and me.
I need to let out these feelings inside of me.
I need to set you and me free
So we may be ourselves and go together and/or
separately
O so I can at least be nice to whomever I be.
I can, I can't escape these feelings stirring inside of
me.
I want to care, I want to share
I want to be set free of this variety of people within
me.
Selfish as I may be to you and to me
Is there still hope inside of me?
Can I still listen to you and me?
Can I still feel the world that surrounds me?
Is there still hope that once again I will be
That struggling person that lives inside of me?
That person who underneath wanted the best for you
and me and everyone else.
And wanted, needed to be loved so desperately!

— Janet B.M.

Mama, How Could You?

Mama you saw me being abused
Mama you saw me being used
You knew for years
You saw all of my tears
How could you blame your little girl
You said I was your pearl
Don't you feel any remorse for my pain
Don't you feel any shame
You watched it go on time after time
Don't you know rape is a crime
I will always hold this against you in my heart
It's time to make a new start

— M.P.K.

A Tribute To Honor My Child

Today I want to honor how my child survived under horrible conditions. She made it, after all that she was put through, she made it. While running away from her house and all the abuse that was there. She slept with who ever she had to. She slept with men and women to have something to eat and somewhere to sleep. And she learned very early that if she did drugs or drank that the pain of having to sleep with strangers would be much less. She did all of these things to survive life. She had to survive through gang bangs. But there were moments of what she called freedom and it was for those moments that all of this was worth it. There were moments that no one bothered her, she had space to exist with no one taking something from her. Drugs let her live through hellish times. They let her fantasize about things not being as bad as they really were. Drinking did the same thing. I honor you little one. Such courage and strength you had. You did your best to protect me. I owe you my life. Thank you.

— Beth Hafling

Keep Out

I keep this wall of fat around me
To keep you out
You men
Can't see the curves
The vulnerable part of me
Can you
You men
Can't see the thinness that turns you on
Can you
You men
With stronger bodies
Raping eyes
Violating women at will
You men
Don't like fat women, like me
Do you?
Good!
I am safe for now.
But beware
I will be back
Strong and powerful
Thin, too.
And you men
Won't matter at all to me.

— Suzanne D'Auteuil

Good Bye, Dad

I've been sitting here all day
Trying to heal my soul
I have so much to say
There's still so much to know

I keep thinking I want to see you
but then my body says no
what if you die
before you know
just how much it hurts so
Please tell me why you did this Dad
I am so angry
I am so sad

In my dreams I'm always scared
All my life I pretended you cared
But now I know
I was used
Good bye Dad
Now you lose.

— Mara Best

Sadness

Sadness is Sad.
I don't like Sad.
Sad is tears.
Tears are wet.
Wet is water
Alot of tears put together is crying.
Crying is sadness.
Sadness is important to people to get it out.
Sad is like mad in a way.
In a way, I can say
Alot can happen to make you sad.

— Stephanie

Land of Me

Sometimes I go to the land of me where you
can do anything, be anything, do anything. I
can realize I'm me and I'm free to be
anything and to do anything I want. To
think anything. When I get back I know I'm
someone, someone special.

— Stephanie

Hands

and will i ever forget
what i refuse to remember?

— C.S.

The "LOOKING UP" TIMES

"LOOKING UP"

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"Looking Up" provides a variety of services to survivors of child sexual abuse and those who care. Services include telephone/mail support education and referral; consultation and training; a wilderness program; 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/child sexual abuse to send original contributions for possible publication in the *Times*: essays, letters, poetry, artwork, anything of a literary nature. No simultaneous submissions, please. 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. For more detailed submission guidelines, request them from our office.

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Lina Dunning, Editor

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