

In Search of Healing

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When
I
let
myself,
I
paint.



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The mission of the Survivor Press is
to promote the healing of people
suffering from the effects of sexual abuse,
empower survivors and prosurvivors,
stimulate communication within the recovery community,
and increase public awareness
of sexual violence and recovery.

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"vulneratus, non victus—wounded, not conquered"

In Search of Healing is a periodical anthology of writing and art for the purpose of healing sexual abuse. All material is contributed by people who are in recovery from child sexual abuse and by their supporters. Disclosure of the abuse, even from years ago, is essential to recovery. Through creative forms, people who are healing can express the inexplicable.

Some selections are extremely graphic. All are written or drawn from the victim's point of view, presenting a different perspective on sexual violence than what is usually conveyed in the mainstream news and art media.

It is critical that these voices be heard in a simple, compassionate act of bearing witness.

Editor's Essay: Toward the Far Shore

Today I read a first person account of a woman who fought for her life and is now recovering from a devastating brain hemorrhage. She said what so many who have catastrophic health problems say: "This changed my life."

I cried as I read that and realized that I, too, am going through a tremendous life-changing upheaval with recovery from sexual abuse. I think I'm a survivor twice over, once from the original abuse and again as I go through recovery. Both are wrenching, profoundly painful experiences.

But, as I unload the destruction from my body and mind, I am becoming aware of a new, genuine psychological wellbeing I've never known before. This unaccustomed state shows up in many ways, but one in particular strikes me as being especially rewarding: my changing relationship with other human beings.

One day, I told my spouse of a particularly selfish thing another person said. The succinct response was, "Well, I sure wouldn't want to be in a flood with her."

I thought about that.

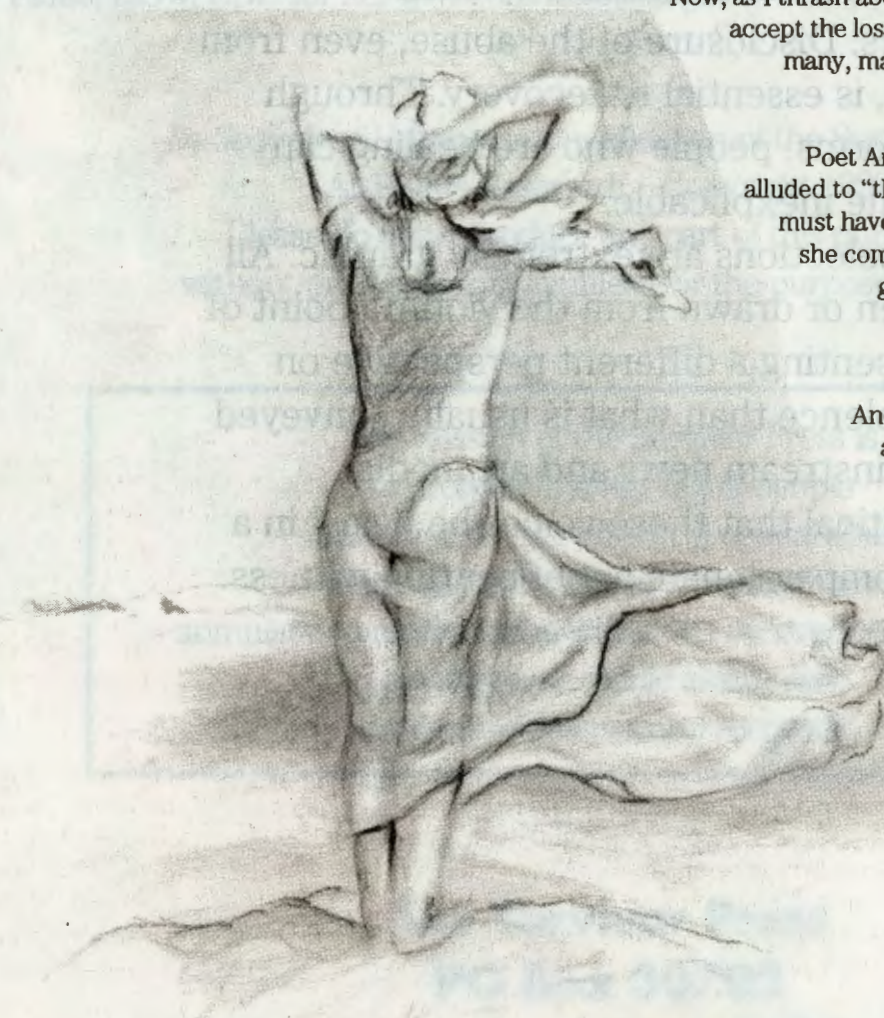
Recovery is a terrible flood of misery and loss, as devastating psychospiritually as when the creek rises. And we all respond, at times as heroes, at times as jerks. The attitude that some of us deserve to get on the boat and others don't is a heady weapon. The truth of the matter is that everyone deserves to get on the boat, because we are all human beings. Just check your guns at the dock, please.

I remember a story I heard years ago attributed to the Buddha, who told a seeker, "The Dharma is like a little boat. Once you get to the other shore you no longer need it." I didn't understand it, but I thought it was a great image to ponder. The trouble was, even though I did some powerful pondering, my little boat always stayed moored on *this* side, and it was empty, too.

I couldn't even see *myself* in it. Now, as I thrash about in this terrible flood of memories and accept the losses, I see not only myself in the boat, but many, many more people, plus lots of teddy bears and dogs, cats, birds, goldfish . . . and we're *all* rowing, every one of us!

Poet Anne Sexton, both victim and perpetrator, alluded to "the awful rowing toward God." I think she must have been rowing by herself, and that is why she committed suicide. The recovery movement gives us the opportunity to do this "awful rowing" together, in the same little boat, to fulfill our essential nature as healthy spiritual beings.

And we row, with all our radical differences and unifying commonalities, our heroism and jerkiness, through the terrifying flood, toward the far shore: toward the God of our understanding — and healing.



Abby Ovitsky
California

I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and have been in therapy a quarter of my life. As my birth and foster families perpetrated the abuse, and continue to deny it ever happened, I have cut ties with them. The hardest part of healing is supporting myself while I explore the painful memories. But, if I don't, no one will. Therapy, bodywork, twelve step and publications like yours help a great deal. Isolation has always been part of the abuse.

Moma

She stood not five feet.

The shame she dragged around curved spine and tugged at shoulders. Hair the color of dirty snow thinned like a blighted lawn in the drought. Bird shaped face and downy skin covered with the graffiti of life: each worry had left its

mark, crease, groove,
furrow, pit, gouge,
score, nick, dent.

Slugger

You packed a mean punch
without raising a hand.

Head blows.

You didn't stop

until the blood ran

out of my ears.

New Toy

I was your ultimate ego trip.

I was your innocence, returned to you.

I thought you were God. And

you thought I was a new toy.

Pickmeup

I am just a little girl. And Daddy is big and strong. Pick me up, Daddy! Pick me up! But Daddy says I am too big. I am too big and he is too tired and not now.

I am a bigger little girl now. I get on airplanes all by myself. And I am only scared sometimes, like when I am by myself and there is nobody I know and I don't know what is going to happen next and nobody sees or hears me. Just sometimes.

Now I am an even bigger little girl. I can decide where I want to live. I don't have to live with Daddy anymore.

There is a strange man. Come with me, he is saying. Why? Where? For how long? I asked. We'll see, he said with a smile, we'll see. I didn't like his smile, but I didn't know what else to do, so I went with him. I didn't have anywhere else to go. I was scared, but I didn't tell anybody because I didn't know who to tell.

Would you like to live here with me? asked the man. I didn't know. I guess so, I said. Good, he said, then you will stay. For how long? Where will I sleep? Will I have my own room? Will you be my Daddy now? But the man just smiled that smile. Then, after a while, he pulled me onto the bed. What are you doing? I asked him. But the man didn't say anything. He was pulling my shirt off. Why are you doing that? Why? But the man didn't say anything. I wanted to get away, but he held me down. I cried. Then he took his pants off. I cried louder. But the man just said be quiet, I can't concentrate when you are crying. I didn't understand. I just cried some more. Then there was sticky stuff all over me. I didn't know what it was. When the man was gone and I was alone, I cried. The man came back again. And again. And I cried and cried. There was no where to go and no one to tell and nothing to do, so I cried.

Then one day Daddy came. And took me away from the man.

Christine Kidney
Connecticut

I am a survivor of sexual abuse. At present I am in therapy for this hideous crime that was committed against me. I wrote the following during one of my depressed moods. I showed it to my therapist and she suggested that I get it published, so other survivors can relate to it.

When you were young you were a big part of your family.
When I was young I was invisible.

When you were young you were bounced on someone's knee.
When I was young I was on someone's knee while he sat there and fondled me.

When you were young when you got hurt you got love and affection.
When I was young and got hurt, I was told not to cry.

When you were young and in trouble, things were talked about.
When I was young and in trouble, I was told to shut up and got slapped across the face.

When you were young you had your childhood friends.
When I was young my friends were taken away from me.

When you were young you were playing with toys.
When I was young I had adults playing with me.

When you were young you had dreams.
When I was young I had nightmares.

When you were young you had your parents' love and support.
When I was young I had silence.

When you were young you knew who you were.
When I was young I was in constant turmoil.

When you were young you had innocent experiences.
When I was young I had experiences that no child should have to experience.

When you were young you had sweethearts, boyfriends.
When I was young I was not allowed, after all, if we kissed, what would we do when we were alone.

As an adult, you have stability.
As an adult I have instability.

As an adult, you can love.
As an adult I don't know how.

As an adult, you see some light.
As an adult I can see only darkness.

As an adult, you can feel emotions.
As an adult I can't feel.

As an adult, you feel fulfilled and alive.
As an adult I feel empty and dead.

**Jill Bensley
California**

I am an incest survivor who did not remember the abuse until just two years ago at the age of 44. Since that time I have been through therapy and the gut wrenching memories that have disclosed the horrors of my childhood and the formerly blank years when the incest occurred. My father was the perpetrator. He is dead now. He began the abuse when I was just months old and continued until I was eight. He also raped and abused my older sister. She is schizophrenic now and does not remember what happened to her. My family is completely unsupportive, save my brother, who is 8 years younger. Apparently, he was not abused.

During the most intense part of my healing, I wrote poetry, I now have a 140 page book which I plan to self publish sometime next year. The poems I enclose are from this body of work. I have enclosed several types of poems. (I understand that some presses do not like to publish graphic expressions of abuse.) I do not wish to use a pen name.

I am very happy to see so many new journals and magazines appearing exposing the horrors we endured. Hopefully it will finally bring an end to childhood sexual abuse.

Breakfast At Carl's

Sitting here in Carl's this morning
spicy bacon in the air
I see myself
reflected in your shine

the crooked teeth
shiny, thick hair
M & M eyes
feathery brows, perfectly shaped
your spunk, your kid-ness
a painless version of me

Eight years old — the year he stopped
the time henceforth he would try to make it up to me

mademoiselle dolls, expensive toys
jaguars, trips to Italy, clothes allowance . . .

you never could, dad
you couldn't make me shine
make my eyes sparkle
my face light up
the way my son's does
this morning in Carl's.

Autumn

Something in the fall shadowed pavement
the oaks mottled in the afternoon sun
errant leaves skipping in the wind
saddens me to the core.

The change of wind
the change of seasons
makes me small, aching in the bones
weary with world knowledge
beyond my young age
the grown-up child
with the tender body
that crumbles in the autumn wind.

(Comfortable napping in my brain
curled like a kitten
childhood incest
mom condoning it
aunts and uncles ignoring it).

Like the layers of an onion
outrage and sadness
deepens with each passing autumn
burrows
down
down
deep down
until it will, someday,
hit bottom.

The Rules

In order to stay alive
and not disappear,
and being an extremely bright
and alert three year old,
I learned the rules
after only one attack.

1. Let Daddy put his penis in your mouth.
2. Let Daddy hump you until goeey stuff comes out of his thing.
3. Let Daddy put stuff in your 'gina til it bleeds.
4. Never tell anyone.
5. Never scream.
6. Never kick or bite or hit him.
7. You may cry quietly, but don't wake anyone.
8. You may tell him you hate him and to stop.
(Of course, he won't.)
9. You must let him do this anytime he comes in the night.
10. If you don't obey the rules, Daddy will kill you.
11. He does this because you are bad.

Grandma Snake

You slither along
breasts sagging, dragging
loose flesh hanging on brittle bones
like a cheap overcoat.

Snake in the grass
snake in my skull
poised in the space
that tells me who I am what I'm worth.

Ready to strike
fangs puncture my brain
indelible, your poison,
*"Dirty, evil girl
Never tell."*

*I won't, grandma snake
Now I'm just like you!*

Waiting Is The Hardest Part

It wasn't the rapes
that were the hardest part.
I numbed my little body to those.
It was the waiting,
the terror in the night
the question in the reveries before sleep:
Will it be tonight?
Will he scare me into numbness again
with his foul scotch breath
and his sweaty, hairy, heavy body?

His limp/hard/angry dick,
his grabbing hands and raspy voice
Will it be tonight?
Will I make it through the night?
Will I die before I wake?

When will he leave again
and let my little self recover
give me time to numb once more
to allow me to survive and
grow up to be a person
to sleep safely, dream of flowers
and green fields and a childhood
I will never know.

My Little One

I'm so very sorry, my little one
it happened
no, you're not ugly
and there's nothing wrong
with your body.

I'm so very sorry, my little one
they betrayed and abandoned you
I know it hurts
but it's all over now
they can never do it again.

I'm so very sorry, my little one
but it wasn't even their fault
they were so mixed up and unhappy
probably because
somewhere
they hurt just like you.

I'm glad we're grown up now
can control our life
but the ache, the hollow remains
and we need to have it,
you and I, together
so we can be ourselves and grow up.

I'm so sorry, my little one
you deserved none of this
you were so lovely and sweet
worthy of all the love you never got.
I know they loved you
as they could
it was just too mixed up
and it was never, never enough.
(no, my little one,
you don't need too much,
you need like a little girl).

I love you
I will always
be there.

Reginald L. Walker New Mexico

I am presently incarcerated at Western New Mexico Correctional Facility. I am a black male 35 years old, and from 6-11 years old I was a victim of incest by my mother's twin uncles in Columbus, Georgia. I've only been writing poetry 2 years on a serious level. And with pain and courage I've learned to express so many of these negative feelings I suppressed for over 25 years. In fact it wasn't until I started writing poetry that I was able to confront that shameful part of my life. The hurt and pain is still there, but I'm dealing with the issues of guilt, pity and dejection, and the one question I'll never have an answer for — Why Me? I grew up a single child to a single parent, my mother. And only recently about 18 months ago did I come clean with her and tell her about everything, and guess what? Her reaction was total denial and defense against my confession. I'm not in any type of therapy on a clinical level; my therapy is my writing of poetry. Writing allows me that inner peace for dealing with my problem and is a form of escape from behind these prison walls!

Deaf by Rape

My insides
sing a sad
chorus line
of no feelings.

No words.
No flutes of softness.
No effects of sound.

Just a
mute note
only a
victim can hear.

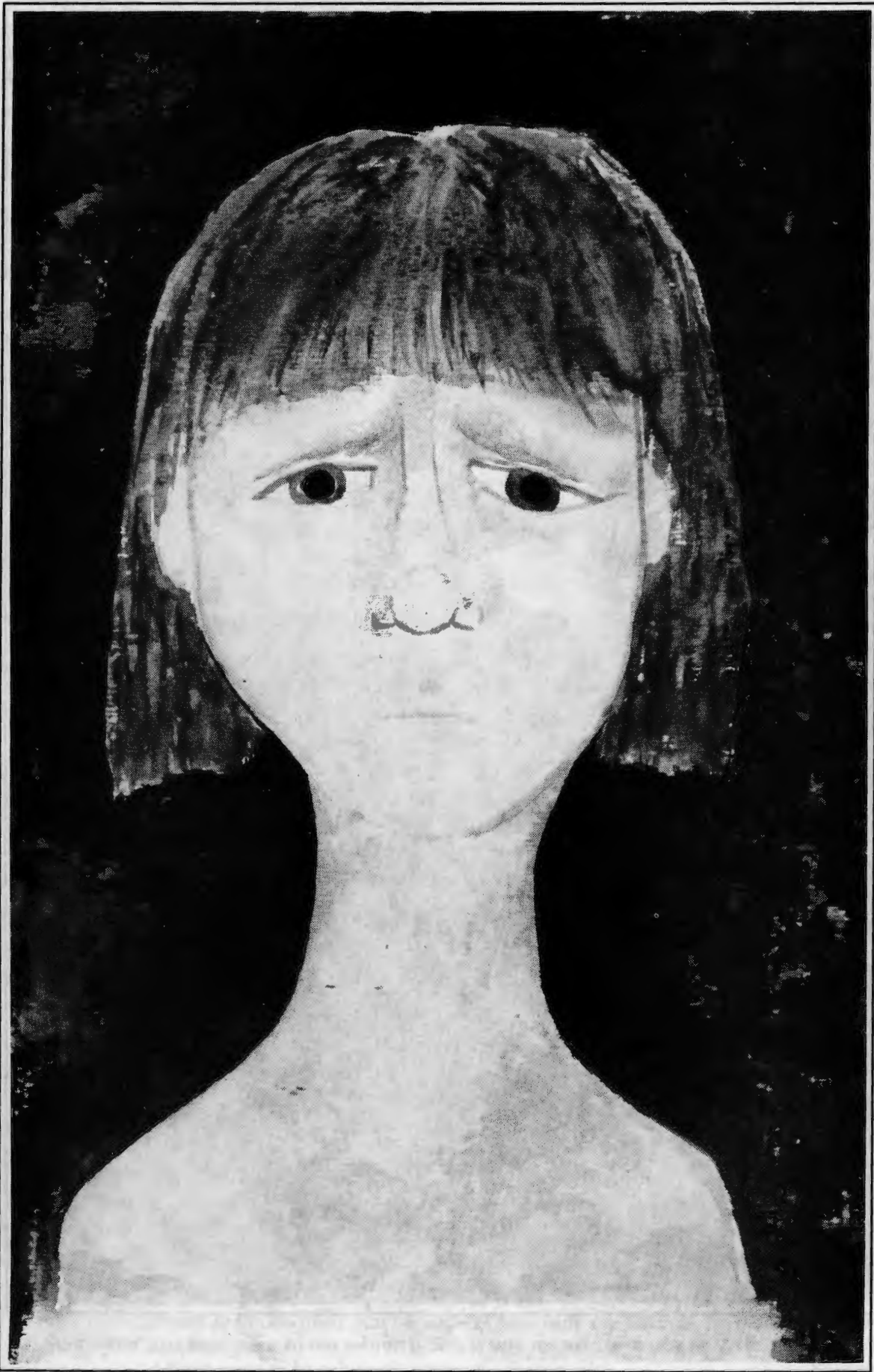
And what
i heard
was lost
in a tear.

Self Portraits
Anonymous
New Mexico



"WIPE THAT LOOK OFF YOUR FACE!"

I heard that many, many times. What look? I didn't know what I was doing wrong, didn't understand why my face angered them so. I'd look down at my feet, try to hide, look blank, look beyond, around, away.



But then I'd forget.

SLAP!

"Don't give me

that

look!"

What look?

Maybe the look

on these faces,

of my inner kids,

hurting and

wanting

to know

why.



*Why are you hurting me? Why do you dress me up, like a doll, disguise me in wigs, makeup, costumes?
Why do you sell me out?*

*Why do you torture, terrorize me into silence?
Why do you do horrible, horrible things at night?
Why is this happening?
Why?*

*Why do you
do horrible
things at night?*



*Is that the look that they hated so?
I used to be ashamed that I couldn't really hide my feelings, no matter how I tried.
It still showed.
I don't want to be ashamed anymore. Ever again.*

Teresa Smith
Kentucky

Look into the mirror
Of my past
Broken glass
Distorting life
A little girl
An empty canvas
Smearred with black paint
By a monster who wears glasses
And a tie
Into a portrait of the pain
That I am
Forever
The preacher says forgiveness
Is everything
But how can I forget
The bitterness
The nightmare
That's tattooed in my brain
I can't live up
To what you expect
But someday
I could be
A reflection of your heart.

Dorian Bloom
New Mexico

Shadow Play

Shadows
steal into dead-
bolted chain-locked
rooms guarded by
watchers who look
the other way

Shadow Play
throws silhouetted fear
walls of my gingerbread
house built
of
story-time with Daddy

Age 3

Mommy was there
ever an upper room
with pretty yellow wallpaper and
a slanted ceiling where me and brother played Raggedy
Ann and Andy for hours and hours when we
didn't know where we were
and I wondered when you'd come for us

Mommy was there
ever a man in dark brown pajamas who
stood in the doorway of a strange
room where I was sleeping and
handed me my Raggedy
which had fallen on the floor

Mommy was there
ever really a Raggedy Ann
and did I really not mind it that
she kept smiling even with
the semen in her hair and
the nickels on my pillow

The Innocent

Storytellers and Poets
have told us
the Unicorn comes

to the innocent

in dreams and fairy tales
the Unicorn appears
from far off worlds
and magical dimensions
to baptize the purity

of the innocent

storybook virginal
princess waiting
for her fairy tale
stolen held hostage ransomed always
in the nick of time

the Unicorn comes
with uncompromised surety
bows majestic at her feet
to sanctify the purity

she is innocent

and her charming prince in shining armor
is assured the glass-slippered
snow-white sleeping beauty
is worthy
is innocent
permitted to live
Happily Ever After

But I know that
Happily Ever After
is a crock of shit

I found out Once
Upon A Time that
Happily Ever Afters
do not come to those
who cannot claim a
beginning and Once Upon A
Time is mired in
bed-time nightmare
where the Unicorn never appears
to little princesses
in semen-stained panties smelling
of daddy

daddy daddy

and virgin voices
are smothered
in obeisance
and terror
of
losing daddy

daddy daddy

but Christ I need
to believe in the Unicorn
that comes to virgins and children
even if I was never either

If I can believe
in the Unicorn I can believe
in innocence
and the magic
of being unafraid

and maybe if I
wish real hard
I can find the place
inside me
that is

innocent

and maybe just maybe
I can whisper from the silence
that I believe the Unicorn will come
and I will see the gentle eyes
and sure-footed strength
of unabashed purity
and I will dare to call it

innocence

and I will know
those eyes are mine

Yasmin Spencer
New Mexico

Throughout my fourteen years of life I have been abused immensely. I hope my poetry can be appreciated and understood.

I don't mind my name or age being put on any of my poems. I would like it if I were to receive any response or feedback for my work. This took me a lot of courage.

CAN YOU SEE ME
WITHOUT THIS MASK I PORTRAY
THAT LAYS SO THICK THAT WHEN
YOU THINK YOU'VE FOUND ME
YOU'VE MERELY FOUND ANOTHER MASK
THERE'S NOTHING MUCH TO SAY

CAN YOU FEEL ME
WHEN YOU LIE IN BED AT NIGHT
FEEL MY EYES UPON YOUR BRUISED BODY
AND KNOW THE TRUE YOU

WILL YOU KILL ME WHEN YOU KNOW ME
OR WILL YOU SCREAM IN HAPPINESS
EITHER IS ALRIGHT WITH ME
I AM SUCH A MESS

WILL YOU CRY WHILE IN MY ARMS
OR WILL YOU LAUGH IN VAIN
FOR NEITHER WOULD YOU FEEL ALONE
AND THERE WOULD BE NO SHAME

THOUGH I'M NOT DEAD, I AM DEAD SHE SAID
FOR THERE WAS NOTHING TO SAVE HER NOW
TRAPPED IN A WHOLE MADE OF HER
HOW SHE LONGS TO BE SOMETHING MORE
TRAPPED FULL OF HERSELF AND NOTHING ELSE
HOW SHE LONGS TO BE WITH SOMEONE ELSE
REALIZING THAT WHAT SHE THOUGHT SHE WAS
SHE IS NOT
SHE SIGHED AND SAID, I AM SO ALONE
WITHOUT MYSELF

IT'S COLD IN THIS DARK ROOM
BUT NOT AS COLD AS YOU
I'M TRAPPED IN THIS DARK ROOM
ALL I CAN SEE IS YOU
I DIED IN THIS DARK ROOM
WHEN YOU RIPPED MY HEART IN TWO
I WAS RAPED IN THIS DARK ROOM
I WAS RAPED BY YOU
YOU WILL DIE IN THIS DARK ROOM
I WILL KILL YOU

AS I SCREAM I CLUTCH TO MY VALUES
WHICH WERE TORN FROM ME
AS WELL AS MY CLOTHES
HOW COULD ONE THING TAKE EVERYTHING FROM ME
HOW CAN THIS SELFISH RAPIST DO THIS TO ME
ALL MY DIGNITY TORN AWAY
HOW COULD YOU CUT MY BREASTS
AND MAKE ME FEEL LIKE NOTHING
HOW DARE YOU SAY I'M WORTHLESS
FOR YOU ARE LESS THAN ME
HOW DARE YOU KILL MY SOUL
THAT USED TO SING SO FREE
I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HAVE DONE
I HOPE YOU LIVE IN PAIN
I HOPE YOU DIE AN AWFUL DEATH
AND LIVE YOUR LIFE IN SHAME

YOU GAVE ME MY EYES
MY EYES OF ICE
YOU GAVE ME MY CLAIM
MY CLAIM IS INSANE
YOU GAVE ME MY NAME
MY NAME IS SHAME
YOU GAVE ME MY FEAR
TO SEE YOUR FACE
YOU GAVE ME THE TERROR
OF THAT HELPLESS EMBRACE
BUT ALL YOU GOT WAS ME

TELL ME WHAT I AM TO SAY
TELL ME HOW I AM TO FEEL
WHEN NOTHING EVER IS FOR ME

TELL ME WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO BE
TELL ME WHAT SHOULD SHELTER ME
WHEN THERE'S NO ONE HERE FOR ME

TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE IN ME
TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW OF ME
THERE ISN'T ALL THAT MUCH OF ME

TIRED

I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING IN HATE
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING IN FEAR
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING IN PAIN
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING IN SHAME
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING IN BLAME
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING A LIE
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF BEING ALIVE
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING WITHOUT RESPECT
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING WITHOUT FAITH
I'M TIRED
TIRED OF LIVING WITHOUT

TO HEAR THE WHISPER OF THE WIND
AND FEEL THE SOFT BREEZE
ALL MAKES ME FALL IN LOVE
WITH ALL I HAVE IN ME

Celeste Terra Massachusetts

Grandfather's Hands — for Anne

a friend spoke of a grandfather
when she of missing baby teeth and
long pony tails sat on the lap of this man
this father of her father she studied
his hands

tiny soft fingers traced
the thick purpley-blue veins in
his hands of strength
the keepers of story
twin gods that protected her
and tickling brought laughter to
her eyes

when later she (of braces
and responsibility)
learned with tears
and leaden heart that
the grandfather died
she was content with
the remembered love of
his hands

another she also had a grandfather
when she of missing baby teeth and
long pony tails sat on the lap of this man
this father of her father she studied
his hands

tiny fingers learned to trust
his hands of strength
twin gods that betrayed then hurt
and brought no laughter
callous gods of anger
which made secrets to be kept in
her eyes

when later she (of braces
and responsibility)
learned with tears
and sorrowful heart that
the grandfather died
she regretted she did not have
the memory of love of
his hands

Good Morning

wake up, girl
and pull out your pony tails — put on a pair of pants under
that dress and make the belt extra tight Don't look at the
ceiling when he's on top of you
(heavyanddroolingspitoutthesideofnismouth) stare right
into his dead lights and show him you're stronger (maybe
it'll scare him) Stand stronger still when he takes you to the
woods — kick him in the balls and smack the star-shaped
wallet to the ground when he offers you quarters as ransom
for you soiled childhood KICK and HIT and SCREAM LIKE
HELL when he puts his hot tongue in your small ears and
when he sneaks it between your legs box his sorry ears with
your knees Don't surrender to his age and size Spit and tell
him you don't blame grandma for not letting him
touch
her
anymore
when they dress you for your birthday DON'T be their little
lady (pinkandlaceyitchingallday) Stomp your feet and kick
their shins and insist on BLACK Scream all the way
(overtheriverandthroughthewoods) to Grandfather's house
and tell them when they ask "why"
that
he's
going
to
FUCK
you
tell them with no tears and quivering lip that he's going to
reach up your pretty little skirts and inside your lace
panties (aren'ttheyjustadorable?)
and pull of his brown slacks
and he's going to fuck you in the very next room just
like he has been since before you could walk
or curtsey
or dance like a proper ballerina-child
or tattle
YELL and SCREAM and pull out *their* hair and be really
fucking angry that they were too blind to see him FUCKING
their daughter (intheverynextroom)
so for now quit crying and get mad because you served
more and tears will get you nowhere Remember that pain
and save it for a rainy day
when you can call them all on killing you.

After Life for my grandfather

Yesterday I hated you,
wanting fire to consume you and pain to control you.
Your hands tore my childhood from me,
your lips kissed away carefree innocence.
The secrets you had planted in my heart
tore in thorns and blood at my soul,
and I was expected to love you.

Today you were lain before me,
and I struggled to understand you.
Your prickly cheeks were sunken in,
your eyes were dead and
your heavy shoes thrown into a Salvation army bin.
Under my scrutiny you were still —
your lips quiet and unthreatening,
your calloused hands drained of their former power.

Free from your fettering command I see you
and finally you live to me.
I hear your mourning song of desperate dissonance.
I see your dreams covered in dust and sprinkled with
burning sorrow.
I feel your thirst for time and contentment,
and I'm no longer expected to love you.

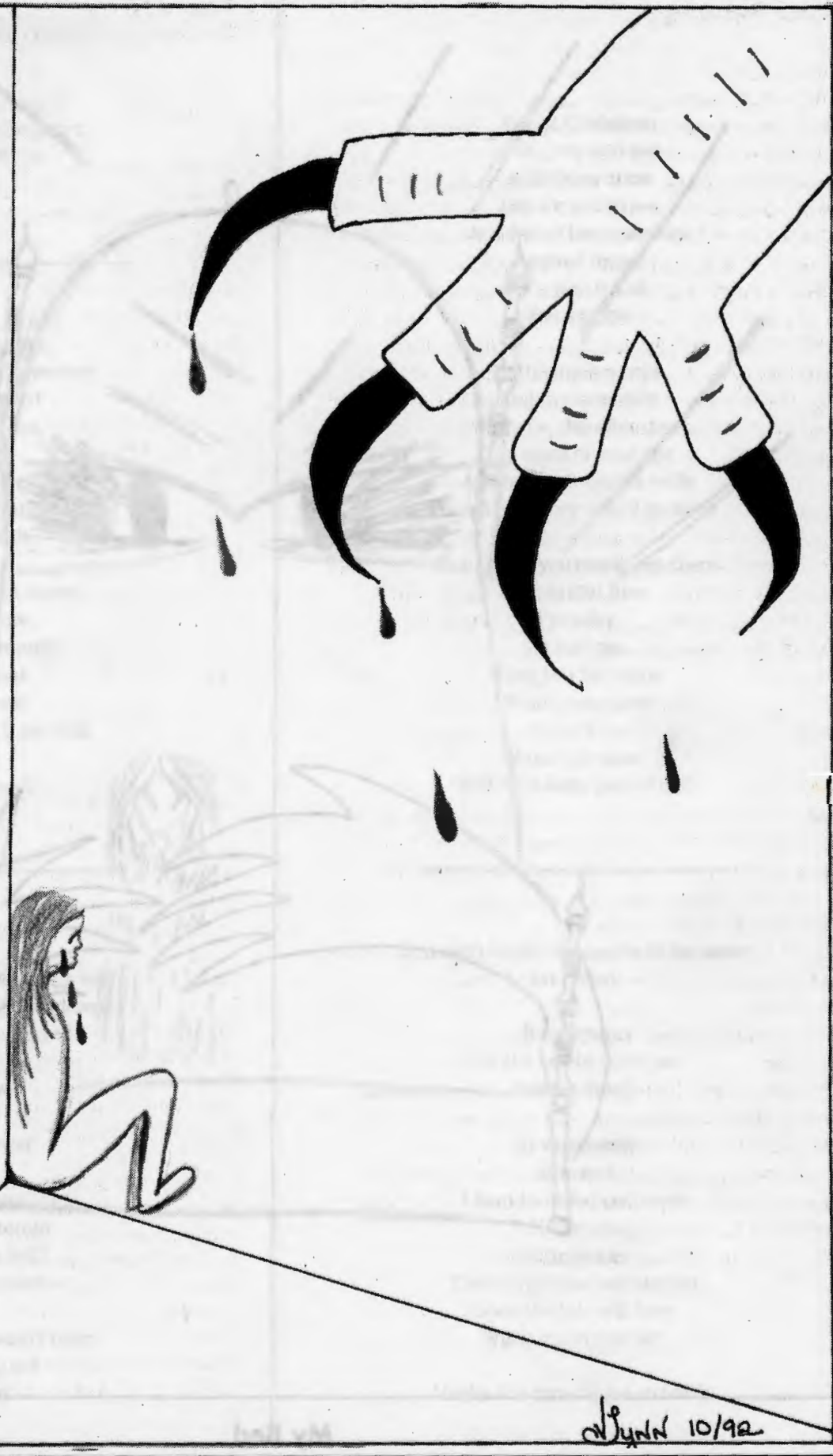
* * *

So now my heart is torn
between wanting to love you and not having to.
I have no fear of your hurtful hands
or your pitiful eyes.
If I can understand you,
why do I still fear you late at night —
or when I see Grandma struggling to be done with you?

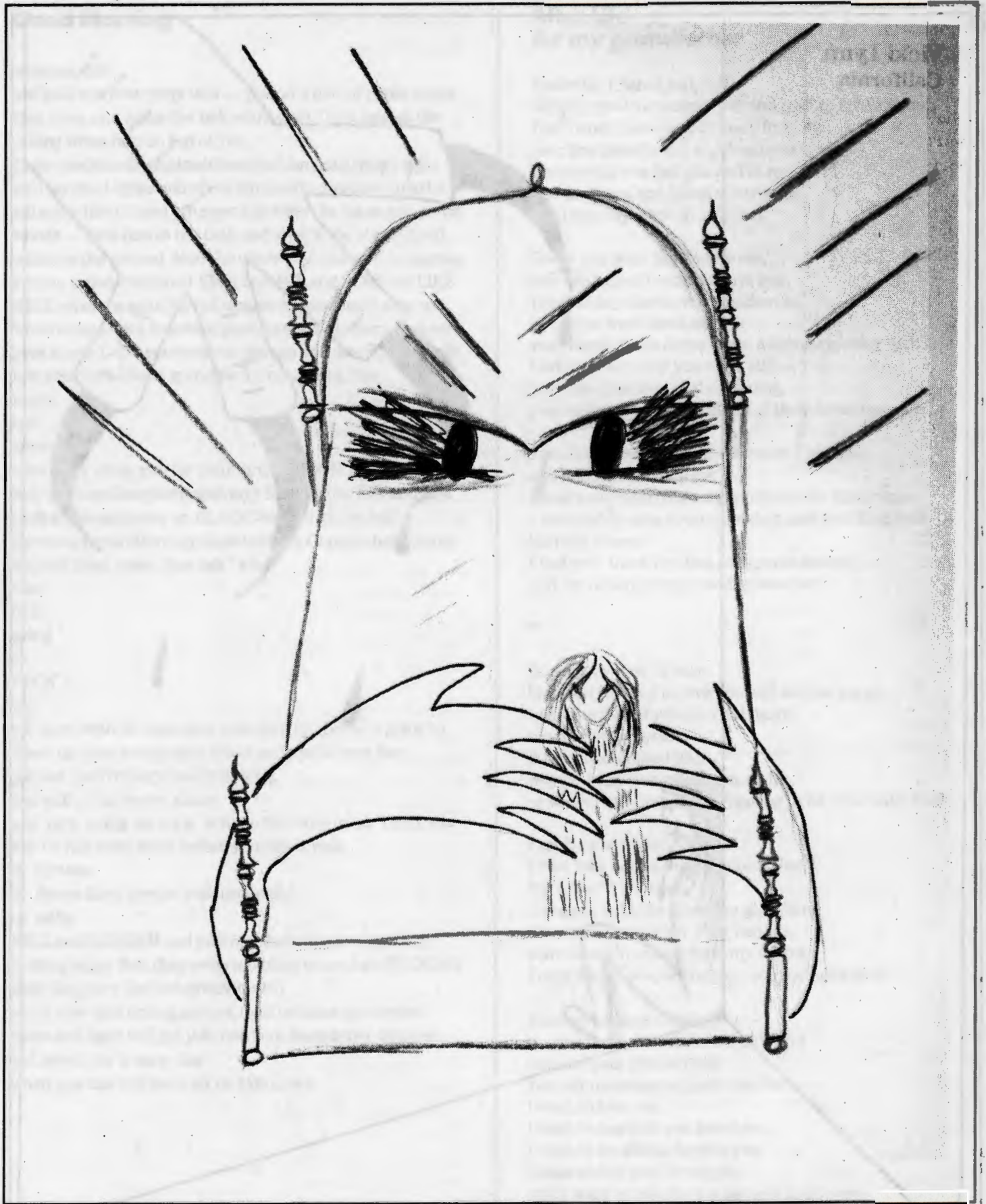
I can't escape you —
I visit your house, I carry your wallet.
My father is your son,
complete with the scars you gave him.
Your smile, your chin, your hairline
stare at me in unison from my mirror.
I can't forget you, or the pain you included us in.

I lost my chance to hate you —
to scream in your saddened face and
tear out your thinned hair.
You left me alone to figure you out —
I want to love you.
I want to feel that you loved me.
I want to be able to forgive you.
I want to feel that I'm whole.
And I want to take back what you took away.

Vicki Lynn
California



Vicki Lynn 10/92



My Bed

C.U. Lley
United Kingdom

*These poems are but a few of many,
which have accumulated over the years.
I shan't bore you with explanations
of whys and whens.*

GOD made man
Followed closely by woman
Then got bored
So He made me.

Sick of His perfections,
Vent His frustrations.
What a result.

Poured rage from above,
Insults galore,
Despised all around,
So the outer
Is hardened
Penetrate THAT if you will.
Truth is, you did.

You've scaled the perimeter wall
The barbed wire all torn down
My defences destroyed
I'm afraid
What now?

To take power
Or
Live with the occupant
Will you obliterate
What little is left?
Or allow it to breathe.

The barbed wire wasn't there
To keep you out
- But me in.

Box at Christmas
Cold, grey and wet
A birthday dress
Just for you to see
Just two of the memories
I cannot forget
Of a past full of
You and me

Cattle market trips
And five a.m. calls
With me, day after day.
The smell of your lips
And my back against walls
How I wish they would go away

But I know you're still out there
Living and free
I wonder
If I told you
What you had done
Would you care?
And tell me
What was done
With that large part of me?

You don't build sandcastles in the snow
Yet I tried.

It took time
For the sun to come out
But it shined.

My sandcastle
It melted
I found a little beach now
Not much
Many stones
The foundations are started
Soon the tide will turn
Will it reach this far?

Maybe this time I'll get to finish.

My breath is frozen
on the windowpane.
Winter is here, again.
Sorrow and tears are cold,
the fire spits along with the cat,
the sun is going.
Funny really, I should have seen it coming.

My head is wandering again.
No. Not to worry,
not from you
or indeed away,
just wandering.
I sit, stand
but it's up and gone.

From as small as I recall
it's done this.
It paces to and fro,
enters lands, unseen
and untravelled;
yearns,
to see and do
so, so much more.

Mundane tasks of life
to be completed,
mechanically,
consumes much of real time.
If it must be
then at least my thoughts may be my own.

What possessed people
to build on a ball
that turns upside down every day?

To live on a planet
that's only half lit
and made from water and clay.

What possessed people
to make war
and destroy.
Don't they know a better way?

I don't want your sweet words
even if they were offered.
What use?
Not that it mattered
they, alone, can't help now.

To want a revenge
would be an obvious attack,
one you expect
but that's the little you know of me.

Just to tell of my life
and what it means
and show you small people
would do.
What are you hiding from?

My way hurts no one.

A million avenues, roads and dead ends
To collate
Ten thousand two hundred and fifty days
A collection of
People and words
Though mostly backs and glares
Ran abroad
Just sham
Few cares
Taken for a ride
Almost won
You've brought it around
A new file begun
How will it close?
Open, shut, gone
Or continues on and on.

For you,
I'll be a wife. The one I believe,
you'd want me to be.

For kids,
I'll be a mum. As I see it,
the one they need.

For them,
I'm the daughter,
they'd rather not see.

Then if there's time,
and a bit left over,
I'll be me.

Who am I?
and what for?
I ask, again and again.
Who has the key?
to unlock each mind.
Here stands, today
so proud and erect,
leaning heavily
on the problems of yesterday.
Holding back
the impending doom of tomorrow.

The small, narrow man
with the large smiles
grins senselessly.
At a flower.
Unaware,
the flower buds,
blossoms,
blooms,
then dies.

I've seen the clowns right up close
Kids on an elephant
And laughed

I've seen Stonehenge on a beach
Avebury stones, Silbury hill
And laughed

I've seen the sea
And driven a car
Face painted animals
And laughed

I've teed off with apples
And rode my own bike
Seen gliders galore
And laughed

I've seen an airport and planes
With bellies so huge
And Harrods and London
And laughed

In three months I've seen a lifetime
It will last me for mine
And laughed enough for us all
An open door that was shut for
How long?

I laughed in my heart so loud the whole world should have heard

Surely body and mind
age in pace,
yet years have passed,
gone so fast,
the 'phone had a voice
yet no one spoke.
If it's all so easy
why cry?
The parcels were labelled.
One fell off.

Cynthia Diamond New Mexico

I first "remembered" my sexual abuse about 3 years ago. I continue to have memories that bring me closer to validating my abuse. I feel that I have been steadily healing from the wounds caused by my molestation, but I am by no means through with the process.

Writing plays a very important part in my healing and growth. It enables me to look back and see how far I have come. It also helps me validate the abuse and its effects because I have trouble believing that it happened. I tend to minimize the incest. When I see the words on paper and feel intensely about what I read, I can affirm my experience.

I want to deny the fact that I was sexually molested because I have so much shame about it. A big part of me "knows" it must have been my fault, that I asked for it. My shame makes it very difficult for me to acknowledge that I am a sexual being, that I have sexual feelings, that sexuality is a normal part of being human—not to mention the terror and shame I feel about having a sexual relationship with another person!

Not being able to claim my sexuality also means that I have difficulty with intimacy. I struggle with wanting to feel whole, wanting to claim all of me, but not wanting to acknowledge that sexuality is even part of life. Yet even here I see progress.

I am always amazed when the moment comes when I notice that I have ceased to struggle, or am able to make a conscious decision to let go of something that has been painful and terrifying for as long as I can remember. Then I know that all my years in therapy, the 5 weeks I spent in treatment last year because of my severe depression, and all the hours of writing, drawing, walking for miles, talking to supportive friends have paid off.

I wrote "Full Moon Torment" and "Refuge" in the first year I was remembering my incest. "Memories" and "Witch Mother" were written in the past six months. I have been struggling with an eating disorder and with intense anger toward my mother for not caring for or protecting me. I wrote "I'm Budding" recently with two friends of mine. The title was taken from my response to an inquiry from my poet friend as to how I am feeling about my process, my life at this moment. I wanted to include it as an affirmation that I am finally feeling hopeful about life even though growth is painful, after years of feeling intense despair, hopelessness about life and wishing daily to die.

Memories

Remember the apartment in Las Cruces
when she turned on the kitchen light
and the cockroaches were thick
as the winter coat on a collie?
She couldn't even see the dirty linoleum.
You called the Orkin Man and the next day
he sprayed the whole house
but when the cockroaches were gone
she could see the dirty linoleum.
You made her promise she would never
let the floor get so filthy again
both of you spent all weekend
on hands and knees
scrubbing until your eyes burned and your fingers ached
from the cleansing of the floor.
That linoleum hadn't looked so blue
since the day it was installed
years of grime, grease,

layer upon layer
like rings on a tree trunk
giving away its age
or like the unshed tears in her soul
layer upon layer,
a numbness learned in childhood.
You made her promise she would never
let her soul get so numb again
both of you spent all weekend
on your hands and knees
crying until your eyes burned and your fingers ached
from the cleansing of her soul.
Her eyes hadn't looked so blue
since the day she was born,
her soul scrubbed clean
like the floor,
after all those years of being walked on.

Full Moon Torment

Awake, it's three a.m.

Weary yet I sense the persistent
pulsing of lunar tension —
a tidal surge.

Conception.

Gestation of thought, action, feeling
tugs at head and heart and hands.

Between the worlds,
now consciousness slips beneath my sheets
and lays cold hands on my trembling breast.

I have been dreaming.

SEX

A shameful issue as far back as memory recalls.
Baskets of elusive, lackadaisical serpents
cunningly announce their presence
curling scaly covered vertebra through recesses marrow deep.

SEXUALITY

Not romantic, proud, deserving.

Not morning glory soft desire.

Not shameless seduction — Pleasure Palace Queen,
lascivious fulfillment life's sole objective.

Instead, a subtle endured harassment
enmeshed, interwoven;

snakes are not contained by basket boundaries.

Invade.

Provoke.

My own desires illusory from the start,
my body's natural appetites are fugitives
daring not to show their faces
for fear of capture or of blame.

Shame of my existence.

SEX

Most often performed at HIS command;
enacted out of duty,
the only valid pose in which to satisfy my need for touch.

SEX

A moment of acceptance, my accolade.

SEX

Insistent. Extracted by his sheer persistence
like impacted teeth
torn from bound-up roots.

Or a mechanical obsession with a singular mission:

"I want a baby."

Years of hoping, timing, fucking.

Desireless other than of conception.

There was less shame in that,
a feat with loftier ambitions.

SEX

HARASSMENT

HE: "I want you"

HE: "Show me that you love me"

HE: "You owe me"

HE: "My manhood is at stake"

Serpentine threats.

Active in the cool night shade.

Demanding. Cold.

Determined to invade my warmth.

I feared intrusion as a child,

checking potties before alighting,

anxious that haughty reptilian heads

would violate the integrity of my sacred spaces.

And again I'm haunted on this full moon eve

by ghosts in snake-like garb.

My stomach knots are decades taught,

the shame binds like tar to rigging,

impervious to corroding brutal elements.

Vermin.

In tonight's dream they are insistent as a husband.

Forcing me to open reluctant eyes,

unlock those rusty closet doors.

Compelling me to peel off sticky tar

exposing shameful memories,

the salty spray corrodes outdated shrouds

and penetrates the ancient wounds.

Witch Mother, Bitch Mother

Demonic goddess devoured me
while still inside her womb;
Witch Mother, stupid fucking Bitch Mother.
Betrayed by life, herself,
she sucked away my breath for her survival.
Too weak. Ignorant and fearful.
Or perhaps betrothed to her perfectionistic ways
my human imperfections were too much for her to bear.
Witch mother, stupid fucking bitch mother
striving for control, out of stark terror
devoured me.
Am I a soul in search of body?
Ice cream binges
Sacred rituals performed to invoke the loving Mother
bring forth instead the witch.
Betrayal is her only game.
Possessed by sweet creamy stuff
I long to know her love; secure protection.
Alas, betrayed once more
the empty box reflects the hollow in my soul.
I tried in vain to exorcise the witch.
What hindered completion of the gagging act?
I wanted that Bitch poison out.
"Get out of me, I'll die" I screamed.
The lie of the loving mother,
the sacred ritual pretending to be guided by Eros,
my starving spirit is fooled by the false promise of satiation
only to be annihilated by the witch's creamy brew.
Poison.
The lethal binge.
The more I eat, the hungrier I become
. . . . eating my heart out.
Mechanical, driven by the darkness,
A demon.
Beyond my control.
For the hundredth time I slip the ice cream past myself,
Devour it in isolation.
The initial calm,
then ecstasy, turns sour
curdles in my gut.
Demonic.
Witch mother, stupid fucking bitch mother
masquerading as my savior.
Spoonful after spoonful I swallow down my panic,
possessed by need for you,
I cannot turn to see
the witch you really are
that is now a part of me.
Fundamental rejection:
Nothingness is always nothingness.

Abandonment.
Witch mother
her devouring ways were meant to nourish me;
the promise of her loving presence
was never to be had.
Binges.
Magnetic.
The ice cream draws me ever nearer.
I am hurled headlong into unconsciousness.
The wolf prowls. The emptiness gnaws.
The sacred ritual is once again enacted.
Quickly, surreptitiously, the forbidden stuff is sucked down
just as the witch mother sucked me down
to fill her empty soul.
I become the very thing I despise.
Tomorrow I will say NO to the witch.
I must FAST.
I will not
I can not ingest her poison again.
I would sooner starve than die that way.
Discipline and control forcing my filthy body
towards the light
the purity of nonexistence.
The binge is now the fast,
the lighter my body is
the higher I will fly.
Witch mother, stupid fucking bitch mother
to you I was only a thing.
The FAST.
One bite of any food
brings certain death.
Indifference.
The rites of full and empty.
As long as I am an object I can choose
whether to enter life or not.
I am in control.
To eat is to enter into matter,
possibly against my will
certain abdication of control.
God did not degrade Herself by becoming flesh;
She was not born,
She did not die,
She never lived on Earth.
Witch mother, stupid fucking bitch mother.
Dare I incarnate?
Dare I allow my spirit into this matter called my body?
Dare I replace my desire for crucifixion
with a passion for life?
Witch mother, stupid fucking bitch mother
Dare I go against your selfish demonic wish

and become myself?
Dare I discover the deep, rich love of being alive?
I am at a crossroad.
The safety and familiarity of
unconscious destruction
draws me back as surely
as surrender to my Self-
and life-
beckons through the darkness.
The journey seems a nightmare
I have seen the shadows lurking.
Dare I trust that which is most untrustworthy
and feels like certain demise?
To find the stillness at the center of the whirlpool
And know that life is born through death
is such a contradiction.
Can I endure the mysteries of transformation
where contradiction becomes the paradox?
Destruction and release
the spiral is the dance,
the being is always the becoming.
Can I surrender and allow my life to happen?
Unbound by tense control.
Can I trust that still point at the center
while tossed about inside this birth canal?
Finding the paradoxical comfort
of the unknowable and inconsistent
is trusting, knowing my connection to the goddess.

I'm Budding

C I am budding from a closed green stem
M struggle is flooding my molecules
S saying goodbye to my wall is forever,
C the essence, acrid yet sweet.
M It's after midnight and I'm climbing for the moon,
S I'm stepping on leaves of madness and ecstasy
C my heart screams like raven in flight.
M Goodbye to my mother, goodbye to boxes of green plums.
S Has anyone wondered who I am?
C My tongue, a chrysalis at birth,
M a green flag of a moth whirring out like a question mark
S I mingle, I envy, I hurt, I twinge outside the green stem.

Cynthia, Mary, Steve

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 who moved in after numbness was awakened and 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, was free at last. Then the truth of violation was almost too much to bear, it 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 can not afford to subject myself to one more hideous encounter with the undeserved abuse. My anger keeps me alive — 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 partners' 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.

Patty Stinson
California



The Silence

Sheryl Blasnik
New Jersey

I am an "Adult Survivor" of Incest. This writing depicts my memories and feelings. I would like the opportunity to share my feelings with others who have had similar experiences.

At this point I have read about 20 self-help books, and after awhile all the facts begin to sound alike. Not to negate anyone's pain, but I would like to share my facts through rhyme.

Invisible Stranger

In a large room that taunts and mocks stir the transparent and vaporous souls of ancient strangers, souls masked by a dismal sheen of smoke hanging heavily in the air like an aqueous cloud resting on a mountain road in a mist-shrouded rain . . .

Myriad shadows surround and encompass but never touch; hollow echoes resonate from thick paneled walls but are never heard; light becomes the insidious trespasser unable to reach the opaque silhouette at the other side of the labyrinth . . .

Cold tombstones flaunt no markings of the apparition impaled in a dark and bleak abyss; the mirror devoid of reflection seems to shun the lost souls. Ancient smells of the sea linger in the stagnant air . . .

A venom permeates the ethereal souls lurking behind a cloak of malignant pain. What's to become of the forgotten strangers whose souls have been scorned and lost forever in a legacy of affliction and deceit?

Once

Staring at the flickering flames aglow
An iridescent dancing stirs my mind
Deeply consumed in labyrinths of thought
Searching for the me I cannot find

Once my mother's bright-eyed baby girl
Her eyes shimmered a majestic reflection
I took my first step, spoke my first word
Each achievement an enchanting perfection

I left her side to grow in mind and body
Separate by the light of day and night
I felt I was completely part of her
And, in her eyes, I knew I'd be alright

Eager I would not be seen or heard
By those who were supposed to protect
I would never stray all that far alone
Frightened by harm or neglect

Now the caricature of an adult
Struggling with the role I am to play
No longer defined by childhood
I ask myself, "WHO AM I ANYWAY???"

Arien-on-the-Mountain New Mexico

I found the remembering of preschool rape to be a distinctly nagging phenomenon.

I had brought patterns of defiance and depression into adulthood but could never trace my dysfunctional behavior to anything specific. I defended my shark's tooth temper as the best sign of integrity I could come up with . . . an intuitive awareness that I had survived in spite of . . . what?

I didn't just suddenly remember. Memories crept up on me over a period of years — just a little piece of the past at a time, nagging me to remember.

When the pieces did finally come together, it felt too mystical and bright to express in mere language.

"Power in the Word" tries, however, to express one of the dynamics of forgetting preschool rape: the simple fact that there is no language available to the preschooler — and without words upon which to hang the experience, it slips, instead, into oblivion.

"Common Ground" celebrates the emergence of two women in their 50's after their two separate lifetimes of buried rage. Each of us was digging up the memories of her own preschool rape at the time of our meeting. It seemed an appropriate crossing of paths, a merging of our separate experiences, indeed, into one common ground.

Power In The Word

(It's the things that are buried that haunt you)

a word
keeps coming up —
like a haunting
INCEST! INCEST!
and at the same time —
the gray gesture
of a memory
appears in the periphery
just a quarter turn away —
like a haunting
they move toward each other
with magnetic attraction
(the memory and the word)
five minutes? five years?
till they finally merge
as if they belong
to each other
as if they belong
to
me
a quarter turn to the right
and i'm eye to eye
with a shadow
that finally has a word
for
itself —
a memory that's been buried
to the brow
till now
in a childhood's midnight
of pre-language
but now —
it has a mouth for speech
a brain — a rage
and tears to flood
the page —
a name:
INCEST!

and that's when
the haunting
ends

and that's when
the healing
begins

Common Ground

(To Margaret Randall)

(With special thanks to David Budai, archeology student)

TONIGHT
IS ELECTRIC BLUE
ON BASIC BLACK

YOU'VE CUT YOUR HAIR

AND THE TURQUOISE SHARDS

I'VE SEEN YOU WEAR

SUCH COUNTLESS TIMES
HANG FROM YOUR EARS
LIKE JOURNAL ENTRIES

YOU MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN
WHEN OUR PATHS FIRST CROSSED
IN THE THUNDER OF OUR ANCIENT RAGE —
A BURIED HERITAGE

OF PRESCHOOL RAPE
AND DEFIANCE THAT CAME

AFTER

WE ARE UNCOMMON
IN OUR DIFFERENT WAYS —
VESSELS ETCHED
WITH ZIGS AND ZAGS
AND FILLED WITH THE GRIT
OF AGES

WE ARE NOT FRAGMENTS SCATTERED
IN THE ASHES OF A FRIENDLY CAMPFIRE

WE ARE THE WHOLE POTS FOUND
IN BURIAL SITES THAT SERVE
THE DEADENED CHILD WHO WAITS WITHIN
FOR VISIBILITY
CREDIBILITY

VISION

WE ARE THE TOMB
AND WE ARE THE FRAGILE CRAFT
AND WE ARE THE CHILDREN

WAKING

Clara Forest California

It's hard to think that anyone would be interested in my poems, much less my history, because I have accomplished nothing as an adult and have always lived alone, secluded from people even at work. I have been seeing a therapist three times a week for over four years, which has often been the only thing that's kept a suicidal gesture from becoming a successful attempt.

My father was my perpetrator. He violated me incessantly until I left home 13 years ago. Now I am almost 40, have no children, and most probably never will. I am surprised I have lived this long and, sadly, still enjoy virtually nothing. Nevertheless, I ask that all your readers keep up the fight to heal. We must do what we can to make tomorrow easier for ourselves and more welcoming and gentle for all the children to come.

1963

I remember almost nothing about being young
Except things like President Kennedy,
And then the dark horse on the snowy black
And white screen, the tall boots
In the stirrups, and the beautiful wife
Crying and petting her kids. I laid
On the floor, close to the coffin;
No one cared that I cried for the nation
Or that I was little. That I was a girl was the thing
That mattered to the whole United States
The very least of all.

I knew all about the president crying
When his wife lost the baby. I pictured my dad
Crying if I'd died like that, innocent,
Before he discovered that dark secret place,
Before he slapped me because it was evil and mine:
I kept thinking about that somewhere, warm under my dress.
The president suffocating under the ground.
I worried about the pretty horse
Catching cold in the snow.

Before and After

Before she was permitted to grow her hair long,
She had a fairytale, wandering mane,
Pale as a gasp, soft as the perversion
Of a priest touching children.

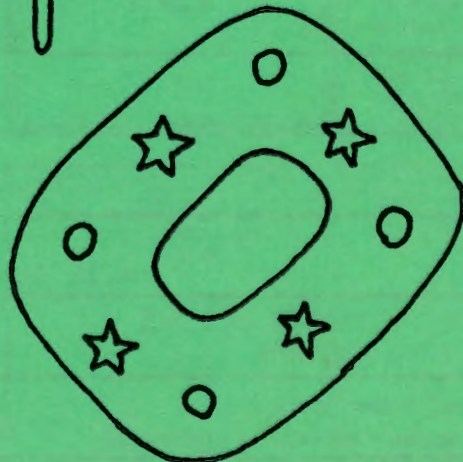
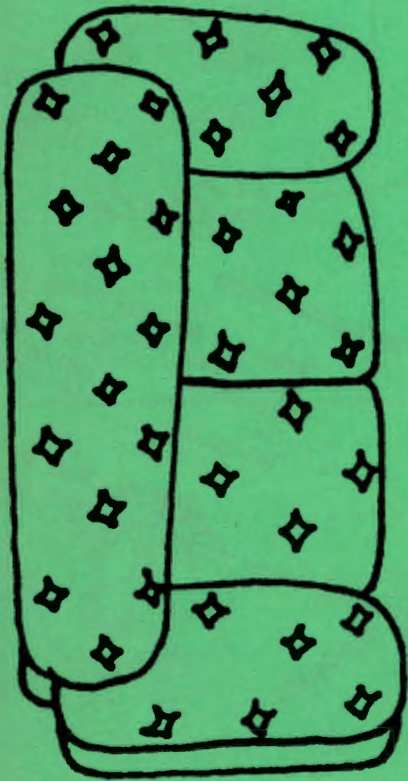
Before she could speak, she was the scream of a horse
Drowning in fire; she was a shrieking handful of hair
Yanked out within the blink of an eye.

Before she left the belly of a large, tranquil mare,
She was pulp mashed by the sun, she was blood in the lung.
Something tubercular from China, a stallion from India
With skin thin as silk, criss-crossed with veins.

Before she tasted anything, she was milk dribbling
From the lips of a large man; every night she smelled her blood
Cool on his fingers and his sex arching upwards
Against the slopes of her thighs.

After she escaped his red house of torment:
She lived by a river on the silvery moon.
She lives there still, small as a thimble,
Sleeps in a flower that closes tightly each evening;
She sips nectar as if from a breast
Breathing soft love sounds and sighs.

“the green pages”



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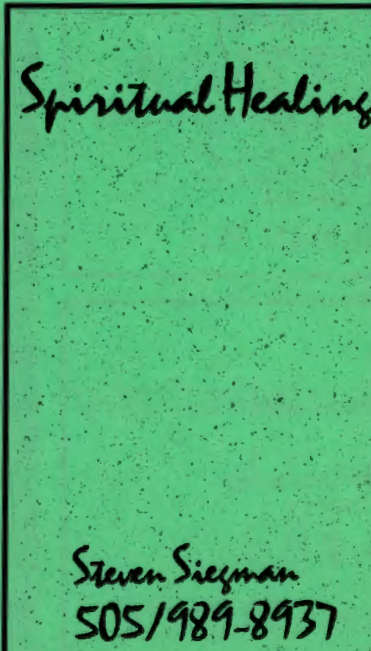
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TO TELL THE TRUTH:

America Speaks Out About Incest and Sexual Abuse
Sunday, August 1, 1993

Sweeney Convention Center Santa Fe, NM

Last year, a group of survivors in Santa Fe presented a free community event, to highlight the healing aspects of our childhood experience. Over 500 people attended, and CNN produced the documentary, "Breaking the Silence", featuring the event. It has been aired several times around the world.

This year, the group has expanded, and is sponsoring a nationwide speakout! Survivors all across America are putting together their own events, all to coincide on Sunday, August 1st. We are joining hands across the nation, to speak our truth, to encourage others to heal, to wake up our communities, and to move not just from victim to survivor, but from survivor to thriver. That is our deserved legacy! We invite you to join us for an inspiring day of workshops, speakers, discussion groups, entertainment and healing. Complete anonymity will be available for those who choose it.

MORNING SESSION: 10 AM - 12 NOON

WORKSHOPS FOR SURVIVORS & PRO-SURVIVORS

- Art as a Healing Tool - led by Christine Tieman, MA, ATR
 - Writing through Recovery - led by Maria Selby, MA and poetess
 - Movement Expressions - led by Innermotion, a survivor dance troupe from Florida
- (There is a \$20 fee for each workshop. Scholarships are available. Pre-registration is requested by July 25th. Call 1-800-578-1292 for information.)

THE MAIN EVENT: 1:30 PM - 5:00 PM

FREE COMMUNITY PROGRAM!

featuring speakers (women, men and teens), slide show, entertainment by Inner motion and People in Reality, breakout discussion groups (topics: women survivors, men survivors, clergy abuse, ritual abuse, for families and friends, community action) and guest speaker Wayne Muller, author of *The Legacy of the Heart: The Spiritual Advantages of a Painful Childhood*.

EVENING CELEBRATION: 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM

a buffet dinner (\$10 in advance, \$12 at the door) plus drumming, dancing and musical entertainment. Bring your rattles and drums! (No charge after 7:00 pm)

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Donna Michael Gleckler
California

I am a survivor of chronic physical and sexual abuse by my father. This effort at recovery began about five years ago, with incest issues coming to the fore about two years ago. The initial precipitant to getting into the work was a very positive experience with gynecological surgery.

I hold a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work, although I do not currently practice as a therapist / social worker.

Crushed

Overwhelmed the weight of it crushes me
I am prostrate with grief
The enormity of it the horrible immensity
The force of it
Can not be measured by time or space
If I look around and multiply it by the real numbers
I am crushed anew
I would say it was a galaxy or a milky way
But even that feels too finite, too limited
It is the weight of all the world
Aghast, and the worst is the shock is wearing off
And I begin to feel it
I feel it in my muscles and yes even in my bones
Gravity has increased tenfold
I stagger under the burden
The air presses down on me heavy
Even the air feels heavy
It is almost incomprehensible but I begin to comprehend
And therein lies the smashing blow
And blow after blow after blow
The unbearable pain
The horror which crushes
So I can not raise my head for sadness
I can not raise my shoulders
From the millstone of the knowledge
It bears down on my soul and crushes me
Is this pain the price of having a soul?
I can not go back to being soulless
But I wonder if I can bear it
I cry out it is not to be borne
I see no real choice

Does The Body Remember?

On love and work I do fine — BUT
My body is the battleground
It's been twenty years since
my stomach sent its pain as clue
And lately now it's my belly too
It's been over ten years since my head began to ache
I have often worn my shoulders as earrings
My muscles stay primed, alerted
drawn up and strained forward
I am often near a cringe
I am braced — for what?
Could it be assault?
It's been seventeen years since
out of the blue I "pinched" a nerve in my neck
And the pain now merging into my upper back
sends shooting throbs down my arm
It's been nine years since my lower back cried revolt
"We can't hold you up any longer
we have a pelvis to protect"
I have triumphed over the "female pain" of twenty-odd
years
By having parts removed
I do believe I won that one
To me the price became quite affordable
as the agony less and less endurable
Now if I could just amputate
my stomach, belly, head, neck, back and arm
Then I would not need to ask
Does the body remember?

Call A Spade A Spade

Let's not call it molestation
We are too comfortable with that word
Sanitized of feeling
So we can say it easily
Say it easily without thinking
what it really means
Say it easily
without feeling flesh being pried open
Let's not call it sexual abuse
Let's not call it incest
Let's call it what it is
Let's call it daughter-rape
Let's call it son-sodomy
Let's call it what it is, child rape
The rape of young children
Children with small baby fat thighs

What A Cruel Trick

When I was, what, eleven?
I prayed with the scapula
At school the nuns told us
If you really believed and really prayed
Then your prayer *would* be answered
And so I prayed
that my father would come home on time, quiet and sober
I often prayed late, far later
far later than his longed-for quiet arrival time
I prayed alone, later and later
Holding the scapula, harder and harder
Trying to make myself believe, fiercer and fiercer
Because if I believed, it would work
The nuns said so, didn't they?
It never worked
Imagine my despair heavily weighed down with my own
guilt
I had done it wrong, imperfectly
The church urged perfection
Wasn't Christ perfect?
Wasn't I supposed to be just like Christ?
I had not totally believed
Not prayed perfectly, somehow
It broke my heart
And among my broken heart glass shards
lie the ragged-edged knives of shame and guilt
It was *my fault* when he arrived late and mean
on a sadistic tear
My church had placed a burden on me
"Believe perfectly and you can make it happen"
Ah, the perfectly part, the ultimate escape clause
Didn't they ever guess
I was desperate enough to take it oh so seriously?
I grabbed at their straw
I hung my world on it
I took all the responsibility
As if I had the power to stop his drunken rages
What a cruel trick to play on a child
To tell them if they only believe
They can stop rape with a prayer

The Nothing Feeling

The *second last* time I remember feeling nothing
was when he tortured the bird before my six year old eyes
The bird struggled and he laughed, his high-pitched laugh
The bird struggled and broke its own neck
It so desperately wanted to get away
So desperately it broke its own neck
to break from the trap of his hands
And I remember feeling NOTHING, NOTHING AT ALL
To this day I can't recall if I liked our pet bird
I am told we buried it with ceremony
But that too is lost to me

The *last* time I remember feeling nothing
was when my husband said
"your mom died this morning"
I would have curled into a ball
except for hanging on him as he stood
And I screamed over and over
"I feel NOTHING, NOTHING AT ALL"
So I could guess the feeling's force
the force of the unfeeling feeling
And yet, sadly I feel *so much better* about her death
than her life

Wounded Dog

Sometimes I feel so raw
Like my skin does not protect me enough from the world
I need a better, thicker, stronger barrier
And I need so much protection
I feel like a wounded dog
cowering under the bed
I feel like a wounded dog
hiding, shaking and licking my wounds

Heart Thud

I forget all about it for a little while
And then suddenly remember
With a heart thud of ah no this is me, my life
And find myself wishing
This chronic gnawing at my soul
Was someone else's life

How Often Was It Rape?

*This poem was written to my mother,
shortly after her death.*

Your things came this morning
I had looked forward to receiving them
Few things stoke my acquisitiveness, my lust for things
But I confess dishes have always topped my list
And so I eagerly awaited your dishes
And when I had unwrapped them all
I felt they were all I had left of you
And I wept
And I felt for the millionth time
that your life wasn't enough
It wasn't enough for you, for anybody
You raised your children, four "good citizens"
And you took pride and yes even joy in that
But no, it wasn't enough
There is the rest of the story
The story of how my father ran rough-shod over you
How he ranted and raved
And how he backed up that ranting physically, and with force
And how his appetites were
I knew his appetites in ways I would rather not know
I knew his appetites to be cruel, inhuman and sadistic
I knew his glee
I knew his sexual proclivities
I knew his enraged refusal to take no for an answer
And so I stand at my kitchen window with my lonely dishes
And I wonder, how often did he rape you?

And I know bitterness
Your lovely china teacups overflow with bitterness
before my eyes
His demands, as his self, were compulsive
He did not brook opposition often
How often was it rape?
How often did you successfully refuse him?
I am sure sometimes
I am equally sure there were other times
Many times when it was just easier to give in
His persistence, I know, was beyond amazing
I am sure he did not always take no for an answer
I know now you were afraid of him
Did he hit you for it, the sex?
My bet is yes
And I bet you never called it rape

Once I snooped, as girls sometimes do, in your dresser drawer
I found an old book, very Catholic,
It advised that many women were essentially raped
by their husbands
The tone was one of resigned acceptance
Were you always resigned to his sickening and sick hands?
I know you feared him
And I bet you never called it rape
But I will
I will call it rape
I will call it rape for you

If I Publish — The Family Dilemma

If I publish and they see it
I fear they will be lost to me forevermore
I fear I will be like a lone Holocaust survivor
with my entire family wiped out to my existence
Gone totally gone
Sometimes I don't feel I have a family now
But if I publish
I fear it will be irrevocable, not on my side but theirs
I fear I will be persona non grata
I fear I will cease to exist in their sphere, their orbit
It is not my orbit but I have had the ability and opportunity
to dip into it
If I publish I fear we will be torn asunder and never be put
together
I fear I will have no family, none, none at all
To be the only lone survivor, not a single blood relative
Totally alone in all the world
To have no one in all the world
Cast out and cut adrift with no kith or kin
But I refuse to use a pen name
I refuse
Why must I hide it?
Why should I hide it?
The thought angers me
There is power in the truth
If the truth sets us free then lies enslave
The truth is a beacon for those who would see
The truth is the bell-weather of change
The truth calls us to task whether we like it or not
The truth can move us and shake us
It brooks no cowardice
It cries out to be proclaimed
It has a driving force, a will of its own
It rents the seams on our carefully constructed realities
Yes, there is power in the truth
Having been powerless I will take my rightful power
I will not renounce my power
I will not silence myself

I delete their names and their personal details
But I will not delete me
My father thought he could delete me
My father thought he could delete my will
He found out otherwise

Parallel Universes

THE EVERYDAY REALITY

of washing socks
and late for the bus
the social chitchat
and shortening skirts

Life, such as this is, is concrete and physical
and ever so mundane

If we keep it mundane enough, reality won't set in
And we can keep our minds out

The upper part of our minds is supposedly engaged

We skate only on the surface of the waters of our minds

Never allowing ourselves to slip into the waters even an inch

For in the waters' depths is the frightening universe

The deep deep depths of the denied

And we clamor and claw and cringe and cling to the surface of the
water

We want no part of the depths of our souls

THE OTHER LAND

Of horror flashes

The knife to the eye

The rape of our tiny spaces

The secret spaces of our souls

Where the truth is buried

But send our flares

Bright flashing split second illuminating flares

that flash the horror of the other world before our faces,

in our muscles, in our thoughts

Our bodies flinch and go rigid

We smell the smells and block the blows

and stand with our toes over the vast abyss

of the secret canyons and chasms of pain

The vast vast universe of our pain

The horrors of it make us gasp

At the pain we could not endure then, but somehow did,

In the unreality of the other land

Land of dead time, dead space, dead air, dead souls

It feels more real than anything, the *only* reality

And yet it is a different reality, a covert world

It is a sadness beyond all measure to possess such secret
realities

THE OTHER LAND

Of perverse truth

The differentness as the possessor of secret and terrible
knowledge all would deny, expunge and flee from

It is society that makes us different

We can not, or will not, just chit chat

And our reality reminds all of hell's infinite possibilities

We say, "all is not as it should be,

all is not as you have labored so long to contrive, to pretend,
to play the numb fool"

All of that is sand on the beach

Sand on the beach about to be rearranged

The tide is coming in

The truth is coming in

Dawna Elaine Page Colorado

I have been writing poetry since the age of twelve, which happens to be the same year that I put an end to the sexual abuse that began when I was seven. My best friend's grandfather was a child molester, and he abused both his granddaughters and me over the years. As an adult, I was married to a physically abusive drug-addict and later raped by an acquaintance. Today I am married again to a gentle and supportive man. Four years of therapy have enabled me to make many positive changes in my life, and I will continue seeking support as long as I am learning and growing. Life today is good.

Little Girl

Seven is the time for picking strawberries
sweet and dusty from the garden.
Seven is the time for skipping rope,
playing jacks, telling secrets.
Not keeping them.

Seven is when life bubbles over with giggles
chocolates from Grandma, dominoes with Dad.
But just one touch can knock them all down.

Seven is when you're not afraid to swing high,
laugh loud, try anything twice.

So I'm trying on seven again
(my niece is showing me how)
and it's easy to be small
and scared on the slide
since the first time I was seven
I wasn't.

For Isaac

I was delivered to the world
by the hands of a surgeon.
Handled over the years by as many men.
At thirty

I was delivered from the world of
pedophiles rapists and batterers
by the strength of my own
torn and bleeding fingers
clinging to the last shred
each time.

I've been caressed by lovers and husbands
shaped by strokes of masseuse and mentor
even soothed by sisters in pain.

Many hands have held me
seeking
to own to use to heal to share.
But never was I touched
until you encircled my finger
with your tiny fist
the day I delivered you.

Healing

The books and bread of childhood
borne in torn and bleeding hands
sheltered secrets from their sight.
My eyes, once grey as mice, faded
brown then gold then green
suffocating in colorlessness. I never
saw his eyes, only blue and ice.

In braille, his hands
read horses, fish and tobacco
and my skin sought solace
in adulterated wine,
feint sweetness. Not his
fist split me open
on his path in the dust
I traced

the wine and words of sister women
who broke bread in healing hands
shattered secrets in the night.

The pail removed, the mouse still ran blind circles . . .

The trains and teddies of my childhood
trapped by pen on paper pages
carry my child
my pain
my wisdom
to a place where a little girl cries alone
her only tears her bleeding hands.

Linda Gean New Mexico

August 8, 1992 (my 48th birthday)

My name is Linda Gean.

I am an incest survivor.

*Until this year, my only memories were of one incident of my step-father in bed with me when I was 13. He had his right arm under my head and his hand on my breast, and his left hand was in my private part in my pants. I had memories of him talking real filthy sex stuff to me whenever I helped him fix fence, feed cattle, or anytime I was alone with him. When we would "horse around" he'd **always** end up groping my breasts and/or groin. Every time I took a bath, he'd come in, sometimes naked himself. I'd try to hide myself by pulling my legs up to my chest and use the washcloth to cover me. He would grab at me and yank the washcloth away. He made me touch his penis. If I wanted my allowance, wanted to go to the movies, wanted to go on a school function (class parties, ball games, field trips, etc.) I had to give him a "feel" of my breasts and/or groin. He would often sneak up behind me and "grab" a feel or goose me.*

I first went into individual therapy in 1985. In 1989 I went into hypnotherapy, and I learned that a lot of really bad things had happened to me. Even though my subconscious had "told all," I still tried to deny it. The male therapist I saw did no therapy with the conscious me, though, and I carried a lot of anger inside. He also got me involved in some evil type of work, and this was very troubling and upsetting to me. I finally "woke up" to how he was abusing me and stopped seeing him. I occasionally see his female associate, who became a friend over the years. She works with me when I need her help.

In February, 1992, I began group therapy. Things began coming into conscious awareness through nightmares and flashbacks. I can now accept it all as fact because I have the conscious awareness of it now.

Nightmare memories I've had: 1) My step-father was aborting a baby (his) from me. I was watching from overhead. Through the hypnotherapy I learned that he got me pregnant twice — 6 months apart — then aborted them both himself, crudely, inhumanely, brutally, the first one when I was 12, the second when I

*was 13. 2) He put me into a hole, and I saw him shoveling dirt onto me. 3) He had me laying naked in the snow, and he was packing snow inside my vagina. Through therapy we decided he must have been trying to stop or slow down bleeding after one of the abortions. 4) He nearly drowned me in a horse tank I liked to swim in — I was about 10. 5) He had me backed up against a post in the shed, he was poking me in the sternum area, which is **very** painful, and he was laughing at my pain. Flashbacks (and some dreams): He hit me on my head, shoulders, entire back, legs and feet, sometimes with his hand, sometimes with an object that looks like a rubber hose; he held a heated branding iron in my face; he kicked me in the tailbone with his boot; he put pillows on my face; and other things that have "left" me right now.*

I'm sure my therapy is coming to an end. After seven years, I'm ready to put the past behind me and get on with my life. I want to do some inner child work, then I feel I will be done. I know more memories may come up in the future, but not I know how to work with those and resolve them. I'm now "surviving" by doing what's best for me (and my subconscious). With God's help we'll make it. I do lots of positive affirmations daily, and reverse any negative thought immediately with positive affirmations.

This past May I received my Bachelor of Art degree in Psychology. I also have an Associate of Art degree in Criminal Justice. I was a Licensed Practical Nurse until I injured my lower back in 1976. I went through a head injury accident in 1981, which took some time to recover from. I was in an auto accident in 1987, which I still receive treatment for.

My ultimate goal is to have my own business where those who cannot afford individual counseling can come. I know there are groups at affordable rates, but some people aren't ready for that to start with; they go because it's all they can afford. And, because of my own experience with what I would call extremely inept therapists, I know that sometimes inexpensive therapy isn't necessarily good therapy. I know I can give good, empathetic therapy, and it will be affordable.

*I believe this is God's plan for me, and it makes me happy that **HE chose me** to do this.*

You took my identity.
You stole it away from me.
Now I don't know who I am.
I don't know what my dreams were then — if I even had any.
I don't know what **I** wanted to become.
So many choices I **thought** were mine weren't.
I thought **I** chose not to have sex until I was 19.
That turned out to be your choice.
I wanted to have 3 or 4 children.
You ravaged my body and I wasn't granted that choice.
Who am I? What am I all about?
I feel like an empty shell.
I go about doing what is **expected** of me, not knowing why.
I have to eat, so I cook.
I have to pass my classes, so I study.
I have to be friendly, so I put a smile on my face.
I have to have goals, so I pretend to set some.
I've never felt like I belong here on earth.
I've never felt at home here on earth.
I've never felt like I belong **anywhere**.
I feel depression swallowing me up.
I try to fight it.
For what? Why?
I feel like I'm living inside a dark, musty, hovering cloud.
It's uncomfortable.
It feels stifling, suffocating.
I'm supposed to be healing and finding myself.
How can I find me if I don't know who I'm looking for?
I don't know who I am.
I don't know what I'm all about.
Where do I find me?
How do I know when I find me?
You took my identity and I feel like nobody.
You took my identity and I don't know who the real me is.
You took my identity and I don't know where to find it now.
You took my identity, my childhood, and most of my adulthood.
Please give me back my identity!
I need it now.
I want to know who I am, what I am, and why.

If

If I close my eyes, he won't see me.
If I keep my eyes open, I'll see him coming to get me.
If I stop breathing, he won't hear me.
If I breathe, I feel the pain.
If I make myself **real small**, he won't find me.
If I make myself invisible, he can't play tricks on me.
If I close my mouth tight, he won't poke stuff in it.
If I speak up, no one will hear.
If I cross my legs tight, he can't get between them.
If I wear jeans, he can't get in ???
If I cry real hard, he'll feel sorry for me.
If I laugh at **anything**, he'll think I'm having fun.
If I tell anyone, I'll disappear forever.
If I don't tell someone, I'm "lost" forever.
If I love daddy, I'll do what he wants me to.
If I want daddy to love me, I'll let him hurt me.
If I wasn't such a bad girl, he wouldn't hurt me.
If I learn to be a good girl, he'll treat me nicer.
If I crawl **way** back in the closet, he won't get me.
If I hide under the bed, he won't look for me there.
If I pretend to be asleep, he'll leave me alone??
If I am awake, he'll crawl in beside me.
If I scream as loud as I can, he'll hit me.
If I scream inside me, no one will hear and I'll be safe.
If I cling to Mom, he'll keep his hands off me.
If I had Grandma live here, I'd be safe all the time.
If I shut my bedroom door, he can't come in???
If I could just lock the bathroom door, I could bathe in safety.
If I were fat — **real fat** — he'd leave me alone.
If I look ugly and old, he won't want me.
If I ever have sex with anyone else, he'll kill me.
If I ever want children, he's taken that choice away from me.
If I am so worthless and bad, why am I here?
If there really is a GOD, why does he let this go on?
If there really is a GOD, why doesn't he take the mean man away?
If Mom dies, what will happen to me?
If Mom weren't so naive, she'd see what he's doing.
If I'm not safe in my own home, where am I safe?
If I'm not safe in my own body, where am I safe?
If I'm not safe in my own head, where am I safe?
If I killed him, who would understand or help **me**?
If I don't kill him, how will I keep from being killed?

If I DIED, he would still find a way to get me.

Do You Know What It's Like?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO

- ... live in a body that doesn't feel like mine?
- ... live with a mind that doesn't feel like mine?
- ... make a decision and wait to be condemned for it?
- ... have 50 different things whirling around in my head at once and I can't center on one single thought?
- ... be 48 and realize I've never had a life of my own?
- ... never have had a childhood because I was made a woman at the age of 5?
- ... be unable to trust my choices because someone else always made the choices for me before?
- ... *feel* I've made a right choice, but some inner voice(s) tells me it's wrong?
- ... want my own children, but to know I can't have any, because of his abortions on me?
- ... look back at my 48 years and be able to claim *nothing* as mine — everything I've done seems to be a direct result of what he did to me? Even my accomplishments feel like failures to me.
- ... be afraid to go to bed because of the memories that may come?
- ... feel powerless — AGAIN — because I can't take him to court for raping me for 12 years and for killing my babies??
- ... feel re-abused when I "remember" what he did?
- ... have the excruciating body memories when I "remember"?
- ... want to die time after time so I don't have to suffer any more/again?
- ... hurt to the very core of my being?
- ... love and believe in God, but hate him for letting this happen to me?
- ... feel like such a success and such a failure at the same time?
- ... feel like my entire life belongs to someone else, not me?
- ... feel terrified of growing old with no children to love me, to comfort me, to care about me?
- ... feel alone even when surrounded by people?
- ... feel such deep, genuine hate for my body?
- ... despise myself for being too weak-willed to quit eating wrong and to quit smoking?
- ... want inner peace and contentment desperately; but, every time I think I've accomplished that, along comes another memory or someone confusing me, and it's shattered?
- ... have so much love to give, but I can't trust anyone enough to let them get close to me so I can give it?
- ... hear what people are saying to me, but not be able to believe them?
- ... feel so out of touch with my feelings — I wonder if there are any?
- ... want to laugh and have fun, but there's nothing funny *in* my life or *about* my life?
- ... feel so frustrated to get this therapy over with, but there seem to be memories coming up every time I think I'm about done; and there seems to be no end to body and psyche parts that need work and healing, also?
- ... look into a mirror and see a pretty woman, then the next time — maybe just a few minutes later — look at the ugliest, most worthless bitch in the world in that mirror?
- ... be humiliated by being bawled out in front of friends/family, for no reason?
- ... have to go fix fence, feed cows, pull weeds throughout the entire pasture (after the flood), and do chores like a boy, instead of doing girl stuff?
- ... have to give him a feel of my tits or let him grope my groin so I could go to a picture show or some school function, or to get my allowance?
- ... be going through all the hell I've gone through the past seven years and wonder why I continue?
- ... wonder if it ever ends?
- ... feel like there are more than just *me* occupying my body/mind? I do, say, react to things and later wonder why — what I respond with is so unlike me — it's real scary.
- ... feel so proud of myself for what I've accomplished, then Mom says I'm "wallowing" in this stuff, and it's been like an anvil landed on me and I can't get over the hurt, bewilderment, devastation that caused me.
- ... be told one thing, then something else totally contradictory? The confusion that causes is **enormous**.
- ... want to be cared for, but I've been the care giver and protector for all my life, and I don't know how to ask to be cared for?
- ... want to just lay down and hope to never wake up?
- ... feel positive and negative about life at the same time? I can't seem to separate them.
- ... end this feeling that I haven't covered everything yet? I have to end it sometime, so *now* is a good time.

Lynne Marie Illinois

When I was twelve years of age, I was molested by my cousin. At age nineteen, I was raped by an acquaintance. But even worse for me, I was sexually, physically, verbally and emotionally abused by my mother from the time I was a baby. Also, I was often neglected. The physical and sexual abuse stopped when I was about thirteen years old.

I now understand the depth of my mother's mental illness. Because of this, I hold no animosity toward her. But, now that I am beginning to remember parts of my past, it makes being with her extremely difficult. I am learning with the help of an excellent therapist to set boundaries — boundaries I had never know before — by limiting the amount of time I spend with my mother.

A Gift for Mommy

I made Mommy a necklace out of some plastic beads when I was only four years old. Mommy was busy ironing in the kitchen. I ran into her with the beaded gift in my small hands. She didn't want to be bothered by a little girl and her childish jewelry.

I wanted Mommy's attention, approval and acceptance so desperately. I kept nagging at her to notice me and my gift. I accidentally knocked over the sprinkling bottle. It was the old fashioned type that used a glass soda bottle with a cork top for the sprinkler.

The bottle fell to the floor and broke into several pieces. Mommy was furious with me! She jerked me by my hair and dragged me off into the bedroom. Mommy stripped me naked and tied me spread-eagle to the bed.

I knew better than to utter a sound for that would only make matters worse for me, but inside I was terrified. Mommy disappeared briefly. When she returned, she had a piece of the broken glass in her hand. Mommy calmly said to me, "I'll teach you not to disturb me when I'm busy and not to break things." Mommy then took the piece of glass and shoved it inside me. The pain was unbearable! The blood frightened me even more.

I wanted to scream and cry; but I knew better than to break anything else ever again, including Mommy's rule about silence. I could only cry inwardly and scream without a voice.

I have no idea whatever happened to that beaded necklace, but it was the last one I ever made.

Silence

Silence holds the family secrets.
Silence keeps the skeletons in their closets.

"What goes on in this house is our business!"
"Don't you ever tell anybody about . . .!"

Silence breeds fear and teaches shame.
Silence protects those who hurt us.

"Keep your lying mouth shut!"
"Who'd believe a dumb kid like you?"

Silence leads to self-blame and guilt.
Silence hides the tears and the pain inside.

"Be quiet, you little brat!"
"Don't you dare make a sound!"

Silence breaks the heart and destroys the spirit.
Silence leaves us alone in confused agony.

Chrystie
Ontario, Canada

This series of drawings represents a regular occurrence in my life as a child. It was a ritual which occurred several times a week when I was between the ages of two and five.

The drawings can be seen in a matter of minutes, but it took me one year of painstaking agony to retrieve this experience. It came in bits and pieces of disjointed pictures and much body pain. One day, in session with my therapist, I exclaimed, "I've got it! It was a ceremony!"

I decided to confront Mother. I wanted her to validate my experience and tell me what had happened there. However, I was afraid that if I said even one thing wrong, she would jump on that detail, to invalidate everything. So I drew it for her and wrote the words.

It was a silent confrontation. I turned the pages, while she read. The words were in Ukrainian, our native language. My parents, being immigrants, did not speak or read English well.

When it was over, she looked at me and said, "What's this supposed to be?" She then went on for an hour, trying to convince me that no child was as well cared for as I was.

I asked her to leave.

Presented person to person Aug 7/1988

*Presented
person to person
Aug 7/1988*

ДЛЯ

МАММ

For Mother

від

її доні

ХРИСТІ

From her little girl,
Chrystie

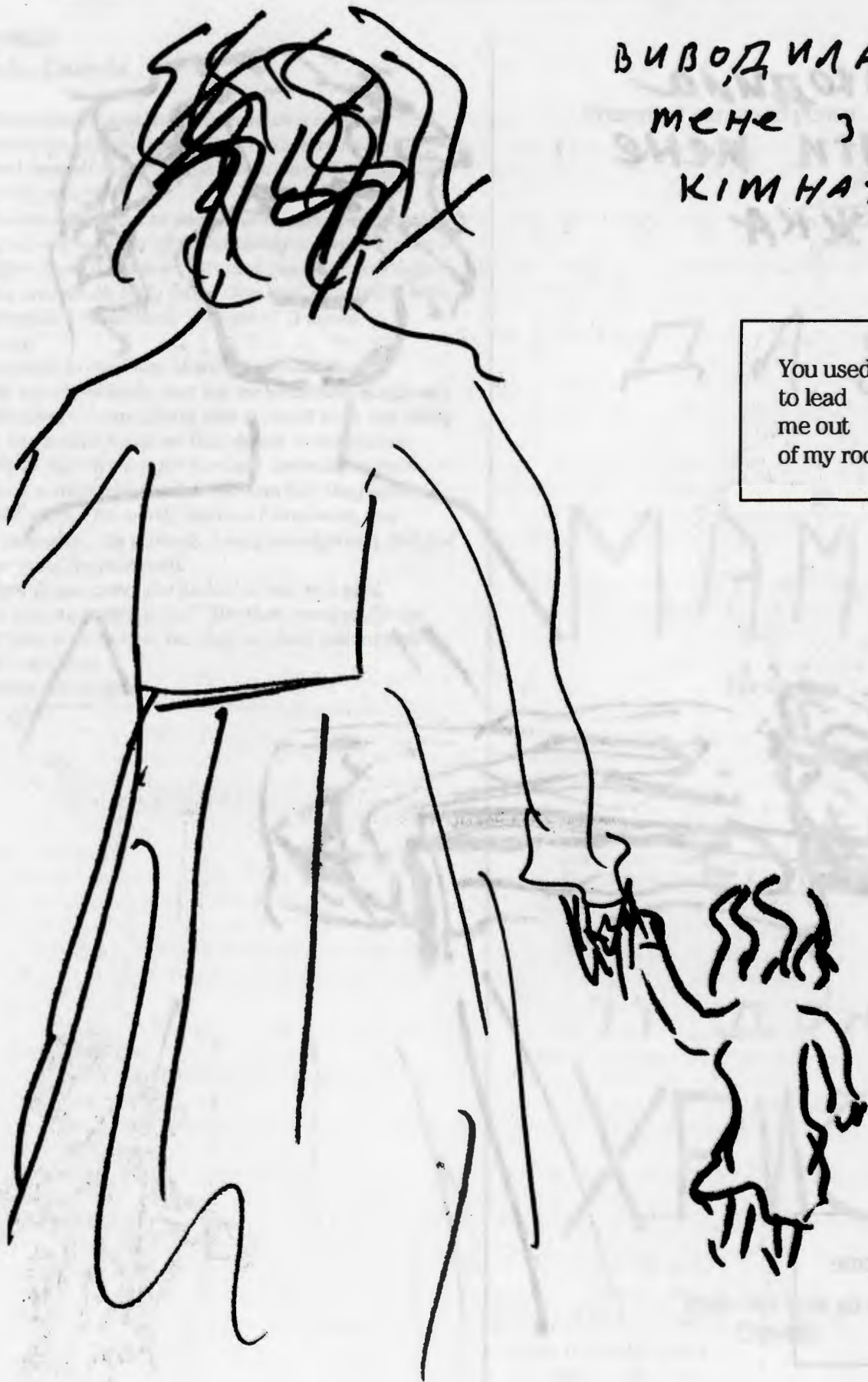
ТИ ПРИХОДИЛА
ЗАБИРАТИ МЕНЕ
З ЛІЖКА



You used to come
take me
from my bed

Выводила
меня в
комнату

You used
to lead
me out
of my room



Я СТОЯЛА В КИМНАТИ

В КУТОЧКУ ЗАКИМ ТИ І ТІ
ВСІ ІНШІ АТОЖН УСОСЬ
ГОМУНІАН, ЩЕ ПОТІАМ
МІЖ СОБОЮ



I used to stand in the room,
in the corner,
while you and those others
hummed and whispered
among yourselves

ТИ І ВОНИ НАДЕГЛИ СИВЛЯСТІ
НІБИ РИЗИ



All of you
put on
grayish-brown robes

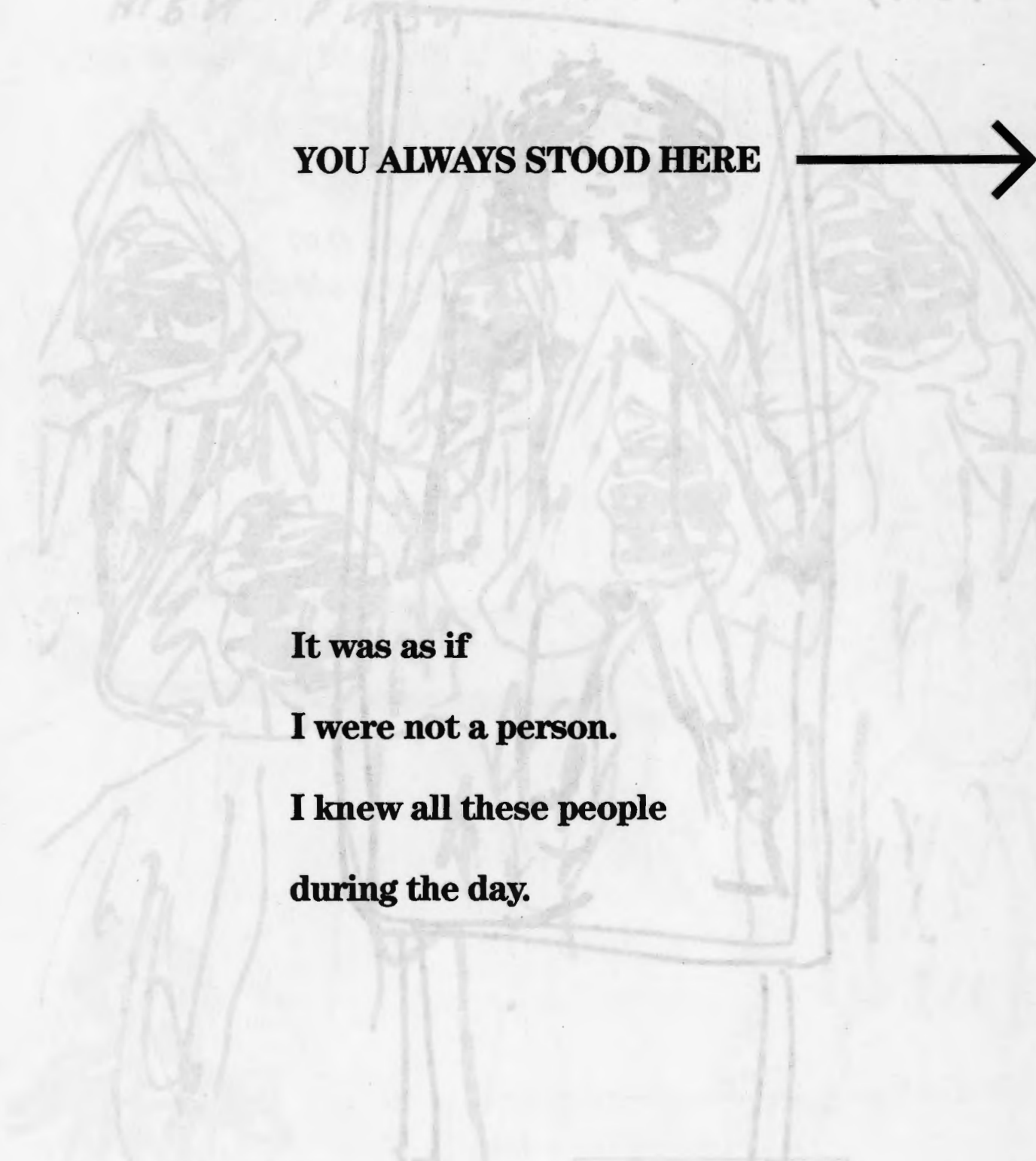
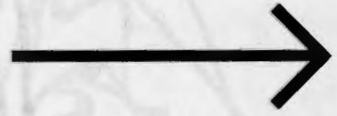
ВИ МЕНЕ РОЗБИ РАМИ І ЮЛАНИ
ГОЛУ НА ТОЙ НІВМ СТИА



You used to undress me and
put me naked on that table

LOVY HA TOY HIGH 1
BN. MC NE TOY HA
GOSSEN-ROVNA
I KARBANT

YOU ALWAYS STOOD HERE



**It was as if
I were not a person.
I knew all these people
during the day.**

You need to witness me and
put me inside on that table

All of you
put me
inside on that table

НИХТО НИКОЛИ ДО МЕНЕ НЕ ГОВОРЯВ-НИБИ
Я НЕ БУЛА ЛЮДИНА. Я ВСІХ ТИХ ЛЮДЕЙ ЗНАЛА
ПІЧАЄ ДНЯ. ТА ВСЕ

ТУТ
ДОМА.



ВИ ЦОСЬ ЧОРНЕ - МІБИ САДЖУ
СТАРУВАЛИ НА МОЄ НАГЕ ТІЛО.
І ТО ДУЖЕ НЕ ЛЮБИЛА.



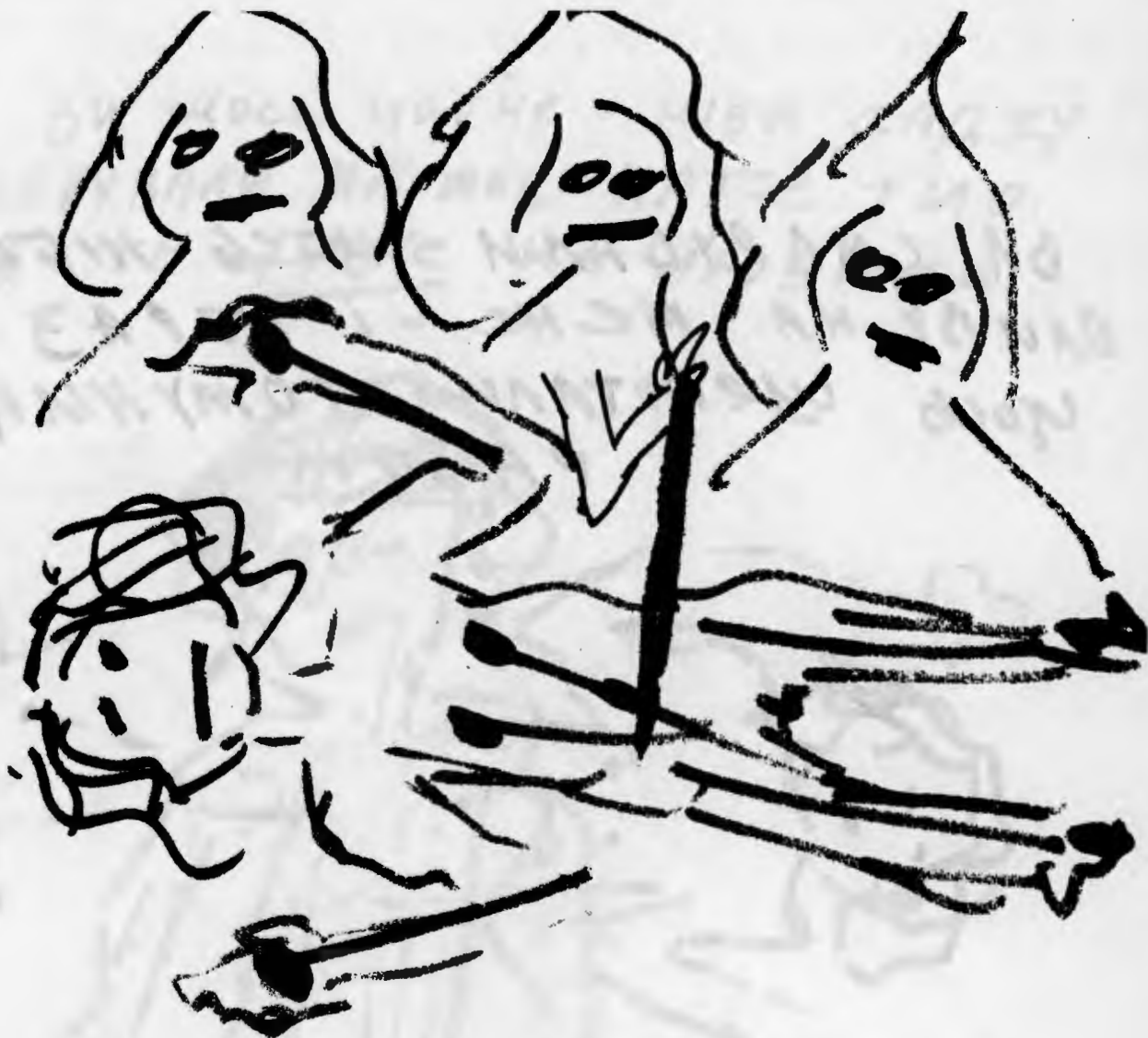
You smeared
something
black,
like
ashes,
on
my
naked
body.

I
hated
it.

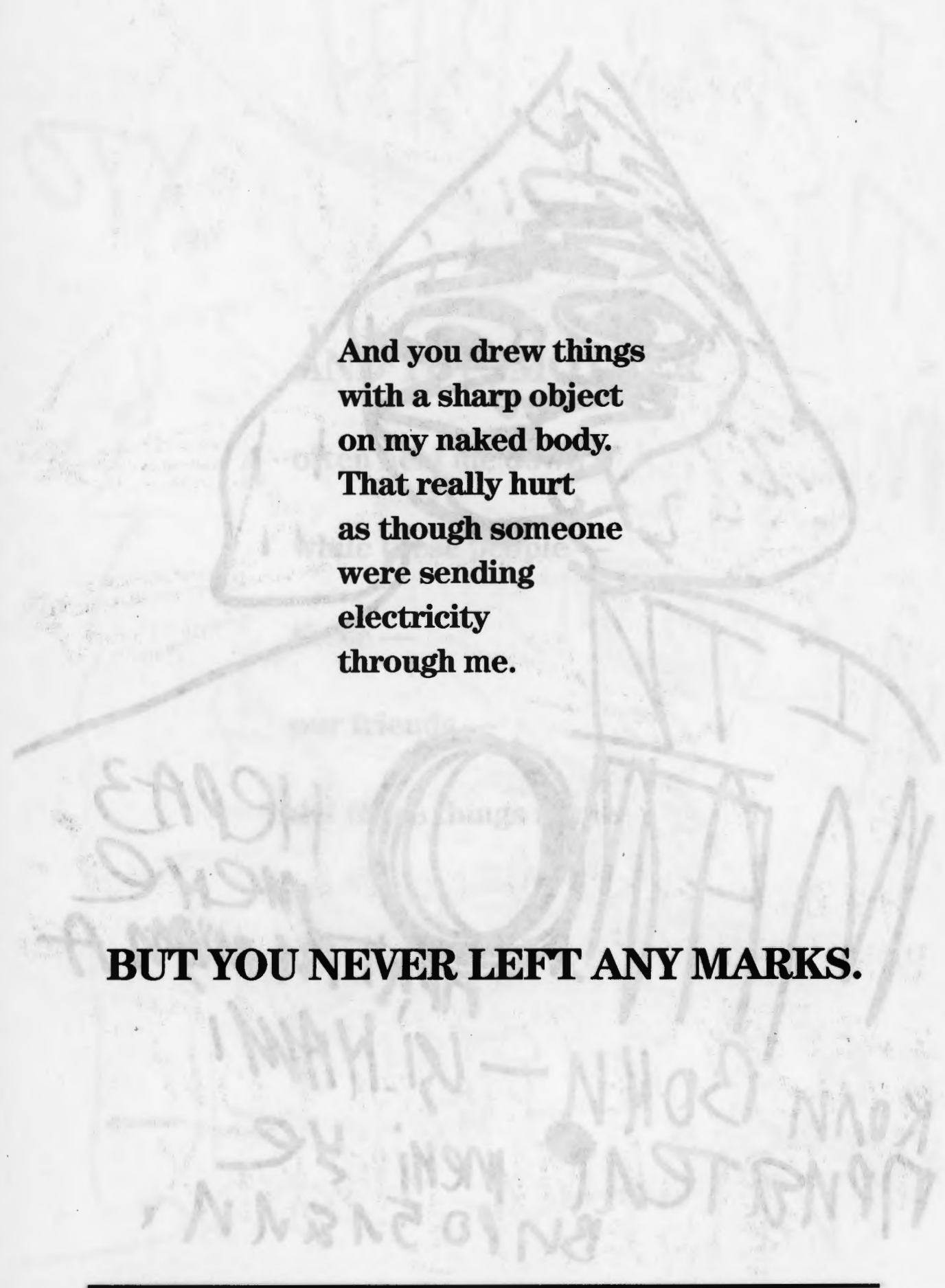
ВИ СМАРУВАЛИ ЩОСЬ НІБИ
ОЛІВУ НА МЕНЕ - І МБРАЗ
ЩОСЬ ШЕПОТАЛИ - ГОМУНИИ
РАЗОМ.



You put something like oil over me
and usually whispered and hummed together



ВИ НІБИ РИСУВАЛИ
ЧИТЬСЯ ОСТРИМ ПО ТОМУ ТІЛІ -
ВОНО ДУЖЕ БОЛИЛО. НІБИ ХТОСЬ
ЕЛЬБЕКРИКУ ПУСКАВ ЧЕРЕЗ
МЕНЕ. АЛЕ НІКОЛИ ВИ
НЕ ЗАЛИШАЛИ МІЯКИ Х
З НАКІВ




**And you drew things
with a sharp object
on my naked body.
That really hurt
as though someone
were sending
electricity
through me.**

BUT YOU NEVER LEFT ANY MARKS.



WANO
НЕРАЗ
МЕНЕ
ПРИТРИ МІВА А
КОЛИ ВОНИ — СИ НАМИ
ПРИЯТЕЛІ МЕНІ УЕ
ВН РО 51&11.



AND YOU, MOTHER

often held me down

while these people —

these —

our friends —

did these things to me

I ТАК ВИМ
ТИ ЗНАЄШ ХТО
МЕНЕ
НЕ ОБИВ
А ВИ ВСІ ТАМ СТОЄЛИ
ДОКОЛА І ДИВИЛИСЯ
ТИ ТАКОЖЕ



AND THIS IS HOW

HE —

YOU KNOW WHO —

LOVED ME

And you all stood there

in a circle

and looked

AND YOU DID, TOO

НА КІНЕЦЬ ВИ МЕНЕ ОБТЕРАЛИ
НАДЯГАЛИ УБРАННЯ І ТИ
МЕНЕ ПРИВОДИЛА ДО
МОГО ЛІЖКА СПАТИ.



At the end, you wiped me off, put on my clothes,
and you led me back to my bed to sleep.

ПІД ЧАС ДНЯ

ВСІ ПОВОДИЛИСЯ

ЯКЩО НИЧОГО

НЕ ДІВЛОСЯ

НИЧ ПЕРЕД

ТИМ

During the day
everyone behaved
as though
nothing
had happened
the night
before

ЦЕИ
ПРОЦЕС
ВИТЪУВАВСЕ
РЕГУЛЯРНО
МАМО!

The Jump

There is a jump in my throat. It nags and tugs. It is not the same as the jump in my throat that is aching all the time, but it is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time.

The jump in my throat is not leaping, it is with me. It is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time, but it is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time.

I relax completely, sitting and closing my eyes. The jump in my throat is not leaping, it is with me. It is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time, but it is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time.

As I look down, I see the floor. It is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time, but it is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time.

My hand reaches over and strokes my favorite cowgirl. It is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time, but it is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time.

There is a moment when I feel the light on the ceiling of the car from where I can watch. It is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time, but it is a jump in my throat that is aching all the time.

This event happened regularly,

Mother!

Barbara Rose
Minnesota

The Lump

There is a lump in my throat; it nags and it lingers. It feels like my entire body is sending all of its energy, anxiety and panic to one spot at the base of my throat where my neck connects to my chest. This is a familiar feeling, and it has come and gone before on many occasions in my adult life.

This lump in my throat is not leaving; it is with me night and day. I can't seem to get rid of it this time. But yet there is a way to rid myself of it once and for all and that time has come, for the lump is ready — it is time — it is tired of continually being tucked away. I am ready; it is safe now.

I relax comfortably, sitting and closing my eyes. The memory is beckoning, pleading to be released, screaming to be heard. I immediately become four years old, dressed in my favorite cowgirl outfit. Today is a special day at nursery school; pictures are being taken and I want to feel extra special. As luck would have it, my favorite boy friend, Jimmy C., is wearing his cowboy outfit, and we have so much fun playing cowboy and cowgirl together. He lets me wear his hat and we squeal with delight chasing each other. Picture time comes and goes, then lunch time, and then we pull out our blankets to rest.

Nap time, blinds closed, the cool floor, relief. As nap time ends, we begin to stir, whispering and giggling. The excitement increases until the teachers give in to our exuberance.

Story time, play time, snack time. Too soon, the special day is over. I am filled with contentment as I prepare to walk home. We live three houses away from nursery school, and I always feel like such a big girl to be able to walk home without anyone having to pick me up. I wave goodbye to my teachers, and as I walk out the door I realize that today will be different. He is there. Standing outside his car with the front windows rolled down and his hands in his pockets.

There is nowhere to run. I already know that he is bigger, faster and more powerful than I. He opens his door and signals — come along before I get impatient. He is already agitated; I can see it in his face. I don't want to make him mad, too. As I climb into the car I greet him softly — Hello Uncle Al. Sick and trembling, I sit in the front seat as he starts the car and begins slowly driving.

His hand reaches over and slides my favorite cowgirl skirt up, so that my bare legs are touching the vinyl seat cover. He separates my legs, and puts his hand into my underpants and begins playing with my private parts. I split. There is a convenient spot by the light on the ceiling of the car from where I can watch.

The drive is a short one to the dead end on the little girl's street. He stops the car, and as I look down I can see that look on his face. He removes his hand from her underwear and orders the four year old to the back seat. She does not move quickly enough, and he angrily picks her up and throws her into the back. He follows close behind. I can't see whether or not the little girl is struggling beneath his body, and I want to fight for her. I hear the zip as he pulls his fly down and feel the soft part of his body touch her face. I get glimpses of him forcing his penis into her tiny mouth. Cramming it down her throat as she struggles to breathe, gagging, suffocating. It does not take him long to get complete gratification from this attack, and his body thrusts into her face as he groans in pleasure. She appears to be unconscious. As he moves away, she begins to come to life, choking, gagging and struggling to breathe, gasping for air. As she gags to throw up he shoots her that "don't you dare" look, and remembering even more pain she obeys. Swallowing, she chokes down that thick sticky mass that fills her mouth and throat. I return now. I am back in my body and watch as he zips up his pants and climbs back into the front seat. He starts the car and drives me home. As I numbly climb out of the car he hands me a lollipop and says, "Be a good girl; don't get into any cars with strangers."

The lump in my throat explodes. I scream, the four year old screams and finally there is relief.

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In Search of Healing relies on submissions from its readers. In order to best present your work, please follow these guidelines:

1. Submissions must be the original work of the author or artist submitting. Contributors younger than 18 years of age must include a written permission from parent or guardian.
2. Include a brief cover letter giving information about your history and/or the work presented. Be clear about your need to remain anonymous or to use a pen name, first name only or full name.
3. Writing should be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white bond paper. Number pages of prose and write name, address and phone number on each page of your submission.
4. Writing in any language is accepted. Provide an English translation if at all possible.
5. Art must be black and white or reproducible in black and white. Do not send originals. Send PMT's, slides, photographs or high quality photocopies.
6. If you want your submission returned, include SASE.
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Survivors need SURVIVOR

"I'm listening to a lot of war stories, listening to the terror. Whatever you don't talk about in your conscious life is going to get stored, and when your brain and body can't take it all, it's going to come out somewhere. This is burnout with the *same kinds of symptoms our clients have.*"

Secondary PTSD: Beyond Burnout

"Sexual abuse is a term I associate with red flannel pajamas, a junior prom and my mother. Like most people, I used to think of sexual abuse as unwanted sexual intercourse, but I have learned there are other ways to inflict sexual pain."

When Sexual Abuse Is More Than Touching

"What happens to a person who has been sexually abused in a language other than the dominant language of this country, English? Let me illustrate through my own experience."

Language, Triggers and Loss

"One of the best reasons to believe survivors' memories is because believing initiates and enhances healing. As survivors begin to remember the specific abuses they lived through, they begin to heal. That is the miracle. All the cognitive therapy, drug therapy and behavioral reinforcement that survivors have tried just do not work like GETTING THE MEMORIES."

Believing Heals



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