

# Out of the Darkness



## Freeing the Betrayed Heart

A Collection of Stories and Poems About Sexual Abuse  
Edited by Barbara E. Verchot, Edythe Anstey Hanen, and Judi Tedlie







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# Cover Art and Design

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Commentary by Barbara E. Verchot

<http://www.lenabartula.com/contemporaryhuipils.html>

Artist Lena Bartula uses the form of the huipil, a Mayan woman's garment, to weave together visual narratives about oppression and abuse. She creates huipils to call attention to social issues such as domestic violence, sweatshop labor, and the environment.

Our cover image incorporates a photograph of her huipil 'Mensajes Mezclados' (Mixed Messages) into the design. The huipil is used as a symbol for the oppression of both male and female victims. The divine feminine or feminine principle residing in all of us is being oppressed. In this state of imbalance, the traits of love, nurturing, care-taking, sensitivity, and understanding are distorted and denied. Mixed messages are part of the aggressive, destructive manipulation, and violence used in all sexual abuse. These distorted messages are purposefully used without regard for the targeted victim. The twisting and abusing of acts meant to display love and affection during times of consensual sexual intimacy strike at the heart of what it means to be fully human. The appalling brutality of this behavior is hidden away in the darkness. Denied.

Bartula's huipil of mixed messages is sliced open. There now is a direct path to expose the betrayal that, in the past, was covered over. This betrayal is of all humankind. A shattered, bleeding heart (added as part of the cover design) reveals itself within the heart-space of the huipil. It is through the means of the fracture in this garment, a break from the traditional form, that 'the betrayed heart' can become free.

# Acknowledgements

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Out of the Darkness: Freeing the Betrayed Heart is a project that grew out of conversations between friends about the terrible burden of silence that survivors – both men and women – of sexual abuse, incest, molestation, assault, and rape carry throughout their lives. It is a silence that forbids us to speak out against these violations to our bodies. Because abuse often happens within the family circle, victims rarely speak of what is happening to them. They are twice betrayed. Betrayed by the abuse and assaults on their bodies, and betrayed by a culture that chooses to “not know” and to “not see.” The resulting shame, anger and pain lasts a lifetime and ripples outward to affect every aspect of our lives.

Many thanks to our contributors and to the volunteers who have worked together to make this project a reality. Without the courage of our contributors who are willing to share their stories, this journal could not exist. We know that healing can come from telling our stories. It is time for all of us to step out from the darkness of silence and into the light of truth. We sincerely hope that hearts and souls can find healing in this process.

Lois Read

---

## Tied With A Square Knot

A continent and an  
ocean away

Nigerian mothers  
ebony heads wrapped  
in bright print scarves  
wail and howl  
in a sea of grief  
for their kidnapped girls.

I cannot imagine

such loss.  
My daughters, granddaughters,  
great-granddaughters  
were with me yesterday  
visiting, laughing  
family together

yet the face of the mother

in the green head-scarf  
is somehow my face  
her anguish mine as well  
her impotence and anger  
and frustration  
connects me to her

with a double square knot

that will not be undone  
until unspeakable acts  
like the one which  
snatched her daughter  
cease to happen and women  
no longer walk in fear

**Lois Read**, retired art teacher and painter-turned-poet, has produced three chapbooks of poems with watercolors and two collections of poetry. She has had poems in *The Connecticut River Review* and *the Poetry of Yoga* (vol.2), and won honorable mention in the Maria Faust sonnet contest two years ago. Her poem "Bones" was judged fifteenth out of 4000 entries in the Writers' Digest Poetry contest in 2013, and her poem "Tied With a Square Know" was judged first place in the Altrusia contest for senior poets in Connecticut in 2015. Read lives in Wallingford, Connecticut except in the winter when she lives in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. She can be reached by email at [loisfay@sbcglobal.net](mailto:loisfay@sbcglobal.net).

# Writing

## Writing

about difficult,

even  
traumatic,

experiences

appears to be good for health on several levels -

raising immunity

and  
other health measures

and  
improving life functioning.

<http://www.apa.org/research/action/writing.aspx>

## Foreword

# Out of the Darkness:

## Awakening from a Culture of Denial

---

The subject is too painful to be let into our consciousness. It is too far outside how we, as a society, believe we behave. It is contrary to what is written in our hearts about our social norms. So, to conceptualize it? No, we cannot. The reality of this issue is definitely beyond what we would imagine to be the behavior of our associates, families, and friends. And yet, there are signs right here in our midst that clearly indicate that all is not well. Without a template for our thoughts to transform the unthinkable into the known, we hide in an age-old way. The legal term for this hiding is Willful Blindness. We choose not to look and not to see. If we do not see it, it does not exist. We willfully choose to turn away from the ineffable. To be blind to the horror. To remain dumbstruck.

Our fingers point away from our closest relationships, away from our families, our community, our region, and our country. These horrors are the property of the 'Other', those who are distant and unknown to us through first-hand experience. We are further distanced and made safe from being brought too close to the victims by having them look out at us from flat, two-dimensional surfaces: a magazine; a television; another world; another country, or another social class. We can only safely acknowledge them from a place that is never too close. The victims so depicted look back empty-eyed and hollow-souled. Drama too poignant to be anything more than theater. They too are dumbstruck and trapped. Trapped in a web of horror, disbelief and shame and left with debilitating physical and mental wounds. These victims have no narrative, no template for a story to relate to anyone, and certainly not to a society in denial. This isolation adds to the pain of the victims and further empowers the abusers.

So here we are, a society of people that distance ourselves as best we can. We shrink away from the slightest implication that such horrors lurk in our shadows. Or worse yet, horrors that may be concealed in the squeaky-clean puritanical halls of our middle and upper classes. If a survivor does dare to speak out, to put the horror into words, he or she may be further victimized by a demeaning, hostile crowd of onlookers who want to hush the survivor-messenger whose words shatter the image we hold of our society. To accept the unwanted message as truth is to accept that the social narrative in place is flawed, and by association, the narrative we hold about ourselves and how we respond to the unspeakable is also flawed. These issues exist. Here among us. It is not theater. It does not 'just happen' to and by the 'Other'.

This ineffable subject is the use of children for sexual purposes - rape, ritual sexual abuse and incest. These are crimes so horrible that it is not uncommon for the survivors to block these experiences out of their minds for decades. Blocking the memories does not, however, stop the physical, emotional, and mental pain. The consequences are insidious. And what of the child victim who dares to tell? That child "... encounters an adult world which gives grudging acknowledgment to an abstract concept of child sexual abuse, but which challenges and represses the child who presents a specific complaint of victimization. Adult beliefs are dominated by an entrenched and self-protective mythology" (Roland C. Summit, M.D.).

The social narrative currently in place serves to distance the sexual predator of children from 'normal' society - us. These predators are portrayed as "despicable lowlifes" who are "creepy men with shifty eyes, stubble and a trench coat" (Thomas G. Plante). At the very least, they are thought of as strangers. This faulty stereotype protects our social narrative but does not protect our children. As Thomas Plante reminds us: "If we assume a molester looks and acts one way, then we won't see the warning signs and won't suspect those who don't match that image."

What is an accurate profile for these predators? This population is diverse and comes from every socioeconomic level and profession. These individuals may be particularly charming, as this is a tool to gain the trust of their targeted victim and his/her family. Typically, predators are not strangers at all and they may even be actual family members. The U.S. Bureau of Justice reports that more than ninety-three percent of sexual predators of children are known to them and many of these predators are in the child's own home.

In this journal, survivors of childhood sexual abuse have a shared space for their life stories to be published. Beyond the act of taking ownership of their life story by writing their truth, survivors have their stories validated through publication and through being heard by readers. We believe many of our readers will be other survivors of sexual abuse and that some of these survivors will participate in future issues. Although all stories in this issue are from individuals who suffered sexual abuse as minors, our Call for Submissions is not limited to childhood survivors. It is open to all individuals who have suffered abuse at any age.

Much of what has been said above about survivors of childhood sexual abuse applies to victims of any age. The scars left behind by perpetrators of sexual abuse are not borne solely by their innocent victims. These scars are deeply imbedded within the families of the survivors and within our society. By creating a valid experience-based narrative, survivors of sexual abuse pave the way for our society to rewrite our flawed cultural narrative and to deal with reality.

Barbara Estelle Verchot  
13 July 2015



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Dedicated to all victims of sexual abuse  
and those that support them  
in speaking their truth  
and moving  
from darkness  
into light.



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Research indicates that **46 percent** (46%)  
of children who are **raped** are victims of  
**family members.**

Patrick Langan, PhD and Caroline Harlow PhD

Edythe Anstey Hanen

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## Dream of a Still Body

I dream of a still body,  
still as the cactus flower, scent  
freighted with night,  
still as a sleeping arm, dark  
as rose petals against  
white summer sheets, still  
as the perfect  
hollow of a cupped palm.

Stillness is the space left  
by what is no longer there.  
I long for such emptiness.

My father is buried deep  
in my bones, my veins,  
a river of blood that cannot  
be silenced  
or tamed. Muscles rage, still  
armored so long  
after the war has ended, skin  
like torn silk carries still  
this ancient cargo.

The night spins  
its stillness, quiets the mind but  
not mine: legs wild with remembering:  
a fox under a  
frozen moon, running dreams  
of escape, of surrender,  
called by some mad old  
hunger, deep  
as memory, deep  
as the place where  
love waits in all its beautiful  
and terrifying  
splendor.

Edythe Anstey Hanen

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## Nobody's Darling

I push open the wrought iron gate into the courtyard of the spa. The cloistered garden is filled with flowering poinsettias, tall palms and potted ferns, the scent of white jasmine. I'm here for my last body massage before heading back to my west coast island home after three months of basking in the seductive sunshine of a Mexican winter.

A young woman stands waiting with a shy smile. "I am Lupé," she says softly. She motions for me to follow her into a small room lit only by candles. She gestures toward the crisp white sheet covering the massage table and a straight-back wooden chair where I can put my clothes, then leaves again, quietly shutting the door behind her. The recorded sounds of Vivaldi's The Four Seasons fill the room. The draped walls are hung with altars to the Virgen de Guadalupe, flaming hearts of hammered tin, whimsical retablos, niched statues of the Virgen de la Soledad, The Virgin of Sorrows.

I take off my clothes, toss them onto the chair then stretch out on the narrow table under the warmed thick green towel. Outside the door I hear the soft pad of footfalls passing by the door. In the distance the high bright sound of children's laughter in the street. Lupé enters the room again without a sound, touches me lightly and motions for me to turn over and lie on my stomach. She wears a loose white jacket and white trousers. Her long blue black hair hangs to her waist and is tied back with a blue satin ribbon. None of the masseuses here speak English and no conversation is ever initiated or expected; I'm grateful for that. I sink into the soft fluid quiet of the room, filled only now with the sounds of Vivaldi and the scent of crushed strawberries.

Lupé's hands move gently, expertly over my back seeking out the taut muscles, the hollows, the mysterious kinks and knots. Her hands are tender, accommodating. I allow her this small incursion into my body, keep the fear at bay, rein in the apprehension that a foreign touch can so easily bring. My mind floats like a boat drifting away from the shore. I feel Lupé's

searching fingers and all at once some tender place in my body resists. I think: hands. Shades of other hands, rougher hands.

Vivaldi has become Greensleeves. In the distance a clamor of church bells, the sound of the knife-sharpener out on the street with his long low whistle. Lupé's hands explore the hollows of my shoulders, slide down my back. I begin to tremble and she stops. I tell her da nada, it's okay, but it's not. I'm remembering. Hands. My grandfather's hands that had imprisoned me all those years ago.

\*\*\*

I'm in my grandfather's room in the basement. He has always lived in exile in the basement below my grandmother's rooms which smell faintly of violets and lemon polish and which do not invite company. He pushes me down on the bed, his breath hot against my cheek, his arms taut as baling wire, holding me down. His Bible lies open on the small wooden table next to his hymn book and his reading glasses. A cross-stitched framed scripture hangs on the wall: GOD IS LOVE. A thin knitted orange and brown quilt is thrown across the bed. I hear my grandmother playing hymns on the piano upstairs. I know that she won't hear me if I scream.

I push against him with all my strength but I know I can't escape. The air is dense with the heat, my grandfather's uncompromising will, my own unvoiced screams. Then in an explosion of panic I do escape. Something reaches up from deep inside me, reaches out into the room, into the choked space between us and I pull myself away from the grasp of his hold. I push myself off the bed and run across the room, then across the basement with its cool painted cement floor and out the door where a huge bluebottle fly drones against the screen, into the dazzling afternoon. I tear myself away from him, running, running, running, the screen door banging behind me. There is a hole in the fence and I scramble through it, tearing the hem of my sundress as it catches on a nail. Tall hollyhocks stand like guardians at the gate. Then the steely blue hatred in my grandfather's eyes as he watches me from the doorway. He spits out one word: Bitch.

I knew then that there was no safe place to run to. There never would be.

\*\*\*

I was in my early thirties, living my island life with my husband, pregnant with my first child when my mother called me and asked me to meet her for coffee downtown near the place where she worked. It was late in the day and the streetlights were already on, pooling into yellow puddles beside the curb. A cold drizzle belied what the calendar said—that it was spring—and turned the rain-glazed streets into a neon haze. The lights of the city shops: Woolworth's, Sweet Sixteen, The Dragon Café with its green neon seahorse, spilled out onto the gritty street, washing it in a luminescent sheen.

A lone woman hurried through Victory Square, with its crumbling tribute to fallen soldiers. One hand clutched her coat to her throat, pulling the mouton tight to her body; the other hand grasped an umbrella that threatened to rebel and turn itself inside out at any moment.

My mother was sitting at the Woolworth's lunch counter and had ordered her favorite: a baked apple wrapped in pastry. I sat down at the counter, ordered coffee, extra cream and a bran muffin. We talked for a while, caught up on family gossip.

"Now that you're having a baby, there's something I need to say....something about him," she said. "About Grandpa." She looked nervous.

My grandfather. Him.

"What is it?"

"It's just...when your baby's born..."

She put her fork down carefully beside her plate, as though what she was eating had suddenly lost its appeal. "It's so long ago now, Maddie. But I need to tell you." She stopped. "He touched us. And more. Both of us. Since we were babies. Just promise me you'll never let him near your baby. You need to promise me that."

"Grandpa did that? To you? To Aunt Cilla?" My mother and my Aunt Cilla were twins.

"He came into our room at night...we were just small."

"But mom..."

"I wanted to tell you before but there was never a good time."

And it dawned on me then. She didn't know. How could she have known? I'd never told her. And it all came back to me like some old dream that I'd kept hidden in the dark reaches of my closet. The basement. The chalky smell of cement and dust, the tang of paint, cleaning fluids,



turpentine. The sharp metal smell of roller-skates and rusty keys. My grandfather's tools hanging against the back wall, tin cans of nails, screws, washers, mysterious odds and ends.

And his room, blinds pulled against the smothering afternoon heat. His hands trapping me, his rage at my escape. She knew nothing of the memories that had haunted me for all those years. My fear in knowing the evil that hands can do.

"Mom."

She looked up at me. Waited.

"He did those things to me too."

She looked bewildered. She clearly had no idea what I was talking about.

"You?" My mother pushed the plate away from her.

"Yes, Mom, me."

"What do you mean? How could he have?"

"Mom." It was all I could do not to shout at her: Why are you acting as though you don't know what I'm talking about? He abused me. Just like you. How could you not have known?

"When?"

"When I was a kid."

"But...when?"

"When you and Dad were at work, Mom. When you left me with them. After school."

She grew pale. Her face looked shattered.

"I didn't know."

"Of course you didn't know. I didn't tell you. I was ashamed."

She nodded slowly.

"But I need to know...I need to know why you left me with them. Why you left me in a place where he could get to me. I just don't understand that. After you, yourself..."

"No, I shouldn't have." She looked baffled. Diminished. For a moment she wasn't my mother anymore. In that moment she was a frightened stranger. She whispered. "I didn't think...I didn't know..."

There was no point in continuing. Her denial was that deep, that complete. I knew then that I was never going to get what I wanted: her outrage. All those years of silence. I think of a poem

written by Alice Walker that I had read just that day: *Be nobody's darling;/Be an outcast./Take the contradictions/of your life/and wrap around/you like a shawl,/to parry stones/to keep you warm.* Is that what I'd done? Wrapped myself in silence, believing that silence could keep me safe?

I never wanted to be anybody's darling.

After we finished our coffee, I walked her to the bus stop, kissed her goodbye, watched her climb the steps of the bus in the gray rain. Trolley buses groaned by, splashing water from the gutters. I walked for blocks through the stream of pedestrians, all of them with faces closed and dark, heads down, pushing into the wind like blind fish swimming against the current.

I felt betrayed. But the truth was, we had both been betrayed. Left with only the silence and the crushing weight of knowing.

\*\*\*

And now she's gone. My mother. My father too. There is only me.

One by one I've pulled my stories out, slowly, painfully, memory by memory, and with each telling I have opened a little wider that door to my heart, until my life is spread out before me like a patchwork quilt, cobbled together out of dreams and memories and nightmares. With each telling I have known a little more. The story belongs to me now. All those secrets and nowhere to hide. All the words never spoken. A lifetime of words. I see them, my mother and her twin sister, my Aunt Cilla, and my heart breaks. Those tiny girls. So alike, yet different, fair and dark, two little girls in pinafores and high button boots in a photograph over the mantel. Little girls lying in their rose-papered rooms, waiting. Shamed and silent. Like me. Even now, it's easier to feel pain, to summon anger for those little girls than it is for myself.

The truth is, it's easier not to remember. But in remembering, I'm crashing through those walls. They have already begun to collapse around me like a deck of cards. Though my heart is raw and tender, I'm ready now to tear apart the secrets, to split the silence with my shouts. The door is opening, like my heart, opening now onto my own landscape of words.

These words.

This is the beginning.

**Edythe Anstey Hanen** *is an award-winning BC writer and editor who believes profoundly in the unique beauty and power of writers 'telling their lives' through story.*

"The more severe childhood traumas

bypass our memory banks,

as a result of shock, and get lodged everywhere else...

This "lack of remembering"  
makes it difficult for us to  
understand our suffering.

Early experiences may be remembered

foggily,

selectively,

or not at all.

Or they may be denied, partially remembered but  
minimized and rationalized away."

Joyce Z. Meyers

Elizabeth Wellner

---

## An Inch Below Water

I peered up through ribbons of light. I could see what I wanted my life to be but struggled to reach the surface. After being raped by my brother, I spent 33 years an inch below water.

He never showed me kindness. The early memories of my life overflow with acts of physical and emotional abuse. Pinching, tripping, hitting and cruel names like, “Bad Breath Beth” would cut deeper and deeper every day. Even though the family photo albums say differently, and he was clearly there at every turn in my young life, I have no memory of him except when he was being brutal towards me.

My parents were of no help, then or now. Any objections I raised were met with an immediate dismissal from my mother who had two brothers, 12 and 13 years older than her. You think YOU have it bad... was the common lead-in to the trip down her Memory Lane as a convenience for ignoring my reality. Obviously, my protests were inconsequential in her eyes and warranted no further mention. My father is an only child, so his past never lent itself to any commentary out of experience for my nightmare. I was on my own.

As I grew up, the constant mind games, verbal stabs and degrading remarks became more and more prevalent. Attempts to distance myself from him by spending more time at school or out with friends proved successful to a point, but that meant a tidal wave of unbearable intensity when we were together. He never passed up an opportunity to humiliate and embarrass me.

And then I turned 12.

The details of the sexual abuse and ultimate rape are irrelevant. It happened. I will give no value to the acts that happened so long ago by awarding them my valuable words. Describing it will not change what happened to me nor bring me solace in reliving those moments. I will continue to cling to the idea that asking Why? is a waste of my time. The answers rarely come but one thing is clear: It can happen to anyone, anywhere at any time. I am not special.

I have no relationship with the person who raped me and I never did. I view him as a stranger, seen from the far-bank of a roaring river that I have no desire to cross.

The greatest pain has been the destructive denial by my parents. Ignoring his abuse when we were younger goes against everything a parent vows to do for their child: to protect them. Even after disclosing the sexual abuse at 30 years old, I was encouraged to see my rapist, wish him Happy Birthdays and extend Season's Greetings for the next 15 years. There comes a time when silence becomes betrayal.

I cannot pinpoint the exact detail that allowed me to begin healing and recovery, but sending a letter to the person who raped me to tell him his evil acts were now his property began to allow me to see through the waterfall of denial that my family seemed to be living behind. Likewise, sharing my frustrations and pain with my parents helped me to desperately grab a life preserver. With that, I began to save myself.

Many years have passed and I often lament the years I was simply treading water and could not begin to confront what was submerged for so long. Suddenly, I have to grieve for the loss of my feelings and the abandonment of my family. I must grieve for the past and grieve for the present; for the damages I now have to heal; for the time it takes; for the money it costs; for the relationships it's ruined and for the pleasure and happiness that I've missed. I grieve the opportunities lost while I was too busy coping and simply surviving each day. I now realize that I was incapable of doing the extensive work to begin healing and recovering from incest for all that time. I now have the tools.

What works for me does not work for all. The only rainbow I can offer is to practice self-care. Take that bubble bath, watch your favorite movie or simply roll over in bed. If that is the biggest accomplishment of the day, stay with it. It can get better.

I finally came to grips with the fact that suicide; alcohol; weight loss; weight gain; hospital stays; hours of sleeping; hours of losing sleep; self-harming; rejecting affection and solitary confinement meant that he was winning. Likewise, leaning on people who said that I was wrong to not forgive him meant that they had their best interests at heart and not mine. Refuse to

accept those guidelines if they steer you in the direction that is not the best for you. Moving forward is hard and often seems impossible but isn't any harder than what you've survived.

I will no longer make excuses for others and their behavior. I will no longer live in shame. I will no longer live in fear. Their crimes are not my responsibility. I have nothing to be ashamed of or to feel guilty about. All of that belongs to them from now on.

The truth can never be heard an inch below water.

**Beth Wellner** is a former reading teacher, professional cellist, avid hiker, world traveler and writer. She shares her time between Chicago, Illinois and San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Her greatest treasures are her two children, Jason and Sarah, and her husband Rich.

He said "Young maid, you swear in wrong

For 6 children you had **born**"

"If you be a man of noble fame

You'll tell to me the father of them"

"There's TWO of them by your **uncle** Dan"

"Another 2 by your **brother** John"

"Another TWO by your **father** dear"

"If you be a man of noble esteem

You'll tell to me what did happen to them"

"There's TWO **buried** 'neath the stable door"

"Another 2 near the kitchen door"

"Another TWO **buried** beneath the wall"

Well Below the Valley

Traditional Folk Song



## The Crinoline Slip

The crinoline pushed out the skirt of the tiny girl's dress. Her hair was brushed smooth. Pulled tight. Forced into a pony tail. Secured with a rubber band. Wrapped with a satin bow. No escape for a single strand. Pipe curls dangled from the pony tail and danced freely down the back of her head.

She was young, three or four years old. She told her mother how the scratchy crinoline material hurt her skin and how the pony tail hurt her head. She tried to explain how her whole head felt bruised with an ache that penetrated deep inside. That all she could focus on was the pain in her head, and it made her feel sick. She told the woman about the pain over and over; or at least, as much as she dared. As normal, she was brushed off. "You'll get used to it," the child was told.

There was no room in this world for this child or her brothers. Every action of the woman spoke her annoyance: the children were a bother unless it – rather than he or she – could buy the woman something she desired.

The child's eyes teared. She took a deep breath. What choice did she have but to endure the scream of the red rash on her waist; her mother's feelings etched on her body. To bear the pain that penetrated her head, the angry blows that have met her flesh from the day she came home from the hospital. This was her norm. She did not know that the rest of the world did not suffer so. As she got older, she would wonder why living in her body was so painful. Why life was considered by others a thing to treasure when it seemed a futile struggle against the blackness that surrounded her. Why when she began wearing eyeglasses in the fourth grade, the arms of the glasses made her head feel tender and bruised. Why, at times, her legs writhed in pain. As she grew, she began to understand that this was not the way other people's bodies felt to them.

The girl had two brothers. The older handsome, hollow-eyed boy, stunned by the brutality, had the refuge of school. The younger, eighteen months the girl's junior, was painfully shy, a beautiful little towhead who shared with the girl the uncertainty of the woman's moods.

This day, the woman seemed happy. The children were unsure of how to process her behavior. She prepared them for an excursion. "You're going to play with another child," she told them. Her eyes were dreamy and wet with emotion; sparkling.

They arrived for their visit and went into the backyard. A large low-sided wooden box filled with mounds of soft white sand was in the back corner of a neatly-kept yard. Trees rimmed the yard, but the sandbox was constructed in a space in the sunshine. A small child was quietly making roads in the sand with his toy truck. The woman quickly set the children down to play and went inside to visit with the man who lived there.

As time passed, the joyful experience of play spoke to the girl's heart. She could not recall having such a wonderful time before, but she knew she would like more. She relished the warm sand sifting through her fingers. They were all completely absorbed in their own peaceful revelries. The girl was filled with contentment. Everything beyond the weathered wood that held together the shifting sand of their existence was forgotten. The silent, harmonious rhythm of peace felt so real. Trucks and cars navigated sand trails without colliding.

Deep within her, the girl felt a seed planted that could be called hope. The idea that life could be so good pushed into her being. If this bliss could happen now, why not more? We should do this more, she thought. It was then, when she had deeply relaxed into the security of goodness and the belief that, perhaps, this could exist for her, the woman returned.

The woman was angry. This was a familiar state. That the child was the reason for the anger was a given. The girl could never remember how she knew the woman was approaching. If she heard the door open, if the woman had called, or if she just knew, deep down, that this reprieve from the oppression was too good to be true. The girl looked up from her play to see the hem of the woman's crisp, shirtwaist dress swinging around her calves as it angrily slapped her shins. Her long military gait signaled vengeance. Her arms, powerful weapons hinged into her shoulders, pitched back and forth matching her gait. Light sheared off her steely blue eyes. Her face was tense and hard. Her mouth was twisted in the same way she would twist the girl's legs.

The woman, an angry machine, stretched out her large clawed hand and grabbed the girl around the top of her arm.

“Come with me,” the woman snarled, yanking the girl from the sand, from the sun, and from the pathetic illusion that she, the filthy child, should have joy. If the woman had not intended the girl to be part of her amusement, which she was, the child’s infuriating contentment would have been enough to incite and justify the woman’s course of action.

The child whimpered. She was unwilling to leave her haven. The woman’s hand slid around the girl’s wrist, her right arm, in the iron grasp of the woman. The child was a marionette, pulled along, legs dangling, toes grazing the ground. A dance toward doom.

The girl could see the gap of the black void beyond the threshold of the house. Her body stiffened. She twisted her head toward the security of the sandbox. The sunshine that drenched her playmates. The startled expression in the other children’s eyes. Why always me? Why me? She pulled back. She felt guilty for wishing it was her brother being taken. Her short dress danced above her ruffled panties laughing at how ridiculous it was for the child to think a starched and ruffled child was meant for the sandbox.

She longed to stay with the other children. For the sandbox to hold her. To save her. To have the warm sand nurture her. To make room for her body as its grains separated and responded to her need for space without demanding anything in return. Without penetrating her. Without questioning her right to coexist there in the world of light. But her ties in the sandbox were frail. The illusion was shattered.

In this world, the woman was god. She loved the black lightless interior of houses. She loved the dense hard walls of windowless rooms and the unyielding blows of hard adult flesh against a child. It aroused her. Hunger raged behind the steel blue of the woman's eyes. She had her needs. And they were endless.

Darkness closed around them.

Phoenix

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# Cleansing

The flow of the Pequest and Delaware rivers  
Cleanses their banks and caresses the roots of trees

But for me,

No  
There is no cleansing  
There is no caress

I lay in a cold tub  
In hot water  
As hot as I can get it

My body  
So numb  
So full of pain

I can hear them all

Father, mother, grandfather

Downstairs at the dinner table

Laughing  
She is either the dirtiest kid or the cleanest kid in town

They all knew the dirt was theirs

# Stigmata

She lived alone in an isolated farm worker's house in the country. Few windows pierced the walls. Secrets stayed inside. Dark gloom, a sluggish vortex, held life in its thick heavy grasp squeezing out the flame of truth. Squeezing out hope. Squeezing just enough to exude a thin tension across the whitewashed clapboard house that allowed the water bug of normality to dance on its surface.

It was here that St. Francis became her fancy. Strange but no stranger than the twisted tangle of tales that defined her life. She was christened Catholic but raised Jehovah's Witness with no indoctrination into the Catholic faith other than exposure through her relatives. As distant as St. Francis was, his gentle spirit spoke to her. She dreamed that, someday, she would awaken from the pain to spring forth into a world of joy. A world where squirrels would seek her out and entwine themselves with her ankles and birds would sing joyfully and settle on her shoulder as portrayed in the garden statues of St. Francis.

On one occasion, while bearing the weight of the house in every atom of her being, she walked down the steps of the front porch into the yard. Clear clean air set autumn leaves dancing and stroked her face with its crispness. It playfully held to her nose the musky scent of life's vital comings and goings. And yet, she remained a separate observer, consigned to the weight of the house.

There was an opening when the clear beautiful sky seemed to welcome her. Some may call it hope, she thinks, but that seems too extreme. It was more the awareness of the thing called hope. A beautiful blue bird sat perched on a lower branch of the tree. She noticed it for its lack of motion. Slowly, she approached the branch, afraid to hope, while waiting to see if the bird would take flight and come to rest on her shoulder. When she was about three feet from the end of the branch, she sat down in the grass and watched. Miracle of miracles, the bird remained unmoved on its perch. She stayed so very still. Would the bird come to her? Was this finally the end of the

seemingly endless? The isolation. And then, like so many times when she had the audacity to look in hope's direction, hope fell to the ground. The bird was dead.

This was a refrain so well known to her. Hold out the desire. Make sure it is never hers. Die rather than offer joy to someone so undeserving. Someone who is to be taken from and not given to. The day went on like all the others.

She woke up with a familiar numb headache. Groggy and sapped of energy. Her body, contents of a sack twisted and bound within a casing that had no sympathy. Pain she could not describe. This too, was familiar. But there on her wrists were strange bruises. Marks that had not been there when she went to bed. Was today, finally, the mark of her uniqueness? The mark of her goodness? For she was, beyond all things, a child with a loving and tender heart. Her heart, so constantly starved and compressed under the heel of her oppressors' shoes, still retained its love. For there was more than one oppressor. It was a game for them to watch her pain. It was a joy to see the writhing and demeaning.

The bruises must be signs that the grace of God was with her. Now, after all this suffering, was god going to lift her up in the rapturous joy that St. Francis experienced? Was this joy to be hers also? What other explanation could there be, she wondered. She had gone to bed unmarked and now the stigmata were on her wrists. She quickly examined her feet. Staring intently at the smooth unblemished skin. Puzzled. Why weren't the stigmata there too? Maybe it will take time. She watched. Nothing. Maybe stigmata on all four limbs at once is too much. Should she risk it and tell her mother? Show her mother her wrists?

They have to be stigmata, she told her mother. The woman sneered. It was a familiar expression. The sneer spilled disdain all over the child. The girl could read her face. *Stupid fool*, it said, as the woman's upper lip jerked when she snickered.

*The woman laughed to herself as she thought of the night past and so many others like it that she had enjoyed. Warmth crept into her breasts and groin and she sucked in the delicious wetness that oozed onto her lips. Her son had originally resisted penetrating his sister. He did not want to harm her, he loved his sister like any good brother would love, but he thought they would kill him if he did not comply. The woman and her husband, stood in the shadows and watched as they*

*forced him to act. They heard his fearful whisper in his sister's ear. They'll kill us if we don't. Delight flashed across her eyes and she suppressed the rumblings of a deep laugh.*

*Her husband was brilliant. He knew the drugs to use so the girl would never remember. They used them on the boys and other children too, but this girl thought she could act like her mother. Imitate her mother. Cross her legs, like her mother. So let her have it all. She never left a mark on the child, and neither did her husband nor their friends. We're experts, she thought proudly. It was an art for them. Scenes of Hieronymus Bosch.*

*Her son was no longer the timid innocent. He mounted his sister with hunger, not for love of the child but for the love of the act. It was me he really loved and desired, she thought as the warmth of joy rose in her. He would learn. Under her careful training, he would not leave a mark.*

*Today, after the games, the woman also felt a little under the weather. It was, after all, a late, tiring night for her too. And she turned and continued her work in the kitchen.*

The girl did not let go of her questioning. She turned and left the room to go deeper into the heavy thick sluggish smog. She continued to puzzle over her enigma. Over the next few days, she checked her feet and watched her wrists to see if the sign would grow stronger.

The bruise itself seemed to mock her, never rising from the subcutaneous realm to play closer to the surface. Her own skin veiling the truth. The bruise shifted, tired of the game, and left.

The girl trudged on, one foot then another, resisting the crush of the house. She lived alone, but in that house, with her mother, her father, and two brothers.

**Phoenix** is a scholar, artist, writer, and poet. She believes that living authentically and creatively through arts and letters heals at depths cognitive therapy rarely penetrates.

**S e v e r e**

child maltreatment

—including

e a r l y

and

sexual abuse

—may interfere with the child's development  
of a

sense of self.

John N. Briere and Diana M. Elliott



## Blacker Than Black

I first remember standing in the alcove at the top of the stairs that led from the main floor of our home on Highbury Street. The memory was filled with the color of soft amber. From the reflection of me in the mirror hanging on the wall where I stood alone, to the bathroom door I didn't want to enter, all was of the deepest melancholy amber. The alcove wall that carried the mirror backed up against the bathroom where, inside, my father lay naked in the bath and I didn't want to go there. It was very early. I was alone, I thought, and I needed to go to the bathroom. When I begged to open the bathroom door I knew my father was inside, and full of fear, I tried quietly to close it again. I returned to the alcove but my father's voice followed me. He was calling me to him and I didn't know how to say no.

Judy would have. Judy would have said no.

I went in. I was very young, so little I could barely make my way up to the toilet seat. I had to wiggle my way up between the edge of the bathtub and the toilet and work my way to the toilet top. All the way as I scrambled my way up my father watched me. His body floating on top of the water. His legs spread wide and his scrotum floating large between them.

My second memory followed close on my first. I was in a bed in the den that backed onto the kitchen. I didn't want to be in that room and in that bed with my father but my eyes were doe-like, huge and dreamy, my lips unusually full. And I was there. And I was so very young. And then my father was gone from our bathroom, gone from the den and gone from our house. "He couldn't help it" my mother said when eventually the phone calls began.

Time had moved on. I was old enough to answer the telephone. I don't remember any calls other than the ones that came from him. "Tell your mother she's a tramp," he would say. "Tell your mother she's full of bullshit."

“Why does daddy call you a tramp,” I asked my mummy. “You don't have raggedy clothes.” I don't remember what she said to me then, but I'm sure she must have said, “He can't help it darling.”

Time went on and the red lights began to appear on our front porch at night. Then came the police to our front porch because my father, in the full light of day, had come to taunt mum.

She hit him hard straight across his face right in front of my sisters and me and that's when the blood came. It spilled from my father's face and trailed behind him across our front path, down our long and steep driveway and across the road to where the neighbors, watching it all, took him into their home. There were those who stood by my father but what those people didn't know was that my father “couldn't help it.”

Over the years I tried to save my father. At the end of his life the task of dealing with him fell to me. I went to his apartment. I stood alone in his hallway as he came toward me, his eyes wild with fear. I took him in my arms, held myself firm and led him to his empty home. And there I sat across from him and listened to his story. No one knows the story. And no one knows about the thick dark liquid slowly and surely falling from his mouth that day. No one knows that I wiped that liquid from his mouth all that day. To this day no one knows the revulsion I kept to myself as I wiped my father's mouth and listened to his words that day.

Horror stories he told me, that first day of his dying. Horror for me. Something else for him. In silence, I listened. When he finally fell asleep I phoned our doctor. “Marlene he's dying,” I told her. She wouldn't listen. She'd just seen him, she said. Old, she said. With problems, but not dying.

“Marlene, he's dying,” I said, “with the black death of his body spilling from his mouth.”

Marlene knew me well. After many years as my doctor she had discovered a thing or two about me that worked to turn our relationship from doctor patient to that of mutual recognition. She did some thinking, it would seem, made some phone calls and called me the following morning.

“Stay close to your father but don't go into his apartment,” she said. “There is a silent ambulance on its way with a straight jacket in it. Do not go into the building. It could be ugly. Give us a phone number and wait for our call.”

As things turned out our father got up early that morning, dressed himself in his finest clothes and beat the ambulance to the hospital. I think he knew he was going to a wedding. He was, after all, nine feet into the underworld with barely one foot left to go and so he was appropriately made ready. When my sister and I got to the hospital he was no longer in his lovely clothes but wrapped instead into a cheap piece of cotton wide open down the back for convenience. Very little held it together there. Only two flimsy ties. One at the neck, another just below the shoulder blades. From there on down, nothing. Our father was as good as naked. He was sitting up on his hospital bed, looking and acting pretty well given the circumstances.

“He's fine,” said Judy.

“He's dying,” I said.

“He's going to take Sarah and me to Hawaii,” she said, “and we're going to go.”

“Judy,” I said again, softly and with certainty, “he is dying.”

We left the hospital for Judy's house and slept until the phone jarred us awake. It was early morning. The message was urgent. Dad was in a coma. We were told to get to the hospital right away. At the hospital I went straight to his room and sat by his bedside. Talked to him. Judy stayed out in the hallway and yelled, “They killed him.” Over and over she yelled. “They didn't care, he was old, they let him die!”

Judy left the hospital. I stayed close to our father's dying body. I took his hand and talked to him. The nurse told me to go. He was beyond me now they said, and things could be much too unpleasant for me to have to see at this stage of the death process. I held his hand more firmly and kept talking. Then he began to move, and then he started tossing, and then he spoke, using his pet name for me.

“Bug, go,” he said. “Go.”

Still I held on to his hand.

But when his splaying legs opened his hospital gown and exposed one of his bare knees and his lower leg I froze with fear, withdrew my hand from his and, as he had told me to do, I went.

He died that night.

It took two years almost to the day for the dreams to end after my father's death. Constant dreams. Always, I'm trying to find him, protect him, save him. Always the dreams are murky and troubling. In the final dream I'm climbing the back side of a steep hill. It is very difficult to get a toe hold because a backhoe has torn away the hill's foundation in order to create a driveway. The earth beneath my feet is bone dry, lifeless. The color of amber.

I must keep climbing. Get to my Father.

As dreams will have it, I find I'm struggling now against earth filled with too much moisture the color and the density of clay. It is with all my might that I win the final battle with my foundations and, pulling my clay-coated hands and feet free, I find myself standing on a firm foundation. Before me, far from where I stand, I see a hospital and out from its shadowy front doors my father appears. He's running toward me. Like a madman he's running, his arms reaching for me, his hospital gown flying loosely around him. I watch until he is close enough. And then I step forward, my arms open, reaching for him. Ready to save him. He falls dead at my feet.

I could not save my Father.

**Eileen Walkem Hall** is the creator and owner of West Vancouver's renowned Savary Island Pie Company. Turning a childhood dream into what became a brilliant and highly successful bakery and restaurant, Eileen has been a student of Jungian thought for much of her life. She believes, as did Carl Jung, that despite life's many defeats and losses, we are all "born with everything within us, hardwired and ready" for our unique gifts and talents "to be recognized in the outer world."

To speak the truth

s p e a k      t r u t h

is a

lie

painful thing.

tell lies

forced

tell

To be

forced

lies

forced to tell lies

tell

is

lies

much worse

m u c h      w o r s e

Oscar Wilde

Kami Kanetsuka

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## Stolen Innocence

The mid 1950s was the best time to be a teenager in London. People were slowly recovering from WW2. The scars of war still showed in the streets, where bomb sites had not yet been cleared. All around there was an artistic flowering and a strong feeling of celebration with new music, musicians and clubs opening everywhere. It was also the time that the ‘working class hero’ came to the fore, with photographers, hairdressers and dress designers rising to the top with their creations, and being accepted by the snobby upper class. Street markets were vibrant and the clubs and bars where artists, poets and writers congregated were easily accessible. In fact this Bohemia was actually the heyday of London and not the sixties when it became termed ‘Swinging London,’ after *Time* magazine’s media cover story. There were jazz clubs for both modern and traditional jazz and basement coffee bars where skiffle groups, --musicians who play with guitars, washboards, tea-chest bass and spoons -- performed.

I left school at fifteen and got my first job at Galeries Lafayette, the French department store on Oxford Street. Although I loved my newfound independence, it was not a happy time for me. My sister Valerie had died from an overdose of sleeping pills after being hooked on heroin. She had worked at Boots Chemist in Piccadilly Circus where registered drug addicts picked up their prescription heroin. In those days it was common for junkie jazz musicians and people from overseas to be in England expressly for the purpose of easily obtaining drugs. She had become involved with some American musicians who were hooked on drugs, and became a user herself.

Although I was traumatized by my sister’s death, it was not usual in the 1950s to be counseled or get therapy to deal with such tragedies. I did, however, have the good sense to come up with my own therapy – dancing. With so many clubs to choose from I could find a place to dance every night of the week as well as Sunday afternoons. One of my frequent haunts was a basement coffee house where a skiffle group called The Vipers played. I had a teenage crush on one of the musicians called Wally Whyton who had a beautiful husky voice. This group was

extraordinarily popular and in fact influenced the Liverpudlian group The Quarry Men before they became The Beatles. They were so popular that they got gigs at a nightclub where jazz bands played Sunday afternoon sessions. Sometimes members of the jazz band would jam with the skiffle group; most London musicians mixed and matched.

At one Sunday afternoon session at a nightclub, a sole Dixieland jazz band played. In this uplifting music I lost myself in wild abandon. I was transported with the music, and all my grief disappeared. I was, however, aware that the French clarinetist in the band, with his short dyed blonde hair and dark glasses, was intently watching me from the stage. I will call him Jean Claude, although his name has been long forgotten. Jean Claude was not a stranger to me. I had once been introduced to him after he had sat in with the Vipers, but that day, being in the presence of Wally, my teenage crush, I did not pay attention to him.

During the break Jean Claude came to talk to me and invited me to a small party at his place he claimed he was having later that evening. He told me he had invited Wally and a few other friends to play together. Contemplating an exciting evening ahead I danced until the session ended. We left together and walked down several Soho streets past a brightly lit coffee bar called Heaven & Hell on Old Compton Street, to his place nearby. We climbed the dimly lit wooden stairs to his one room apartment over a neon-lit shop. Although his place seemed very small and not at all set up for musicians to play, in my naïveté I believed what he had told me. It soon became obvious that no one was coming.

I was uncomfortable and told him I wanted to go home. He took off his dark glasses and I could see he was older than he appeared, well into his forties. I got up to leave and he grabbed me, kissing me vigorously. I tried to push him away and as I struggled he pulled me to his bed, flung me down, took the cord from his dressing gown, and tied my hands behind my back. I was terrified when with great strength he held me down while he uncovered himself. Then he pulled my skirt up and my panties down and forcibly raped me.

I was a virgin and all I can remember of the defilement is pain, fear and anger. I struggled and screamed as loudly as I could, then amplified my hysterical outburst with huge sobs, hoping to scare him. It seemed to have some effect as he asked for my telephone number, saying that he

wanted to call my mother, undoubtedly a ploy to subdue me. I couldn't imagine what he would say.

When I escaped, I walked through the crowded streets feeling numb and sad, to where I had to travel home by train on the London underground. My lasting memory is of sitting there in the bright light for all to see, facing a line of people and feeling that I must look different – somewhat tarnished. Everything felt cold and harsh. At 16 I was no longer a virgin. I wondered if I could ever be happy again.

In those days -- more than half a century ago -- I would not have dreamed of reporting that incident to the police, as I would not have dreamed of telling my parents. I knew that they would consider that I was partly responsible.

Looking back, it is difficult to know what lasting effect that rape had on me. For some time I was very untrusting with men and not at all ready to have sex. Several years later, when I met a boy my age (who later became my boyfriend) on a ship going to Israel, I had a good sex life and felt healed. By then in England it was easy to get birth control and it was normal to sleep with boyfriends. In the sixties in London there was so much promiscuity that rapes became less regarded.

I married in my late twenties but it only lasted two years. My husband turned out to be quite cruel. Over the years I have had many lovers, but I have always been totally intolerant of any male roughness or unkindness. I have lived alone for many years now and wonder if that stems from a deep distrust of men unless they can prove their kindness.

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It is now 2015 and it feels like things are being shaken up. Male celebrities, one American and one Canadian, are in the news for perpetuating sexual violence. Though the Royal House has absolutely denied it, Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, has been accused of sleeping with an underage girl over the years, arranged by a known pimp. Stories of the Duke of Edinburgh's trysts with women have been talked about for years. Royalty may have the power to get away with it. We shall see.

Although today victims often fear coming forward thinking that they either will not be believed or it will bring shame to them, they are slowly speaking out. Through social media we



hear many stories about their abusive experiences and the information reaches many. On a positive note, this year the world responded to the shooting by the Taliban of Malala Yousafzai a Pakistani schoolgirl, by rewarding her speaking out with the Nobel Peace Prize. At the age of 16, she is the youngest recipient ever.

In my adult life I have lived for more than a decade in India and Nepal, where I was sometimes harassed and touched by men, thankfully, with no serious consequences. Around the world people were troubled by the horrendous gang rape that occurred in Delhi, where the young woman was so badly damaged she later died. Millions of Indians became aware of this injustice and I saw pictures of its young men in protest. Although there was another teenage gang rape the following year, I do believe that change is slowly happening in India too.

Recently in the Toronto Star I read about the Rise of Women's Rights. It states, "No man is so powerful he can assault a woman and actually *count* on getting away with it. And no woman is so powerless that a crime against her doesn't matter." I know that men and boys have also been sexually abused and those cases are often less known. It is time for men to speak up too. The time has arrived where women and men all over the world must take our power and speak out about sexual crimes until the perpetrators of violence and abuse are put to shame.

**Kami Kanetsuka** is a writer/photographer who has travelled extensively and works primarily from Bowen Island, B.C.

“Violators

cannot live with the truth:

survivors

cannot live without it.

There are those who still, once again,  
are poised to invalidate and deny us.

If **we** don't **assert** our **truth**, it  
may again be relegated to fantasy.

B u t   t h e   **t r u t h**   w o n ' t   g o  
a w a y . . .

It is invincible.”

Chrystine Oksana

Janet Oakes

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## Grampa Fred Stops By

I was sitting at a table in an outdoor cafe in Malaga, Spain. Laughter and loud conversation at the table next to me caught my attention. I didn't speak German, but I could recognize its sounds when I heard it spoken. All four, two women and two men, had red, robust cheeks and both women had red-dyed hair. The man with the salt and pepper moustache picked up his glass with his sausage fingers. I shuddered. Grampa Fred. Those swollen fingers and hands were just like Grampa Fred's. On this warm, sunny afternoon sitting in a plaza in Spain, those fat fingers cast me into a sea of memory.

One day when I was eleven, I had a red throat and swollen tonsils and couldn't go to school. My mother decided that she would leave me alone in the house to take care of myself because she had to go to work and didn't want to use a precious vacation day to stay home with me. I felt grown up and was happy to be left on my own. We had just acquired our first black and white TV so I had entertainment if I got tired of coloring or reading, even though most of the daytime programming consisted of test patterns or *please stand by* messages. The only UHF station broadcast from Portland, Oregon—50 miles away—was not very reliable in those early TV days.

I put my pink chenille bathrobe over my nightgown and headed to the living room. I turned on the TV before sitting down. No such thing as a remote control existed at that time. After jiggling the dials to adjust the horizontal and vertical lines floating across the screen, I was ready to get cozy on the sofa. I tucked my legs underneath me and wrapped them in my bathrobe. I was warm and comfortable. Then I saw my Grampa Fred's blue Plymouth sedan roar into the gravel driveway and brake to a sudden halt. I was surprised because Mom hadn't told me he would be stopping by. Through the square glass windows of the front door, I watched him come up the steps and let himself in. We never locked our doors unless we were leaving on a week's vacation.

Grampa Fred was a big man of German heritage. His hearty appetite was apparent in his large gabardine slacks held up with suspenders. He wore a wool suit jacket and dressed more formally than most men of that generation. He sat down next to me and smiled. He asked me if it was a school day and wondered why I was at home. I explained that I had a sore throat and that Mom had wanted me to stay home from school. He told me that he hadn't known I'd be there alone. He said he'd just stopped by to see if he could get the awl that my dad had borrowed from him. I told him he'd have to look for it in the garage but he said it was okay and that there was no rush. He wanted to know what I was watching on TV and asked if he could sit down beside me and watch a little.

I was beginning to feel weird but I told him he could. Grampa wasn't usually this friendly when my folks were around. I was startled when he pushed his hand with the big, fat sausage fingers under my robe and between my legs. I froze. He moved his hand up my leg and his fingers rubbed my private parts. Electric sensations raced to my stomach and through my whole body. I swallowed air and gasped. I wasn't sure what he was doing or what I should do. Feeling uncomfortable and with all the courage I could muster, I said, "Grampa Fred, stop it." He removed his hand and told me I was a sweet girl. I shouldn't be frightened, he said. He'd look for the awl another day. Then he told me that I didn't need to tell my parents that he'd stopped by. He stood up, straightened his jacket, smoothed his slacks and left through the front door that he had so recently entered. He tore out of the driveway in reverse with gravel spewing every which way. My dad could always tell when Grampa Fred had visited by the trail of misplaced gravel he left behind. I prayed that neither he nor my mom would see any suspicious signs of strewn gravel when they returned from work. I now had a secret. I didn't want to have to tell anyone about what Grampa Fred had done. I was just eleven and didn't know much about sex except for what I'd witnessed in the barnyard, but somehow I had the feeling that what had happened was wrong and was not a subject to be discussed with my family.

Several months later there was a second incident with Grampa Fred. He and I were sitting in close quarters in the back seat of our 40's Chevy driving north to the Yakima Valley from Salem, Oregon. On that day, my sister had stayed home because she had a job in the bank. Being 16 going on 17, she relished the idea of being on her own at least for a few days. My brother was

already at my Aunt Rena and Uncle Bob's house in Selah, where he had been staying to help out with the cherry harvest on my Uncle Bob's ranch. So there I sat captive to my grandfather's groping as he pinched and rubbed the nipple on one of my budding breasts. I didn't say anything or move away. I was scared. I didn't want to alert my folks in the front seat. Even though I had never had a discussion with my mom about people touching me or about my private parts, I sensed that what was happening was wrong. So I let Grampa Fred tweak my nipple for many miles. I was in a state of terror and I was confused. The tingling feeling in my stomach was quite pleasant. My first sexual arousal. My feelings bewildered me and I didn't know what to do about that big hand and those sausage fingers. I couldn't decide what to do. Should I speak up and tell Grampa to stop it? Or tell Mom that Grampa was touching me? I did nothing and he continued until my Dad stopped the car and we all got out to greet the aunts and uncles gathered at the ranch for a picnic reunion. But I wondered: Did Grampa do the same to other girls? There are no living witnesses, because my grandfather, parents, aunts, and siblings are all dead now.

After, that day, my Grampa never had an opportunity to touch me and I didn't think about him until years later. I had been widowed and wanted to sell my large home and downsize to a condo. I invited my daughter to accompany me to check out a place I'd seen advertised for sale near the house where we'd lived when she was a child. As we got closer I said, "Let's drive by and see what the old place looks like." As we drove down the tree-lined street behind our former home, she suddenly burst into tears. I pulled over to the side of the road and stopped the car so we could talk. Through her sobs, she said, "He touched me. I couldn't tell you. I thought you were mad. I was scared." Then she told me her story.

On her sixth birthday, I was busy in the kitchen decorating her cake. She was impatient and underfoot. Out of exasperation I told her to run on down to Terry's house and she and Terry could walk back together. This was 1967 and we mothers felt it was safe in our neighborhood to let the kids run the few blocks back and forth between our two houses. One mother would give a quick telephone call to let the other mother know when to expect a child's arrival.

Becky ran out the door wearing her paper crown from school with her name boldly printed below the points of the crown: B E C K Y. I called Bonnie, her friend's mom, and returned to put the finishing touches on the frosting. After about 15 minutes my phone rang.

Bonnie told me that Becky hadn't shown up. My heart dropped. I slammed down the receiver and ran down the steps to the road below our house, then ran along the beach road and up the hill to Bonnie's house. No Becky.

I jogged on the back road back to our house. My stomach clenched. Bonnie retraced the two roads that I had just covered. No Becky. I called the police and called her father at work. I cried. Bonnie called the other mothers and cancelled the party. I cried some more. A policeman arrived. They asked me how old she was and what she was wearing and a string of other questions.

I told him we'd had the *dangerous stranger* conversation that we'd learned from the TV clown J.P. Patches: Don't talk to strangers. Don't take candy from a stranger. Don't get in a car with a stranger.

What felt like a lifetime later, Becky came up the front steps with tears in her eyes. I swept her up and gave her a big hug. Through tears and sobs Becky told her story. She was on the side of the road when a man in a car pulled up. He'd said, "Becky, your Mom sent me to get you and take you to see your new pony." He'd obviously read her name on her crown. What six-year-old wouldn't want to believe that she was going to get a pony for her birthday? Becky, a believing child, didn't perceive this gift-giving man as a dangerous stranger since he knew her name and said her mother had sent him.

We got few details from Becky that day. She said that the man had driven her up the back road, stopped the car and got out, then had gone behind a tree. He'd returned to the car a few minutes later and then drove her home. Neither the policeman nor I wanted to put words in her mouth or thoughts in her mind, so we left the story at that.

My adult daughter who was sobbing in the seat beside me said that being in this childhood neighborhood had brought back her memory of that day. She wanted me to know she hadn't been able to tell me everything. She had interpreted my concern as anger and couldn't tell me that the man had touched her inappropriately before getting out of the car.

I told her how sorry I was that she had been scared by my words and actions. I explained that I had been both frightened and happy to have her home. I may have over-reacted. I certainly wasn't mad at her. I told her that I didn't know how to ask her what had happened. I hadn't want

to put ideas in her mind or words in her mouth. The policeman had been equally inadequate, I told her. Only later would the appropriate vocabulary become common knowledge.

For the first time, I'm writing about my daughter's experience and my Grampa's inappropriate touching when I was a preteen. My daughter and I were fondled by men, nothing more. I ask myself: What difference did it make to me as to how I developed sexually as a teenager and a woman? As a teenager, I was promiscuous, losing my virginity after the junior-senior prom in the back of my boyfriend's father's Packard sedan. I'm lucky I didn't get pregnant. Neither one of us had a condom at the ready.

Did it matter? Would I have become the same person, were other factors at play? Was my brain wired for excitement and experimentation because of this experience or in spite of it? I kept my experiences a secret from my mother and others until I decided to write this essay in my seventh decade. In comparison to the long-term abuse and rape that so many other girls and women have endured, is my experience significant? Is there a difference? My good luck did not last forever. I got pregnant in the front seat of a VW beetle when I was a junior in college.

My daughter was the first one to hear my story. It seemed appropriate that I share with her the feelings of violation that were overcoming her. After I spilled out my story, we both had tears running down our faces but a cloud was lifted. We no longer have to hide our secrets and our shame. It was a liberating moment.

Although many girls and women have suffered greater degrees of abuse over longer periods of time, I believe that each story that comes out of the darkness into the light of day is a positive step toward ending the culture that allows men to do whatever they want or need to satisfy themselves with no regard to the feelings or the effect upon their victims.

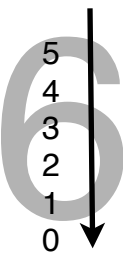
**Janet Oakes** is a teacher of writing with an emphasis on personal stories. She feels it is gratifying and healing to take her turn to reflect on and write about her life.

# Strangers...

[are] offenders

in just **3%** of **s e x u a l**  
**a s s a u l t s**

against victims under age 6



**s e x u a l**  
**a s s a u l t**

& **5%** of the

victimizations of youth ages

**6 - 11.**

Howard N. Snyder, Ph.D



Rachel Grant

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# From Broken to Beyond Surviving

## Excerpt

I was a five-year old, middle-class kid, growing up in Oklahoma with an acre out my back door when my grandfather came to live with our family. As an innate nurturer, I would help my mom and dad take care of him by doing simple things like bringing him a bowl of cereal, keeping him company, and reading to him. We spent hours on our front porch swing talking, laughing, and watching the people in the park across the street. He was my friend and a quiet companion.

One day, glowing from having just turned ten, I was hanging out, watching some cheesy 80's TV when I heard my grandfather coming down the hall. I knew he was heading outside, so I hopped up, and went to the door. Sometimes, he stayed outside by himself for a while then knocked when he was ready to come back in. But this day was different.

When my grandfather pulled my arm and dragged me with him to the porch swing, I didn't think much of it. It was a nice day; I thought he wanted some company. I've always been a snuggly person and at that age I still loved to crawl in behind my dad in his chair while he watched game shows. So when my grandfather put his arm around me, I snuggled in close to his fuzzy brown and orange sweater.

This day was the first day my grandfather molested me. I was terrified, frozen, and confused. I remember thinking that he just didn't realize that he was touching my breast so I shifted my body, but his hand returned. This was the first day of many that my grandfather would violate our friendship and rob me of my peace and innocence.

The touching went on for months and got worse. No one noticed and I didn't tell. I believed I'd done something to cause it. To everyone else, I was the same old Rachel, laughing

and cracking jokes, but in my room all alone I'd sit and try to fight off all of the confusing new thoughts that had become a part of my everyday life: I deserve it. It's my fault. I'm ugly. I'm worthless.

One day, my aunt drove up unexpectedly while he and I were on the porch. He withdrew his hands quickly and I finally knew for sure that what was happening was wrong. But that only made things more complicated. I thought I should know how to stop it and because I couldn't, I believed that I must have been doing something to cause it. This was the first day I felt deep shame about what I had experienced.

Another day, I was again on the porch being violated. Suddenly, my mom came flying out onto the porch yelling, "Rachel, get in the house!" I jumped up, shocked and scared. This was my mom's best *You're in trouble, child* voice. She had been walking by the window and saw him touching me. She stood over me, but not aggressively and not in anger. I clearly remember in that moment thinking: It really is my fault. I'm the one in trouble. This belief is one that I have struggled with for years and years until I eventually was able to challenge it by recognizing that my mother was just scared and wanted to get me away from him.

Fortunately, when my parents discovered what was happening, they immediately removed my grandfather from our home. Unfortunately, that didn't make the thoughts stop. My mind was quickly becoming my worst enemy: You made it happen! You must have liked it or you would have done something to stop it. No one loves you! Why bother living?

My parents wanted me to get help and even found me a counselor, but I wasn't having it. I didn't want to talk about it. I would run away to the woods so they couldn't force me to go. I just wanted to pretend that everything was okay. I buried my head in the sand and tried to be a 'normal' little girl.

I spent my teen years learning how to "perform." How to keep the outside looking great while everything fell apart on the inside. I was a straight A student for the most part. I had a job and played volleyball and studied writing and acting. That was all a part of the performance. Behind closed doors, I was full of fears about my self-worth and value. Confused

about relationships and intimacy, I felt very alone most of the time. I believed that no one truly understood me.

In my early twenties, I attempted my first “real” relationship. It quickly became clear that I was ill-equipped for a relationship. I was distrustful and antagonistic, I constantly created drama, and I was in constant fear of the relationship ending. Fed up with feeling this way, I began doing all of the things we do when we want to get better. I talked to friends, saw a therapist and read books. I was starting to feel better, but in many ways I was still going around and around the same mountain of self-doubt, anger and shame. I was acting out and living a life with nonexistent boundaries.

By my late-twenties, I was going through a divorce, lived in a new city with no friends or sense of community, and was still in pain. I was ashamed of the abuse that had occurred 16 years before. I realized that I could not keep going in the same direction, that something had to give or I was going to live out the rest of my life feeling alone, broken, and miserable. Merely surviving.

That is when I had my *aha* moment. The thought occurred to me: I don’t want to just survive my life, I want to live it! I realized that my abuse was an experience. I had successfully made connections between being abused and my current behavior. But the most critical question remained unanswered by any of the books, therapists, or friends I’d come across: What do I do about it?

I began to ask this question, and I was shocked by the answers I got. Everyone I spoke to seemed to believe that this was a life sentence that I was just going to have to deal with. I thought: Man, wrong answer! And that’s what spurred me on to do my Masters in counseling psychology and to study how the brain is impacted by abuse and how we can heal and move on.

I started using myself as a guinea pig. I would think about an area in life where I was struggling and try to figure out what I was missing, what was going on in my brain, and what needed to happen in order for me to heal. Ultimately, this all came together into what is now the Beyond Surviving program.

Today, I am Beyond Surviving. It's been a hell of a road, but today my new 'normal' is being confident in who I am and able to connect with others and ask for what I need. I feel unburdened and joyful, and I now have the skills and tools needed to successfully navigate any bumps in the road. And the best part of it all is that I get to share this with other survivors and walk alongside them in their journey.

**Rachel Grant**, *Sexual Abuse Recovery Coach*, works with survivors of childhood sexual abuse who are sick and tired of feeling broken and unfixable. She helps them let go of the pain of abuse and finally move on with their lives.

S e x u a l A b u s e

causes a sense of

alienation

that pervades

all

relationships

relationships

relationships

starting with ...oneself

to the most abstract

affiliations.

Feelings of guilt, shame, and inferiority are common.

2013 Laura K Kerr PhD

Charlotte Anderson

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## Scarred for Life

I pedal my bike faster and faster...breathe...breathe....breathe. Away from that small apartment...breathe...breathe...breathe. Away from my worst nightmare...pedal... pedal... pedal. My heart is pounding. My head is spinning. How could he do it again?

On the phone after school that day, he'd said he needed my help. I was alone with my younger sister, busy following my mom's carefully written instructions on how to make spaghetti sauce so that dinner would be ready by the time she got home from work. I had fried the onions and ground beef and added it to the canned tomato sauce in the pot. I was stirring the sauce when the phone rang. I instantly recognized the deep radio quality voice on the other end of the phone. The baritone that used to melt my mom's heart.

He said he hadn't seen me in a long time and asked me if I would do him a favor. I said I would, but in a guarded voice. He told me he wasn't feeling well, had a terrible headache and wanted me to bring him some aspirin. He said he knew that my mom must have some in the medicine cabinet. I told him that I had no way to get it to him because my mom wasn't home and I was cooking dinner. I couldn't leave my sister Christine alone. He said that my mom didn't have to know about it, said how much he missed us and how sorry he was that things didn't work out between my mom and him. He told me how much he loved me. I didn't know what to do. He sounded tired and desperate.

Twenty minutes later I arrive at the apartment that he'd recently moved to after he and my mom split up. We helped him move so I know which way to go. Clutching the aspirin in my hand I walk through the lobby of the older three story building and knock on the door of his ground floor apartment. The door is slightly ajar and the knocking opens it a little more. He calls out to me to come in and tells me he's in bed.

My heart starts to beat faster as old memories of him lying naked on the bed flood through me. No it isn't like that, I think. He just needs the aspirin. He needs my help. I move slowly into

the room. It's sparsely furnished with unpacked boxes strewn around. I surreptitiously look around the corner into the space where his bed is and there he is, lying on top of the blankets completely naked. I freeze and look away.

He tells me to come closer, tells me how much he misses us all, how much he loves us. I hold out my hand with the aspirin. He pats the place beside him and tells me to sit with him. He begins to talk about memories of when we were together as a family and all of the fun times we had together and how much he misses my mom. He sits up and moves closer to me, and as he's talking, he grabs a glass of water by the bed and swallows the aspirin. He asks me about school. Asks me if I'm interested in boys.

In the past when he'd done this it was always when Mom wasn't home. I would be home from school watching TV and having an after school snack and he would sometimes wander around the house naked and ask if I minded. Sometimes he would call from the bedroom. When I went to see what he wanted he would be like this, naked on the bed, asking me to give him a massage. He would start on his stomach and ask me to rub his back. Then he would flip over and ask me to do the front. He wouldn't want me to miss anything so I had to massage *that* too. Then he would get up and stand in the corner and with a tissue in hand, finish what I had started. He would then show me and it would be over. I could go and watch TV and he would tell me that I didn't need to tell anyone. After a few times he would ask me to do more, kiss him all over and not miss anything there either. All the time he was telling me that he loved us and loved my mom, reminding me that she didn't need to know. It was our little secret. I was eleven years old.

Now at thirteen sitting in his apartment alone he is different. He's no longer asking me to touch him. He's beginning to touch me. He caresses my arm as we talk, and he fondles my breasts, tells me I'm developing into a beautiful young lady. He says that he needs to teach me how to be with a boy. He says he can show me. He unbuttons my jeans and slips his hand down and remarks on the "peach fuzz" that has grown there.

All the while I sit frozen and terrified. At eleven I didn't understand what was really happening though I knew something didn't feel right. At thirteen I know this isn't right and the fear of knowing that has my brain racing as to how to get out of here. I try to pull away and button up but he pulls me closer and lays me down on the bed underneath him. His nakedness is

looming above me and he has my hands pinned to the bed. He starts to rub against me and rock back and forth, still trying to pull down my jeans. I pin my legs together tight and keep my body rigid. I ask him to stop but he keeps saying that I need to learn how to be with a man. I can feel something hard pressing at my thighs trying to push, push. His eyes are closed and he is mumbling loving things and telling me it's okay.

I finally get the courage to jump up and yank my jeans up. I back away from the bed and tell him I have to leave. I run out of the apartment as fast as I can, grab my bike and start pedaling. I think of my sister at home with dinner on the stove. How long have I been gone? When I get home my sister is mad. The sauce is burned and she's asking where I've been and what has taken me so long. Mom had called to check on us and she'd told her that I wasn't there.

When Mom gets home she yells at me for leaving my sister alone and for ruining the dinner. She can't understand why I would do such a thing and I can't tell her. I just go to my room and cry and cry. I can't talk to anyone. I think of the betrayal of a man who was supposed to be like a father to us who is still a friend of the family. A friend of my dad. Tears stream down my face and all I can think is that I will be scarred for life. And that I can never tell anyone.

But eventually I did tell. When I was 16 or 17 I invited my boyfriend Joey into our apartment when my mom wasn't home. We were making out and enjoying some alone time together when there was a knock on the door. It was quite late and my mom was out of town for the weekend. I was afraid of getting caught alone with a boy so I asked Joey to hide in my bedroom while I went to the door. I asked who it was before I opened the door. A very familiar deep voice answered. It was him.

My heart jumped. Should I let him in? What would he do if I said no? I opened the door and he sauntered in as if nothing was unusual. He said he'd been driving around and saw the light on so thought he would come up and say hi. I'm sure he noticed that my mom's car wasn't there. He sat down at the kitchen table as if he had no intention of waiting to be invited to stay. We made small talk and I wasn't sure if I should let him know that my boyfriend was there and risk my mom finding out through him. But not saying anything, I decided, left him thinking that I was alone in the house which made me feel more vulnerable. So I told him. He raised an interested eyebrow but made no move to leave or get up. I told him that Joey was in my bedroom



and that he should probably leave. He lingered a bit longer then finally got up and made a move to give me a hug. I stiffened, but he just said goodbye and left.

When I came back into the bedroom I was shaking. Joey asked who had been at the door and wondered why I was so upset. I couldn't hide my feelings. I was visibly shaken by the unexpected visit. What would have happened if I'd been alone? Right then I was grateful for Joey being there. He pressed with more questions and I started to cry. I had to tell someone and I didn't know how else to explain my emotions. I finally told him that I'd been molested by this man a few years before and that I hadn't expected to see him again. Especially alone.

Joey was angry. He paced back and forth and asked me if I'd told my parents. I told him I hadn't because I was afraid of what they would think. Afraid they wouldn't believe me. I didn't want to break up the friendship that my parents, especially my dad, had had with him. Joey told me that I would have to tell or he would break up with me. I guess it was his way of looking after me. He begged me to do what he felt was the right thing. At that age I was very influenced by peers, especially my boyfriend, so I reluctantly agreed.

Joey walked me home to my dad's house where I was staying while my mom was out of town. At the front door he gave me a nudge forward and said, "If you don't do this we're over." My heart was in my throat as I walked into the house. My dad and my sister were both there watching TV. Dad asked where I'd been and I told him I'd been out with Joey. I told him that I had something to tell him but that it would be better if Christine wasn't in the room. He said that anything I had to say could be said in front of my sister.

It was a terrible thing to have to tell him and I could see the hurt on his face. I don't know what he was expecting to hear but certainly not what I told him. I didn't go into detail but I gave him enough information for my dad to say that he was going to get his gun. I wondered if he blamed me in some way for causing it to happen. Now their friendship would be ruined forever. What surprised me was my sister admitting that something had happened to her as well. It was an incident while she was taking a bath. I was horrified and that made Dad's reaction all the more difficult. He told us that we shouldn't tell our mom as she was going through an emotional time and was too fragile to process this news. He said we must never tell her.

But she did find out. Several years later Christine and I let it slip accidentally when we were looking at old photographs. I had wanted to deal with the memories of the abuse in my own way but while looking at the photos, Christine and I began talking about it together. We didn't realize Mom had overheard us. She was horrified and she insisted we tell her more. She took the photo albums and tearfully removed every picture that included him and tore them up in front of us. I wished she hadn't done that because some of those were happy memories from camping trips and bike riding. Now every picture is gone but I will never forget his face or his voice or what he did to our family.

It is now 40 years later and that event and the events leading up to it have indeed scarred me for life. My relationships have suffered and intimacy is difficult if not impossible for me. My scarred brain tells me that to be loved I must perform sex and if I don't, then I don't deserve to be loved. On the other hand my negative association with both love and sex have left me not wanting either and choosing to live a life without romantic love and intimacy. This is the way I can escape the discomfort, pain and betrayal of love and sex. Over the years I have come to terms with this to some degree, but sadly, it hasn't been easy for my partners. Luckily I am now with someone who accepts me the way I am, even though he doesn't like it. We have a quiet and gentle kind of love that is not demonstrative, but we are both content. Maybe over time we will get to a place that is closer to the love and intimacy I have missed for most of my life, but it's a process every single day. Emotional scars last a lifetime.

**Charlotte Anderson** *is an artist who enjoys travel and nature walks and likes to express herself through writing and painting. She works as a dental receptionist in Coquitlam, BC.*

While all **survivors** react differently,  
there are three main symptoms of **PTSD**:

### **1. Re-experiencing:**

feeling like you are reliving the event through

dreams  
or intrusive thoughts  
flashbacks,  
dreams,  
or intrusive thoughts  
or intrusive thoughts

### **2. Avoidance:**

intentionally or  
subconsciously changing your behavior  
to avoid scenarios associated with the  
event or losing interest in activities you  
used to enjoy

### **3. Hyper-arousal:** feeling "on edge" all of the time,

having  
difficulty sleeping,  
being easily startled,  
or prone to sudden outbursts

Seren Nye

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# A History of Violence

I get back to the block after lifting weights in the gym and I just want to rinse off. I'm in the showers, then BG's behind me. Christ, what a pain in the ass.

"So you're lifting, huh? You think you're big and shit, huh?"

I shrug.

"How much you press? Huh?"

"I don't know, Bobby. I just look at the plates on the bar. I don't know how much they weigh."

"You don't even know what you're doing." He sneers. "See this?" He makes a muscle. "Look at this. What is this, wood? Feel it, go on. I press 350, more sometimes. I said feel it."

"I take your word for it. Look, I'm burned out. I got to get down to the kitchen soon, okay?"

He grabs my arm and twists it behind my back, puts a meaty hand on the back of my head and pushes me down, slams my mouth against a shower faucet. I spit something out. "Shit!"

"Shut the fuck up. Shut the fuck up or I'll kill you, you little cunt." He slams my head down again, grinds himself up against my ass, tries to fuck me but he isn't hard enough. Then he starts to shudder. Something viscous and unspeakable drips down my thigh. My face is up against the faucets. I'm thinking: *Hot on the right, cold on the left? That ain't right.*

He snarls. "You say anything, I'll kill you, you little fuck. I'll break your fucking neck in your sleep." He wades out, a sneering ape.

I turn the shower on full hot, spray it into my mouth. The broken tooth screams. Blood drips down with the water. Shit, I gotta do something about this.

I wrap a towel around me and walk back to my room. Soupy, my Puerto Rican roommate and compadre, is lying there on his bunk. What the hell's he doing here this time of day?

"Hey, Bro, you're bleeding like a chicken." He looks closer. "Oh man, you better do something about that. Y'know what I mean?"

I don't say a thing. The shakes are coming on strong.

**Seren Nye:** *is, at various times, a poet, spoken word performer, performance teacher and coach, public radio producer, and recovering economist. He is the author of the poetry collection, Witness, (available on Amazon), and the poetry audio CD, A Jungle of Roses. He lives in San Miguel de Allende, MX.*

In every adult

there lurks a child--  
an eternal child,

something that is  
always becoming,

is never completed,

and calls for unceasing

care,

attention,

and education.

That is the part of the  
personality which  
wants to develop and  
become whole.

C. G. Jung CW 17: 286

Nicola Frost

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# My Mad Sister

My mad sister and I go back a long way. It's hard to say just where, why or when my sister appeared. Sometimes it feels as if she was always with me, my mad sister. We're like twins who share the same life in each and every way. Then something happened. That's it I suppose. Something happened to my poor sister.

My sister's tale is large and confused, difficult both to understand and narrate. I guess the only place to begin is right here. She lives in a fantasy world; it's all her stage. Things were large, bright and wonderful in my sister's World once upon a time. Our mother remembers her earlier than I.

"Such a happy little girl!" she says.

I find this hard to believe. My sister was always troubled. My earliest memory of my mad sister was when she was nine. Perhaps I never noticed her before, but it was then she started to pray. And she stopped talking. Not that she didn't pray before but now all she asked God for was death. She had a strong faith in those days and honestly believed that if she prayed long enough, her prayers would be answered.

But God betrayed her.

As my sister could not die, she became larger than life. Her mouth became her tormentor, always open, ever ready, insatiable. In the end she ate raw sugar to appease it. She ate until she could eat no more and awoke to find herself gross.

Nobody seemed to notice that she had stopped talking. But I noticed, and from then on, her voice was forever in my head. The rantings, the ravings. The compulsions and obsessions. I hang my head. Is it me or she who cries: "Shut up!"?

I don't know, but it is she who answers, screaming in her mania: "Talk to me, please talk to me. Talk to me about anything."

"Can't you think of anything but yourself?" I say.

“To the contrary,” she says. “I would give anything to be thinking of something other than myself. So talk to me, please talk to me....”

My poor sister.

Sometimes she cries every day. Sometimes she doesn't cry at all for months, even years. Everyone thinks she is at her sickest when she cries, but I know better. When she goes numb, and she can't feel the things she's experiencing, when she can't hear her own voice or thoughts over the noise in our head, can't sleep, can't eat, can't stop eating, this is when I fear for my sister.

My poor, lonely, looney, crackpot sister.

My sister thinks she needs a man in her life to make her special. Whole. It's the last thing she needs. Sometimes she's like a little puppy-dog. “Love me, love me, love me,” she begs, as she clings to men who cannot love. I don't pretend to fully understand her.

My sister is not always sad. But still, she lives inside her head, where distant islands shine like pearls within a sapphire sea. Where mountains perch amongst clouds, where countless stars sparkle, shooting as they fall.

Oh my sister, my sister.

I love my crazy sister. Sometimes you wouldn't think she had a care in the world. She sees things differently than most people, and through her eyes, sometimes all is new and wondrous. And sometimes all is darkness and despair.

Sometimes my sister's voice sounds the same as mine. As time goes on it gets harder to tell. Sometimes. Is it she who put heroin up our nose and pickles our liver with alcohol? Is it she who puts razors to our arms and, so slowly, so calmly slides them through our skin? Watches beads of blood change suddenly to tear drops she should be shedding, but somehow cannot? Comforted by pain's distraction, is it she who cries out to me in anguish and despair: “Stop doing this to us!”

Or is it me to her?

I look in the mirror and see myself. She laughs as she says to me: “But don't you see? I'm OK. It's you, not me!”

My mad sister and I go back a long way.



Nicola Frost

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# Thief

Broken, damaged, torn,  
Held, forced, hurt,  
Smothered, suffocated, terrified,  
Disgusted, violated, tormented;  
He robbed me.  
My innocence? Of course,  
And so much more;  
But worse  
He stole the light from my eyes.

**Nicola Frost** *is a 55 year old English artist and writer living in Port Jervis, New York.*

“.....Tell us

what



the



a t

world has

b e e n



y<sub>ou</sub>

in the

dark...

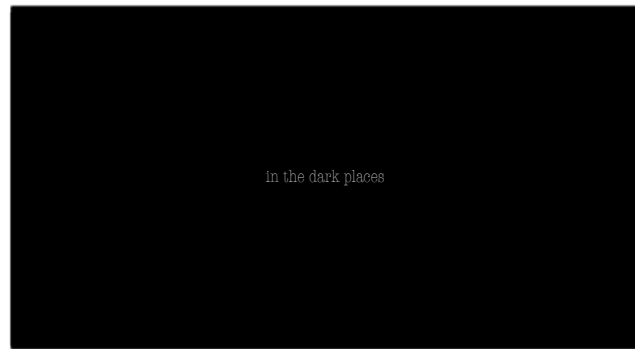
and in the

L a n g  
u a g e

alone protects us from the scariness of things with

Toni Morrison

no names.”



light...



# Call for Submissions

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## Out of the Darkness: Freeing the Betrayed Heart

Out of the Darkness: Freeing the Betrayed Heart is a project that grew out of a conversation between a few women one afternoon in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. What came to the forefront was realization of the terrible burden of silence that survivors of abuse carry through their lives. The silence that forbids us to speak out against violations to our bodies. We know that healing can come from telling our stories and we agreed that it is time for all of us to step out from the darkness of silence and into the light of truth. Because abuse often happens within the family circle, victims rarely tell anyone what is happening to them. They are twice betrayed. Betrayed by the abuse and assaults on their bodies, and betrayed by a culture that chooses to 'not know' and to 'not see.' The resulting shame, anger and pain lasts a lifetime and ripples outward to affect every aspect of our lives.

We are looking for stories from people – both men and women – who have a history of sexual abuse and who wish to join with us in the healing process of telling our stories. You may use your own name or a pseudonym. Writers do not need to be professionals, as we have editors who will help you tell your story in a way that fits within our guidelines. Our editors and writers are professionals with many years of experience. By submitting your manuscript you are agreeing to the editorial process and the decisions of the ODJ editors as well as publication of your manuscript in the journal “Out of the Darkness: Freeing the Betrayed Heart.”

We accept poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Submissions may be up to 4000 words, and may have been previously published. Submissions should be in Word format, double-spaced, and must include the writer's actual name, a short bio, and a contact email address. If you are using a pseudonym, please let us know and include your real name as well. Incomplete submissions will not be considered

The deadline for submissions is September 30, 2016. Send submissions to me, Edythe Anstey Hanen, at **OutoftheDarknessEditor@hotmail.com**. I look forward to receiving your stories and getting to know you as we work together as light bearers.

Edye



# Editors

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## **Barbara E. Verchot, MS**

*Barbara is an anthropologist, independent scholar, and educator. She has twice been honored by having the opportunity to present her research at the annual American Anthropological Association conference. Her digital books and papers based on her research are used in educational courses both in public schools and at the collegiate level. She has been Site Coordinator for Florida State University's Graduate level DBAE curriculum building courses. Her written curriculum for special exhibitions at Orlando Museum of Art (OMA), including the curriculum for Judy Chicago's "The Holocaust Project," are still being used throughout Central Florida. Barbara also served as television spokesperson for OMA for art programing. She is recipient of the Global Women's Humanitarian Award, Women's Caucus for Arts Outstanding Achievement Award for Leadership, and has been formally recognized many times by the Thai government for her humanitarian work there. Barbara is founder and director of Wings of Peace International, a humanitarian aid organization.*

## **Judi Tedlie, MSW**

*Judi is a retired social worker whose area of expertise is marginalized youth. Her research found that 90% of the youth living on the streets in her city, had been abused. Judi's work with these youth informs her interest in our subject matter.*

*An active creative, in her small business "blue skies up above," Judi has also started two social enterprises, one of which, "BeadWorks," won an innovation award from the City of Ottawa. Judi continues to be involved in spreading the word about the insidious nature of 'rape culture.' She lives half time in San Miguel, Mexico and half time in Canada.*

## **Edythe Anstey Hanen**

*Edythe is a writer and editor who lives on Bowen Island, a small island community off the west coast of British Columbia. Edythe wrote for and was the editor of a weekly community newspaper for 17 years. She studied writing at the University of British Columbia and has published a historical coffee table book "Bowen Island: Reflections;" articles, award-winning short stories and poetry in several literary magazines, four anthologies as well as in The Globe & Mail, the Hamilton Bay Observer and the National Post. She is also a regular contributor to Mexconnect, an online travel magazine on Mexico. You can contact Edythe at: <http://canadianauthors.org/national/profile/moonrider/>*



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