

Shasta Sovereign

A Creative Collaboration
February 2023



Contents

Sri	4
Alice Neel	7
Mooga	7
Golden Sapphire	10
Deena	20
Ms. P	22
Misty	25
Dr. Alan Cohn	26
Mrs. S	27
Michael T	30
TLC	33
Catherine	34
Phoenix	36
Adamine	38
Pensir	40
Maris	46
Sanji	47
Mrs. H	49
Mitch Pinkerton	55
Dee	56
Kristin M.	75
Natalie H.	85



Dear Reader:

We are honored to continue sharing with you the works by our friends, who come from all paths of life. This is our 2nd volume, with our first volume being well received by our community. We want to recognize our friends, who have the courage to share a piece of themselves with you on the following pages. Different aspects of the human experience can be seen here, varying from hopes and dreams to fears and angst. By making sense of our lives, we can help inspire others to start doing the same. It is our hope to create a community to help one another along the path of self-knowledge. Please be witness to our friends. If you are moved by these pieces to share your experiences, please visit our website at shastasovereign.com.

In inspiration,

Shasta Sovereign



Disappearing

Author: Sri

A friend pointed out that I am very up and down.

It is so true.

And I am just all over the place.

No focus.

No attention span.

Not really interested in anything.

Not really super good at anything.

Whimsical.

Is this the result of 18 years of taking a benzodiazepine?

I don't even judge tweakers anymore.

How am I any different or better?

I don't really believe in anything anymore.

I feel of no use.

Even obsolete as a mom.

I never get hugs.

I never give hugs.

I am uninspired.

UNmotivated.

I excel in mediocrity.

A son makes a point of praising photography.

Not mine, though.

I used to love to sing.

My children silenced me pleadingly.

What I love I kill my children's interest in.

My fears of terrifying physical, bodily events keep me from going out and working and making money.

Something else runs the show.

I feel like a stranger living in this body.



No God, no religion, no process recommended for connecting
with a source holds my attention.

A positive affirmation works once or thrice and then just
annoys me.

I don't believe in the comfort of being held and sheltered.

Who wants to hug this non-spring chicken?

My dreams don't exist anymore.

I have nothing to offer my children.

Nothing.

How am I going to change?

* * *

I just don't know

Author: Sri

The way people have disappeared from my life

Has been so inexplicable

And so hard to wrap

My head around, in this life.

I am so afraid to love ever again.

This, more than anything, has made me contemplate

Just exiting from the human experience.

For a person to be there for me one minute,

Be my best friend, my support, sometimes my life-saver

And then just be gone, an empty husk,

A soul-less machine going through the motions of life,

No life in their eyes, no soul smiling out at me,

Is so warping.

I fear I may lose my f'-ing mind.

I cannot throw myself away, though.



But I can't let myself dream anymore, either.
So much pain and confusion.
And to resort to saying, like a mantra "Let Go and Let God"

Is an act of throwing it all to the winds
With a "come what may" attitude
As God has also ceased to exist for me
As I had known and felt him before.

* * *

Darn you, body. Just kidding.

Author: Sri

At first I thought my body
Was betraying me.
After an upbringing of being told
It is a bad thing and to negate it;
Just a bag of blood, pus and stool,
I was trying to ignore it,
Wishing it would just cooperate,
Getting in the way of the "fun"
I wanted to have.
And I know I'm much nicer to my body (compared to some),
As I live a very clean, straight life,
As a non-drinking, non-smoking, non-any-kind-of-mind-
altering-foreign-substance, Vegetarian, hyper-aware, person.
But still,
There are other ways
I have let my body be hurt.
Now I see that my body is my greatest teacher.
It guides me to do for myself



What I have had such a hard time doing.

And it translates to this, very simplified:

Do NOT put up with sh*t

* * *

Ripped and Rewoven

Author: Alice Neel

My body meets each day with the necessary response.

Every now and then, I get a glimpse of what is going on.

My life is unraveling.

Repairing it I try to keep it just as it was;

Tightly woven into “my” design.

But, the original pattern evades me.

It rips again and I reweave it.

It rips again.

I reweave it.

It rips again,

I reweave it; again, and again.

When the string runs out, I stop.

* * *

Side order of life

Author: Mooga

I don't know what to do, where to go,

I feel like a puppet on a string,

Not sure which way to move or even bend,

I wonder how long to the end.



A town with nothing, hardly a friend.
Some say go for a walk, read a book,
The town reeks of depression & sorrow,
People only like you for what they can beg or borrow.

The days are lonely and full of sorrow.
When will it end? Maybe today, maybe tomorrow,
The tears never really go away,
I don't know how much I have left.

I think about my Son all the time,
I can't leave him, he needs me & I need him.
In my own way, I'm in a (p) to.
How to get out, where to go?

We're both being punished.
I understand me, but don't punish him.
We all make mistakes,
But it shouldn't be what decides our fate.

So we have to see if we have what it takes?
For him the struggles are real & daily,
For me its a life I've chosen to take,
I tried & failed at everything I've done.

So please God take Me not my Son.

* * *



Happy Gas

Author: Mooga

Today, I was at the gas station where I witnessed something you just don't see anymore. An elderly white haired man was getting gas when the attendant came over. He noticed a necklace the white haired man was wearing. I couldn't help hearing the conversation. The attendant was a very nice Klamath Indian. He quickly spotted an Arrowhead on a necklace and you could see that there was something special about it. The Arrowhead, just a broken piece, found in a plowed up farmer's field, was attached. The Indian man said he really liked it. Without any hesitation, the man was taking it off and asking the attendant if he would like to have it. "Really?" he said. "Absolutely," the old man said. He even helped the attendant put it on, as the Indian wanted to wear it right away. I couldn't help asking the attendant who that was, or if he knew him?

"No, just a nice old man," the Indian said.

* * *

A Heart-full hug

Author: Mooga

Sometimes life's encounters can be so heart warming. I was doing some shopping for a friend around Xmas. A young lady went out of her way to not only help me shop, but gave me some of her slice of life. She shared how she felt and then listened to some of my story also. Smart, beautiful, kind, knowledgeable. How can such a young lady know so much?



After, or actually during the shopping, I mentioned that I make some jewelry and asked if she would like to see it. "Absolutely," she said. She liked the pieces, and I asked her if she would like one. "Yes!" she answered. During this time, her friend noticed, came over. I decided to give them both a jewelry piece. They were both so happy! I asked them if I could take their picture with them wearing the necklaces. "Sure!" they answered. I was so happy that they loved them, and of course no charge. As I was getting ready to leave, the young lady asked if she could give me a hug. I couldn't help but shed a happy tear.

She said, "it's ok, sir, we need more of this in our world today."

* * *

Closing the blinds

Author: Golden Sapphire

Curious turns to cautious
Terrorized by my nightmares
Petrified settles inside my heart
Detached from my mind
Phobic shows in my eyes
Startled by the outside world
Start to distrust in others
Wanting to close up
Shut everyone out
Shows everyday

* * *



Under the blanket

Author: Golden Sapphire

Curled up under my blanket
Knees to my chest
Tears falls down my cheeks
Hearing the pouring down rain.

Tired of the cruel world
Getting lost inside my head
Getting lost in the maze.
Scared to fall asleep,
My nightmares
Keep me up at night.
Wanting to let go,
Wanting to fade off in the darkness.
Having a bad feeling in my stomach.
Closes eyes,
Covers ear.
* * *

Brave Soul

Author: Golden Sapphire

When the voices are loud,
Which they been louder than ever,
I push them to back of my head.
Tell myself, remind myself,
It's inside of my head.

A battle within myself,



One I've been fighting for a long time.

Being born broken,
Gone through hell my whole life,
Doesn't make me weak.

It makes me stronger.

Fighting a battle within yourself
Makes you stronger,
Keep fighting, keep moving.

Look up to the day sky,
See the sun for the first time.
Look up to the night sky,
See the stars for the first time.

Believe angels are sitting on the stars,
Watching down on us.

Believe in yourself,
Believe in your future.

* * *

Life is a lesson teacher

Author: Golden Sapphire

Trying to understand the world,
The way animals walk among us,
The way others help each other
in time of need!



The way mother nature brings
Beautiful colors on the land,
In the sea or up in the sky.

Trying to understand the way of life.
Yes, the world is full of scary people,
Real monsters out there.
Hidden in the dark,
But if you look past all of that,
You'll see life in a new different way.

Take a big deep breath,
Remind yourself how far you have gone in this life.
Remind yourself how much you've overcome,
The bad and the good.
The mountains you claimed were bumps on your path
You walked.
The path you walked isn't straight,
The curves and bumps.
But don't stop walking your path.

Life isn't easy,
Which it's not supposed to be easy.
It teaches us to be strong,
Get back up when we fall,
Be there for one another.

Life is the main lesson teacher on reality.

* * *



Mind at ease

Author: Golden Sapphire

Sleepless nights,
Trying to doze off into dream
Realm.
Thinking about the stars,

The ocean waves hitting cliffs,
Someone who I admire,
Trying to put my mind at ease,
My heart at ease.

Dislike my nightmares,
Roaming free inside my mind.

Why can't I fix myself?
Fix the broken pieces
I feel deep within myself.
I smile because I don't want
Anyone to know how scared

I am of my nightmares.
I smile because I don't want to
Keep shedding tears.

Some nights I cry myself to sleep
or I wake up crying in my sleep...



I smoke marijuana

Author: Samantha smith

I smoke marijuana to numb my pain,
I smoke marijuana to hush the voices
Inside my head.
I smoke marijuana to heal
My broken pieces.
I smoke marijuana to forget my nightmares.

I know smoking won't solve anything,
But create more pain,
More hatred towards myself.
I know smoking won't bring back
My loved ones,
Who passed away in my lifetime.
I know smoking won't heal me all the way.
Hurting my body by smoking
Won't solve anything.
Hurting those who deeply care about me
Won't solve anything.
Big healing process is
Letting go of all regrets, mistakes,
Letting go of the past.
Waiting for a bigger, brighter future.
Taking that one step can be a game changer.

I smoke marijuana to remind myself
That I'm broken
I smoke marijuana to remind myself
That I won't truly be loved...



Unheard Voices

Author: Golden Sapphire

Why should I say few words
When they are not being heard
By others?
Why should I start a conversation
When it's a dead end conversation?
Why force a smile on my face
When I get glares by others?
Why do I force my self to be Respectful towards others
When they're being disrespectful?
Confusion running through my head,
Feeling mistreated,
misunderstood.

* * *

Teaching and Learning

Author: Golden Sapphire

Meeting others for a reason.
Rather, they're teaching
Or lessons to be taught.
You meet others for a reason,
Rather, it's short or long period.

They walked in to your life for a reason,
Rather, to show love and kindness,
Respect or admire.



Poison Water

Author: Golden Sapphire

Don't test my water,
It's filled with poison.

That's what I was raised to believe.
My water is poison to those
Who drink from it,
Or swim in it.
That's how I was raised to believe.

But as I got older,
I learned the truth about my water.
I am not just a delicate flower,
with thrones.
I am the strong waves in the ocean,
A big tree with roots miles long.
I am strong as a diamond,
Pure as a gold flakes.

I was born in hell fire
And raised from it ashes.

* * *

Not wanting to go home

Author: Golden Sapphire

Having the angel of death
On my thoughts.
Feeling his presence



Hanging on my shoulder,
Wanting to let go,
Wanting to go with him,
Want to fight against him.

Don't want to home just yet,
Don't want give up fighting.
Scared he'll come for me
Force me to go home....

* * *

Record Player

Author: Golden Sapphire

My mind is like a record player.
Always playing,
Repeating nightmares,
Trying to clam down,
Moving from one end
To another.

Walking back and forth,
Trying to hush the voices.
Heart pounding too loud to hear anyone,
Mind playing tricks
for me to think clearly,
not wanting to listen to anyone

* * *



Storm with stand

Author: Golden Sapphire

Storms come and go like people
Pass by, like the seasons.
Learning to let go
Doesn't make anyone weak.
It makes us stronger
Wanting a better future.
Makes us grow as humans.
A tree that has strong roots in soil
Can with stand any storm

* * *

True Fear

Author: Golden Sapphire

True fear isn't about giving up,
Throwing the towel in.
True fear isn't rejection from others.
True fear is losing those around you,
Push everyone away
Because fear takes control.
True fear is losing control of yourself
To the end game.
True fear isn't sitting in darkness alone,
Lost in your mind of confusion.
It's about staying in the darkness,
Shutting down, pushing everyone away.
Wanting to lose the fight, not wanting to talk...
It's about getting out of darkness



Brushing off the negative...
It's about the next story,
The one that hasn't been written yet,
The story that is still writing itself...

My story is still being written
Just like everybody else...

* * *

Letter to my kids

Author: Deena

There are so many things I should be able to say but can't remember. There are huge pieces of my life that are just not there. I'm sure that's hard for you to understand but I'm tired of repeating myself. The one constant throughout my life is that you were ALWAYS taken care of and I always worked. I know you didn't understand that years ago, but maybe now that you're parents yourselves, you can understand. I know you hold that against me. I am sorry. A couple of you still seem to think I am not worth the dirt on your shoes and I have to live with that. It haunts me every day and I'm not getting any younger.

I've worked so hard to get away from the pain and the noises in my head that no one else heard. From the panic that now consumes my life. The anger that once controlled my actions, the feelings that I could never sleep enough, because it helped drown out the pain and confusion. I drank, I took pills, I did whatever I could to just not feel anything. Now I know that even if I thought it was helping me, it was hurting you. I



never spanked you or yelled at you, but maybe in doing what I was, it was worse on you than I ever thought.

I have apologized a million times. I have stopped the pills and the drinking but it hasn't taken away the noise or the panic. I am so glad that you guys don't really understand what life has been like for me and I hope you never do. Living your entire life with multiple mental illnesses is not how anyone wants to live. I am 100% aware that I am just the crazy lady that has been removed from your lives over the years. I've been replaced. There have been so many times I have just wanted it to all be over but I swore I would never do to you kids what my dad did to me. Even if you have chosen to block me out of your lives I still wouldn't be able to.

Anyway, I'm sorry for being a horrible mother, I'm sorry for using my confusion and pain as an excuse, and I'm so sorry that you have given up on me and found someone to take my place. I'm done running from things and I guess it's just time to deal with them.

I wish I could send you this but it wouldn't make a difference at this point and would probably just end up in the trash...

I love you,

Mom

* * *



A letter to the father of my children

Author: Ms. P

Beloved,

Seeing you today brought memories of past to surface. Memories of being carefree, naive and belonging. I remember your shiny shaved head with a goatee. You looked good back then. Now, your hair sitting on top of your head like a yamaka, looking unreal and cut unevenly as if done in haste. I could see through your scalp, the stitches that hold your hair in place. Although you look physically fit, your skin has aged a bit. You still can't make eye contact and speak truth. Your fashion sense has improved. The jeans, shirt, shoes looked new as if you just wore them today. Your jacket fit perfectly showing your weight lifting sessions were still going strong.

You have visited us three times this year. Never before you've come for our children in the past twelve years since the divorce. You only met them when it fit your schedule. Despite being an emotionally charged event, I made sure our children attended your wedding reception party. I always encouraged them to see you because I wanted them to know their father. Each time they came back from a family event, they would express that you would not sit with them or take pictures with them because of the fear of upsetting your new wife. I continued to encourage their participation in family events. I knew the importance of a father's role in a child's life as my father never stepped up to his role. And then blamed my mother for his inadequacies all his life. I wanted our children



to make their own image of you without being influenced by my expectations of you.

I do not remember you encouraging, admiring and appreciating our children when they were young. You are not a man of many words; albeit a great provider in making them feel secure by ensuring their financial needs were met. I never did look at another man as I was always focused on our children. The main qualm I had with you was your inability to step into the shoes of a father for our children. Even today at the restaurant, did you look at your son how excitedly he was telling you about what is happening in his life and you sat there disinterested. Did you see that your daughter was waiting for you to ask her about how she was but you never did. Did you even ask me how I have been since our other daughter left home? I have been devastated since she left. Or do you still blame me for everything that is not going well in these moments with our children.

It has been twelve years since our divorce. I wished you would come back correct to keep our family together. I just wanted you to become more....more loving, more caring, more attentive to all of us...to spend more time enjoying us as a family. Instead, you got married to a younger lady to start anew. I cried that day as I knew there was never going back to you. That door was shut forever. I went through my sad years crying with eyes puffed up like a toad. I would put ice on my eye lids before work to bring down the swelling. I couldn't get out of bed for years as if I had a rock chained to my heart and it was too heavy for my tiny body to lift. You just left and never came back. You were more worried about the property



and money. I didn't want our hard work to go to waste, so I let you have a little more. I wanted deeper connection with you. I was astonished that the mutual trust, deep bond and joy was never there despite all attempts over two decades of being with each other. One would think that after being together for such a long time, even as a friend, you would have asked me, "How are you?" Or "Let's talk about why it didn't work." I guess, we need to put our emotions aside to think clearly that we are all learning from each other. I agree that some of my actions and words were hurtful towards you. But I just wanted a meaningful conversation in which I could establish unwavering faith and trust in you.

I never was jealous, sad, angry or upset over your marriage, new wife and child. I was happy that you had someone to come home to. I am thankful to your new wife for keeping you alive, healthy and stable. I am thankful that you are still in our lives in some capacity despite all your characteristic qualities. Being married so young and only to you, I admire you for all the accomplishments you have achieved. Now, in this phase of your life as you take care of you child, I look forward to connecting deeply with my creator. Daily I ask my creator, "God, let me be of service to your people. Show me what I need to do today." My heart still hurts, but less than before. Each day I become grateful for little things in life. Seeing small babies smile, hearing birds chirp, squirrels chasing each other, family of deer chilling on the grass. Life is full. I enjoy more. I am grateful for you, my children's father, for all that I have grown to become. More loving, more grateful and a much better woman than I used to be. I think of you often and send well wishes to your family for all the joy I



feel in my heart. I would not change anything about us. I will still go through marrying to learn how beautiful, kind and loving I am. So, thank you for being a great partner. Take care of yourself as our children will need you more in the future....now is the time to step up into the role of father.

* * *

Tired

Author: Misty

Tired...

Mentally and physically, emotionally.

Tired of living in fear.

Tired of feeling like no one is listening

Tired of feeling lonely.

Tired of feeling I am going crazy.

Tired of feeling like I have no control over my life anymore.

Tired of feeling crazy.

Tired of crying just trying to talk

About what's happening to me,

Yet no one seems to care or understand

Just how bad it has gotten.

Tired of professionals looking at me

Like I'm crazy

Or it's just anxiety.

But try this pill...

It helps with anxiety

And they never do...they make it worse!

So here I sit,

Feeling paralyzed.



Which makes me cry,
Cause my mother is actually paralyzed,
My son is paralyzed on right side of face.
But I still fear
Getting out, I try to fight
To get to appointments and work.
I don't know what to do anymore,
I'm tired I want me back,
I am tired of feeling
Like I am a burden!

* * *

Filling a Hole from the Inside

Author: Dr. Alan Cohn, written circa 2003

Filling a Hole from the Inside
I know it doesn't sound plausible.
Filling a Hole from the Inside
You'd think that you'd stand on the edge and fill from the
outside.

But it doesn't work that way,
not this time.
In fact it would be impossible.
You have to start from the inside.
You need to be in the middle of it;
the space of heart and soul.

Only then can you move
with the rhythm and subtlety
to start the process of filling



the holes born of hurt.

It may in fact be a clearing out,
a taking away or creating more space,
but when you start
it feels like a hole that needs to be filled.

Self acceptance and compassion
will be more helpful than a shovel.
It may be the long embrace,
dancing in ecstasy or the time of quiet reflection
that does most of the work.

Stand inside your life, stretch into this holy, holy space and
dance.

* * *

Ugly Truth

Author: Mrs. S

Part 1

My heart hurts. It aches.
I'm in such a lost confusing place.
I miss her terribly,
but I can't forget it all.
That would hurt me too badly.
How can I love someone who broke me?
How can I miss someone I'm unsure loved me?
How can I long for someone I'm unsure I knew?
How could she do this?
How?



She loved no one.

Not even herself. She couldn't have.

Why would she love me when she couldn't love herself?

Why save me when she didn't save herself?

There are countless nights I cry for her.

Part 2

Miss her voice and touch.

How could I miss those things?

When more than not, those were the voice and hands that hurt me.

I wonder why I wasn't enough.

Daily, hourly, sometimes by the minute.

If the person who brought me into this world knew I wasn't enough,

Why believe I ever could be?

How can my world feel so lonely without her?

So lost.

No matter who loves me,

It will never be her.

I will never see her. Touch her. Hear her voice or laugh. Smell her. Text her. Call her.

She's gone, forever.

Part 3

I can't accept it.

I never had closure. I never asked why.

How could you let him hurt me?

You were hurt by what was supposed to be "loving hands," why let me have the same fate?

Why let me fight the same battle you did?



It's dark here.

Worthlessness, sorrow, belittlement, ridiculed, used, wasted.

Disgust, hated, unworthy.

The feelings I get in my stomach.

The memories in my head.

The nightmares. The flashbacks.

The darkness.

* * *

A Moment

Author: Mrs. S

A moment in my belly,

Forever in my heart.

I never got to hold you,

But I carry you in my heart.

I never got to see you,

But I have dreams of you.

I never got to kiss you,

But you've kissed my heart.

I never heard your heartbeat,

But you made mine keep beating.

You see,

You gave me a reason.

My heart beats for you,

Because one day I will

Hold you, see you, kiss you, hear your heartbeat.

One day soon, your wings will become

All these sweet little things.

* * *



DreamWork

Author: Michael T

Part 1

I went to sleep and woke up in a forest. I was looking back at a group of people around this sword in a rock. They were trying to get it out and I waited for all the people to leave. I walked up to the sword, pulled it out to look at it, then I put it back into the rock. I realized that to pull it out, one must have only one thought to simply pull it out. Later in my other dreams, I would think of one thought of having a vanilla cookie. It would manifest in my hand and it tasted better than here in this reality. Einstein said if one could focus on one thought, one could control the universe. I have realized I needed to look back at all my dreams to remember what they were about for me to realize I can do these things here also.

Part 2

I remember a time where I was being taught to let go of control. In my dreams I would be with people that are driving fast and I was in the passenger seat. I had a hard time with that. Then I had a dream where I met this older man and he said they brought in the Ultra Mirage 2 and a very experienced pilot. It was a silver disk shaped craft, and as I walked up to go on board, a being greeted me (he was silver looking from head to toe). I shook his hand and said "My name is Michael." He said to me with words "I will call you whatever name you wish." Telepathically, he said "I will define you whichever way you wish." As I got into the ship with the older man, I asked if I was to fly the craft. He said "No, sit back here with me." So I sat behind the pilot who was a small gray



being. I noticed the screen he was looking at had Earth in it's focus like I was out in space looking back. Then the pilot took off and the Earth disappeared from view. The pilot turned to me and started talking to me and flying the ship at the same time. I almost had a fit.

During the same time as my dreams, I was being taught in this dimension about letting go of control. I always put the TV remote control on the arm of my recliner. When I looked for it, it was not there. I turned that recliner upside down to see where it could have gone, and still nothing. Then I turned around and gave up looking for it. When I turned back to the recliner, there it was sitting on the arm of the chair just like it was always there.

Part 3

This is a dream. When I went to sleep, I woke up surrounded by dark beings on a spiral staircase. I looked down and saw a rope hanging in the middle of the staircase. I jumped and caught it, then started sliding down the rope. The dark beings were on the staircase following me down. As I came to the end of the rope, they laughed and said "Now we have you!" I said "No you don't" and let go of the rope. I fell into this darkness. I found myself standing in a very bright auditorium. I looked at what was nearly a thousand people in the room. I was standing with two other people and two beings of light were walking around us.

As I was looking at the crowd, I focused in on this Mexican man with tattoos and a blue bandana. Because I thought I was in a spiritual place, I thought he (who looked like a gang



member) was out of place. Then one of the light beings walked by and dropped something in my pocket. I looked into my pocket and saw only rocks. I said to myself "whichever one I pick will be the right one." Without looking I reached into my pocket and pulled out an emerald with many facets on it. I looked at all the facets and saw writing on one side that said "I Shall Bare No Seals." Then I bit off a piece of the emerald. Everyone in the room clapped and reached with both hands to their chests and opened up their chest. It was pure white light and the Mexican man also had this white light coming from his chest. I realized there are light workers all over Earth and that I was one of them. This also showed me about my judgment on a book's cover (as the old saying goes, Don't judge a book by it's cover).

Part 4

This took place several years ago when I had my dog who slept on the bed with me. I woke up one day and looked over at my dog who was still sleeping. I turned over to see 5:59 on the clock, and I watched it turn to 6am. I said to myself, "I have about 1 hour before the dog will wake me up to go out walking." So I go back to sleep. When I wake up, my dog was not there, so I get up to see what he is doing. I was living in a mobile home at the time. I was in the back of the house and walked into the kitchen.

I saw this woman closing what looked to be gas valves that were hidden behind this flip up enclosure. I asked her who she was and she answered that she was the maid. She started to walk very fast towards the front door but I cut her off and got a hold of her arm. The door opened up and there was this



very tall blond woman telling me to let the maid go. "Not until you explain what the hell is going on," I reply. She then called me by my name and told me to let her go again. Just at that time, I saw an opening to slip past her and try to get away. I made it past her and asked her again "What the hell is going on?" I looked into her eyes and she telepathically told me that I was in a training program and that I was not ready to know. I telepathically replied "O yes I am ready to know."

She opened up her eyes to me. What I got from her was that I was not on Earth and I was in training. That scared the heck out of me, so I turned to run away. There were an 8-10 foot male who picked me up, walked me to this door of light and put me in it. It was instant speed, and felt as if I was in a tube or a wormhole. I yelled, but no echo. I remember waking up back in bed. As I looked over, my dog was still sleeping on the bed. I then looked at the clock and watched the time go from 6:59 to 7:00am for the second time that day.

* * *

Connection

Author: TLC

Drunken in the warmth of your smile,
Tethered to your magnetic soul,
Our attraction slashes denial,
Our love never running dull.

* * *



Sweet Nothings

Author: Catherine

Sweet intangible pain,
Like a soft whisper in your ear
Telling you
Sweet nothings.

The voices take over
And before you know it
You're lost.

The abyss takes over and that chasm of pain
That void we know all too well
Swallows us whole and there's no breath
Left in our lungs.

Left gasping for air on the shower floor
Trying not to drown in an inch of water,
Or are we? When will it end?
The struggle is becoming so heavy.

The whispers tell me sweet lies
Of relief and promise the joy I've been missing.
Why can't I join them?
What's holding me here?

* * *



To a Forever Absent Father

Author: Catherine

Dear Dad,

I know deep down you can't help where we are.
You didn't know how to handle your pain and your hurt.
You probably can never change because
Of how long you've been running from the pain.
Drowning them in Alcohol
And goodness knows what else.
I know you'll never change
But every time I get that call,
My heart drops, I rush to your side,
Like the past never happened,
Because I've been conditioned
To forgive you my whole life.

When will you see how much you mean to me?
On the drive away from you yesterday
The girls would not stop talking
About how you were going to die
And I couldn't even correct them.
They love you too, you're their whole world.
Did I make a mistake letting you into their lives?
When you're constantly in and out of the hospital
You'd think you'd learn.
Instead I'm forever going to be that daughter
Waiting for you to care more about her
Than the alcohol.



I can't even tell you what's going on in my life
Because I don't want you to worry.
This was the last time I'm running to your bedside,
I've come to acceptance.
It's like before where you're gone before you pass.
I can't keep caring if you don't care.
I love you Dad
But I have to love me at some point too.
* * *

Ishmael—I, alone, survived.

Author: Phoenix

I have been, still am,
both Great White Whale fleeing for my life, and
Ahab in fevered pursuit.

Obsessed with finding the perfect solution,
denying, forgetting all the perfect love I hold in
my heart, hostage to my wounded self,
by my crazed desire to be whole again, to return to the
before, believing it to be perfection.
I, Ahab, constantly yearning to be someone other than
myself,
driven by my shadow self, inflamed, seeking always,
to escape myself, to find myself and then harpoon the
taunting
voices
so I may then experience the relief of ending the pursuit,
able to feel joy in being myself, just as I am.



And I, Moby Dick, taunting, fleeing, wanting only to dive into
the depths of the ocean, then
surface, joyfully, leap into air that buoys me like the ocean,
then
births me, again and again, again. Moving, always moving in
the oceanic peace of pure being.

And I am the crew, caught in the eternal struggle of chaos,
terror, and madness.
I am ocean, ship, the air, harpoon, and the crippled body,
heart, mind, and soul.
I am each and every piece.
I contain it all, am imprisoned by it all.

And I am Ishmael, the sole survivor
Slipping onto, standing firmly upon firm ground which
Of course, shifts like the ocean that embraces me, allowing
me
To tell the story,
Be the story.
I am Ishmael, and I alone survived and thus,
All did as well.

* * *



Dear Savannah

Author: Adamine

Sweet Baby Girl,

Thank you for being my friend, for loving me, caring for me, and for being with me all these years. I don't know how to go forward without you. You are my heart.

I love German Shepherds for many reasons, but one of them is because they appreciate rules. I grew up in Berkeley in the '60's and early '70's, in a family where there was alcoholism and drug addiction. At the time I thought I was lucky to have all the freedom that came with that. Then later, as an adult, I came to appreciate structure and rules. You valued structure and rules too.

I always think about when you were about a year old and we went shopping up in Oregon. We'd been up there for most of the day and around 5 pm I just needed to run into one last shop before heading home. I knew you were young and I wasn't completely sure of what you'd do in that car full of groceries, so I buried the meat in the very back of the car, underneath all the stuff from Costco. After all, I was only going to be a few minutes. I ran into the store and about 20 minutes later I came out and there you were, sitting in your seat, with a big grin on your face and nothing was moved around in the back of the car. Off we went to go home.

When we got home, I got out of the car and opened the door for you. You jumped out and there, on the seat where you



were sitting, was an empty turkey thigh package. You'd been sitting on it! I know what happened. Five pm was dinner time, I didn't get you your dinner, so you had to get it yourself. Simple. Rules are rules and five o'clock was the time. I also remember that big grin on your face.

Thank you, sweet baby girl, for being with me all these years, for being my friend, for all the walks in the woods, and for keeping a smile on my lips. I love you, it has been an honor to be here with you, and I miss you more than I can say.

Addendum:

For a day or two before Savannah passed, I noticed Robins coming around the house. It was curious because it seemed early for them. Then the day that Savannah was passing, I asked my other animal companions that have already crossed over (one of which she was quite bonded to) to please come help us with this transition. After Savannah died and we buried her, I left the house for a while. When I got home I noticed big bird droppings all over the front walk way. That'd never happened before. Then I realized that there was a huge flock of Robins hanging out and eating the berries on the Juniper tree out front. I also started to see them in the backyard. I looked up Robin medicine online and what I found was: ". . . when a robin appears some people take comfort that loved ones are at **peace**, and many believe that their lost loved ones are visiting them."

* * *



I can't breathe

Author: Pensir

It's so much,
Feels like it's too much to handle,
Feels like I can't breathe.

I don't know what it is.
Is it just life?
Does everyone get this feeling?

I can't breathe,
Feels like I'm under water,
But I don't stop Living.
Feels like things just keep getting worse,
All I hear is people complain,
Then do nothing to help themselves.
Or is that just my false perception?

I can't breathe,
The pressure is weighing on my chest,
Smashing the life out of me.
But what pressure?
The pressure of life in general?
Or the pressure of responsibility?
Maybe the pressure of expectation?
Or it could be all three.

I can't breathe.
I'm so close to a snap,
I'm trying to be understanding,



But I can only take so much.
Nobody wants to help me.
Why do I break my back to please so many,
But so many take what I can offer for granted.

I can't breathe,
Why does this feeling keep coming back?
I asked God for help, but he will only do so much.

* * *

I miss it

Author: Pensir

You tore out my heart.
You stole all I am.
Yet I still have love.
I refuse to repeat the cycle.
But I want clarity.
I miss you most every day.
I don't miss the fights.
I miss the comfort of your presence.
And I miss the love.
I have tried to take steps to move on.
But I am not ready.
I feel as if I am far too damaged to move on.
I miss you, every day,
But I do not miss the treatment I was given.
We were both so toxic to each other.
I can admit I was not innocent in it all.
I was pushed to a point,
I couldn't handle any more.



And because we couldn't properly
Communicate any more,
You stole my entirety.
The law returned a large portion to me,
But you are still included in my entirety.
What has been done can not be undone.
Maybe we have a chance for clearly,
At the very least.
It has been a long battle
To get to where I am now.
I miss holding you and singing to you.
I miss seeing you with the kids.
I miss seeing your smile and hearing your laugh.
I miss you, I miss us as a family.
Things were done
That can not be forgiven or forgotten.
I miss it all,
But I can not repeat the cycle.
I will not stop what is in motion.
I would love to have clarity
For the both of us.
I can only hope you will work
With me on that topic.

* * *

Brighter Days

Author: Pensir

I'm searching for brighter days,
They never seem to come.
I see a glimpse of the sun



And then it's gone in the rain.
What kind of hell is there to gain,
If these are my brighter days?
I get so sick of myself,
I know I need help.
I get stabbed in the back,
Even the front.
I have lost myself in search
For my brighter days.
I took the easy path,
It looked so promising in the beginning.
Slowly the rain rolled in.
So slow, I didn't know.
Now I am lost within.

Please God,
Guide me to brighter days.

* * *

Limits

Author: Pensir

When will I reach my limits?
When will enough be enough?
I just want to quit and
Give in to the terrors of this world.
I ask the invisible entity,
Have you had your fill?
There is no reply.

In less than a year,



My life had been destroyed.

First it was health,

Then it was my marriage,

Then my kids were striped from me (I have since regained my kids).

I ask the invisible entity,

Are you done yet?

What more can you take from me?

Just when I thought it was done,

Down it all goes again.

Why did I have to ask?

It was not a challenge.

Maybe it is the finale for the year.

Now my mother is gone too.

I know she is home where she belongs,

But it doesn't make any of this easier.

Have I reached my limits yet?

How much more can I take?

God please give me a break,

From this terror.

I don't know how much more I can take.

I must push on, for my children's sake.

Please God, please. I just need a break.

* * *



Mom

Author: Pensir

You have left us alone.
You had to go home,
But we are still alone.
You were our cornerstone.
I am not ready to be alone.

You birthed me and raised me
You fed me and sang to me.
You spoke words of experience and love.
You could calm my every storm
With simple spoken words.
You could see my fire rage
And patiently watch in love,
Till I would come to you for a simple hug.
You could melt my walls and mend my wounds.
Now you are gone,
How can I move on?

I know I am not alone,
But it feels like I am.
I do not grieve or process these things like others,
But you knew that, mom.
I will always love and miss you.
Till I can join you in our forever home.

* * *



Sometimes

Author: Maris

Sometimes, I just want to leave. And I don't mean leave the house. I mean just pack my belongings along with my family and just leave far away where no one knows me. Start fresh. Begin a new chapter in life.

But how do you know if you are making the right decision? How do you know if, in the long run, it was a mistake? Even though the future seems so far, it is actually the beginning right now.

But sometimes you just need something different. Like a day off from work. To go far away alone. Or with someone who understands your silence. All what you want to do is just forget about time, people, work and problems.

Should I take that chance? You know what they say. "If you never take that chance, you will never know what could have been." But then come the questions. "Are you Ok?" How can you tell someone you are ok, when deep down you are drowning in your own thoughts?

I can hide behind a beautiful smile. I've gotten so good at it. People actually think my life is perfect. But really behind my beautiful smile is a world full of pain. And really, I have gotten so good at it that I get asked: "Are you always this happy? Every time I see you, you are always smiling."

But in reality it's called "depression." Depression sucks! It's physically and emotionally draining. Pretending to feel



stronger than you really are. It is in cases like this is when I want someone to ask me if I am okay.

But really, what I am looking for is for someone to just hug me and tell me, "I know you are NOT okay, but I promise things will get better." It really makes you think if people around you have a normal life. Or does it even exist? It's too much to handle at once.

But I know, that if I keep telling myself things will get better, eventually they will. It doesn't matter how slow it takes me, but as long as I don't stop, I know I will be able to reach my happy place.

* * *

Journaling 101

Author: Sanji

1

find journal

write anything

close mind

open mind

allow spirit

close eyes

go

find emptiness

find void

find me

no longing

no expectations



2

Another day, another page
In out up down thoughts go
round and round
thoughts without meaning chaos
fear of essence
fear to touch the center
the core
altruism thinking pure
but no motive mind
always has purpose
shake off the bindings
free constraints
clear
then perhaps no motive
only clarity
non thought
no being
just i am

3

writing again
watching pen move along
the page ink flowing letters
form thoughts manifest wane
the pen stops for a moment
thoughts also mind blank
pen wants to continue
so writes nonsense
no sense



what now can the
pen continue to write
when no agenda is behind
it? yes mind is good at
spewing out words meaningless
drivel but perhaps a
single word or group
will spark a deeper
thought and meaning
comes
or not
* * *

The Innocent

Author: Mrs. H

So many animals, so many kids
Are being hurt or mistreated.

Why I ask,
Are they the ones
That people hurt,
When they are the innocent?
Lost, alone, so many sad,
So many roam, so lost,
So many die, so many.

Nobody understands why.

Abandoned are children and animals.
How can you do this to innocent ones,



Who have no voice to say anything?

To me,
This sad world of neglect,
Our world of confusion, our world of hate
Our world that nobody appreciates.
Lost little ones to slowly die
Because nobody sees the hurt outside.
All have soul
All want love.

So, please people,
Please warm up your heart.
Look at the innocent
Who fight everyday to stay alive.
Take down the walls
And give them the love,
For everybody needs someone.
This world is cold,
So give them heat
From the warmth of your heart.

* * *

Unexplained World

Author: Mrs. H

It's another day,
We seem to always say.
But what does that mean?
To all of us who say,
It's another day,



Some of us are old,
Some of us are cold.
Some of us are mean
Some of us just want to scream.
Some of us are sad
Some just want to die
Some of us just say nothing.

What makes us who we are?
What makes our hearts grow cold,
While others have a heart
That can melt the coldest snow.
Why some are lost,
While others are found.
Why are people like the ocean,
So unpredictable. Why?

So many of us don't know
Who we really are,
While others know exactly
What they want.
This world is just one big planet
with thousands of faces walking on it.
So, no matter what the case,
maybe everyone must live
within it.

* * *



A Brand New Me

Author: Mrs. H

Today I see a brand new me.
I see a person in the mirror
Staring back at me.
A person that was so unclear
Of who I was,
To be so afraid to show my self,
That I would hide behind a cloud,
deep in my mind.
But now I feel
I've become a person
Who is strong
And everyday, I can see
Accomplishments that I can make.
That all my weaknesses went away
And that everyday's
A brand new day.
That I can start to heal
And start my life,
For real.
That now I'm proud of who I am,
And I am now a brand new girl
I see within the mirror.

* * *



Changes

Author: Mrs. H

Changes happen throughout life.
Some are good,
Some are bad,
Some we just can't seem to know
Which way they seem to go.
Everyday in this world,
Things do happen.
Some are sad,
Some make us mad.
Some make us cry,
Some simply keep us alive.
But to every change,
There's a reason to it's name.
Storms will rise in many ways
Some storms we can not change.
We can not predict which change will come,
But we must know it's part of life.
We can only do our best
To make the changes, like the rest
Of human kind.
So buckle down,
And don't be blind to changes
That are going to come.
Accept the bad with the good
And do your best
With all the changes
that occur in your life.

* * *



Forgiveness

Author: Mrs. H

Forgiveness sometimes can be hard
And when you're older,
Looking back on things,
That went terribly bad,
Forgiveness doesn't seem to come
As easily as it should.

But life is made of twists and turns,
Life is made up of many words,
Life is made from ups and downs,
Life is made of good and bad.

So forgiveness has to be a part
Of everybody's life.
But as with everything,
Forgiveness has its time.
But there are some,
Who just can't find forgiveness in the heart,
And even where they are going to rest
And leave this world behind.

A simple thing,
That forgiveness brings,
Like calming in your heart.
It just can't be,
No matter what,
at least, that is what I see.
But try your best,



No matter what,
To forgive the things of hurt
So you can live in peace

* * *

The Mermaid

Author: Mitch Pinkerton

She is a Mermaid,
You must hold her like sand.
She must be held perfectly
In the palm of your hand.
If you hold her too tight,
She'll put up a fight.
You must hold her just so,
So she doesn't let go.
If you play with her hair,
She'll follow ya anywhere.
Her smile and grace
Will "light up" the place.
And leave every person
With a smile on their face.
Oh how badly I miss my Mermaid!
But I slept with my back to her
And her love slipped away.

You must hold her softly
Like sand in the palm of your hand
Or she'll slip between your fingers
And she'll soon swim away!
Oh how much I miss my Mermaid!



I'm forever in sorrow
For letting your love slip away.
You are the absolute Mermaid
In this ocean of life.

Forever and always,
* * *

Reflections on the past, Parts 1-10

Author: Dee

Part 1

My mother (Karen) met my father (Mervin) in school. My mother was not a popular child in school; she was born with a physical disability. My father was one of the school's "bad boys." My parents met through my father's younger sister Anita, who is the same age as my mother.

My mother got pregnant with me one of the times my father came to visit her from the Vietnam war. There was a party and I was conceived in one of the bedrooms. My father left to finish his time in Vietnam. He came home and was dishonorably discharged from the Army. A few months after he came home, I was born. I grew up with my parents during my infancy and my toddler years as well.

One of my memories of my early childhood was when I was 2 years old and we went to visit my grandfather David and his girlfriend Peggy. While we were visiting, my parents, grandfather and Peggy started drinking. They were sitting at the kitchen table. When someone finished the drink,



grandfather got up to refill their drink. I walked up to the table, grabbed grandfather's drink and emptied his glass. He would get mad at Peggy because he thought she was drinking his drink when he had walked away from the table. This happened a few times before my parents finally got my grandfather to watch what was happening. He saw that I was drinking his drink. When we got ready to leave his house, I would take a few steps and fall on my face. I would get up and do it all over again...

Part 2

I was about 3 years old when my father wanted to get someone a fur coat of Christmas and did not have the money to buy the coat. He broke into the store with me. When the police came, they let him go because I was with him. Not sure what story he told them to not go to jail.

The next thing that I remember was when I was about 3 years old and in preschool. I happened to be the only white child in an all African American school. My grandmother Emma (father's mother) was not happy about this and told my parents to get her granddaughter out of that "porch monkeys" school.

The next few memories that I have are from when I was 4 years old. These are the ones that I remember. They may not be in the correct order in which they really happened.

The first memory from that year is when my grandmother Emma took me to Washington for a week so that I could see where my father was born. During this trip, I just wanted to go home so I could take care of my father. I was so much a



daddy's girls at the time. So, in-between the time I went to bed and when grandmother came to bed, grandmother said I was all over the bed and even tried to kick her out of bed many times...

Part 3

Another memory from that same year was when I was sent outside to play. I always had to play by myself since I was an only child. So while playing, I saw an old dining room chair that had a broken seat on it. I somehow managed to take the broken seat off by playing on it. Then I started to jump through the chair with no seat on it. This chair had a couple of metal brackets to hold the screws for the seat. While jumping through the chair, my leg hit the bracket and was sliced open. I screamed in pain and my parents came running out of the house. My mother grabbed a kitchen towel to apply pressure on the wound. My father had my mother and I get into the car. He drove to the hospital like a mad man on a mission. I remember him running red lights, and he was laying on his horn while going through intersections. The entire time that we were going to the hospital the only concern that I had was that I was getting blood all over my white bobby socks. When we arrived at the hospital, I was taken into the emergency room. My father blocked my view of what the doctors were doing. My mother was at my head, having me recite as many nursery rhymes to all the nurses who were in the room. I impressed the nurses with all the nursery rhymes that I know. It took the doctor 13 stitches for my leg and one of those stitches was close to an artery I had nicked.



The next memory I have is of when my great grandfather Lilienthal (mother's grandfather) passed away. I don't remember much about the man. I do remember when we went to his house, it always smelled of boiled liver and whiskey of some sort. I also remember that he always had candy corn and some kind of soft dog food for his dog Alfie. After my great grandfather passed, Alfie came to live with my mother and me.

I remember when my older cousin Michael was going to the first grade and I wanted to go with him but was obviously not able to go. This is the same year I got chicken pox just before my mother was to start college.

That year, I was in the hospital to have my tonsils and adenoids removed. I wanted to take my favorite blanket but my parents would not let me due to the fact that there was a large hole in the middle. They allowed me to take my bean bag doll. My grandfather David's girlfriend Peggy gave me this doll and I named the doll after Peggy. My parents promised to buy me a new Winnie the Pooh blanket after I was released from the hospital. They kept their promise, took me to Sears and bought me that new blanket.

Part 4

We were living across from the naval yard. So, one night my mother's brother Gary came into the room. While I was asleep, he touched me on my chest and kissed me. I do know that he and my mother were both using alcohol and IV drugs at the time. I never told my mother because I was not sure she would believe me. I never said anything to him, like "no"



or "stop" because I was half asleep and did not think it would do me any good. After this, we ended up moving into a building that my Aunt Anita owned, which had a couple of one-bedroom apartments and a two-bedroom apartment. In fact, this was a house with a basement. The house upstairs was a two bedroom, and the basement was converted into two one bedrooms. My mother and I were once again in a one bedroom. This time, we did not share a bed. We had bunk beds, which were my mother's old bunk beds from when she was a young girl. I finished sixth grade from this apartment. I had a couple of friends. My father was in and out of my life. He still beat my mother. During the summer, my friend Ora and I would go to the movies. We had sleepovers and we were a part of a swim team.

Next, I moved on to junior high school (my seventh-grade year). Ora only talked to me when we did not have school because she wanted to hang out with the popular kids. I had no desire to be with the popular kids. I never had clothes that were a part of the crowd. Michelle and I were in band class together. We went to church together. We had sleepovers. Michelle and I were the best of friends. This year I told my mother I was sleeping over at some friend's house (I do not remember who this friend was) and she told her parents she was at my house. We spent time down the street from my house with some older guys who were having a party. This is the first year that I was in the marching band. We went to competitions, and we even marched in the July Fourth parade for our town.



My eighth-grade year, I was still in the same junior high school. I was still in marching band. I had a crush on my music teacher. This year, we had the old band uniforms from the high school (across the street from us). We also had the same name as the high school. This year I told my mother I was going to a Halloween party, but I really was not going. I was hanging out with another girl about my age and a couple of older boys (who were about 20/21 years old). I was being silly and tried to jump over a chain that blocked the road path in the city park and ended up breaking my right wrist and elbow and spraining my left wrist. Doing this, I was not able to play or practice my clarinet. My band teacher let me sit by my best friend Michelle while she played her flute.

The trumpet players were being rude and gross; they were emptying their spit valves on us. So, Michelle held her flute so that the spit would collect near the mouthpiece and at the end of class she flung it on the boys. They cried to the teacher, and we told the teacher what they kept doing to us. The teacher just gave all of us a lecture, especially the boys for what they were doing. That year we did a lot of band competitions and we won a few of them. This is the year that Michelle and I went to snow camp and almost got snowed in. This is the year that my great grandmother Crawford passed away and my parents chose to not tell me until I got back from snow camp. I was upset with them since I never got to say goodbye to her, while my cousins did. This summer we marched again for our town's July Fourth parade. After the parade, my band teacher broke my heart by telling us that he was leaving to teach in another town.



Part 5

The summer after eighth grade, I was in bed. We still lived in the one-bedroom apartment that my aunt owned. My mother woke me up and reintroduced me to Gary, my parents' friend from when I was younger. She told me that they were going out and were going to pick up Gary's son Micheal from the bus station. My mother was working at some bar, so I am assuming that is how Gary found my parents again. Father was not around at the time that Gary showed back. Mother, Gary and Micheal showed up and my mother wakes me up and asked me to come out to the living room. I came out wearing a summer night gown that was short and see-through, and Micheal and Gary were out in the living room. That weekend we went with Gary and Micheal to Gary's home in another town. That weekend, Micheal (17) and I (13 almost 14) started dating. My mother, Gary and his wife Gloria all locked themselves in Gary and Gloria's room. I am not sure what they were doing in that room, but now as an adult, I have a clue as to what they were doing. If they thought that Micheal and I would not get together, then they were out of their minds. This weekend we all went to Lake Tahoe. When my mother and I went home, Gary was also taking Micheal back to the bus station to catch the bus to go back to the group home.

I went to the ninth grade. I was still dating Micheal, only seeing him every now and then. I never went back to the band due to my broken heart over the band teacher not giving the new band a chance. I still did not fit in with the popular crowd. This year I had kids putting milkshakes in the broken locker above mine ruining my books and things. I was an outsider in



this school. I took ROTC Naval jr, wood, metal, and ceramics classes. Other girls were taking home economics. My best friend Michelle left the school I was going to and moved to another school.

Michelle and I still saw each other at church youth groups and still had our sleepovers at her house. I finished ninth grade at the junior high school I started at. At the end of my ninth-grade year, I got to go to Great America amusement park. That summer my grandmother Emma took me and my two younger female cousins to Hawaii for summer vacation. During this vacation, I was chilling by the pool and talking to some guy who was in the navy. I do not remember what we were talking about, but whatever it was, we kept talking. I followed him up to his room, but never entered the room. I just stood in the hallway and continued to talk to him. I had no interest in this man. I was in love with Micheal, but no one really knew about that. My grandmother Emma called me a whore for just talking to someone. While in Hawaii, I got to see the lava flows, macadamia nut plantations, got to go to a luau, among a whole lot of other things. During the summer vacation, my mother ran off with some man (in the mainland). When I got back, my grandmother Emma and my Aunt Anita wanted me to stay with them. But I said I wanted to go home.

When I went back to my father, it happened to be my grandmother Lois' birthday. My father did not want to let me see her since that side of the family did not get along. My father eventually allowed me to go spend time with my grandmother for her birthday. My father found out that I spoke to my mother at my grandmother Lois' house (I had her



number) and demanded that I give it to him. He proceeds to call her nonstop and threatening her every time he called her. It got to the point that where my mother took the phone off the hook so that the calls would stop for a while. Then it was Fourth of July and Gary (Michael's father) wanted me to be able to spend it with them and having fun. My father allowed me to go, but demanded that I come home that same night. Gary and his wife Gloria had been drinking quite a bit and were very intoxicated. I did not feel comfortable with them driving me home drunk. So, I stayed the night with them.

Part 6

When I got home the next day, my father came to the car and slapped my face for not coming home the night before. When he did that, he knocked my glasses off my face. I told him that the next time he did that, I would call child protection services. Gary called and told my father that Micheal wanted to marry me. He told Gary he would not allow me to marry his son. Then he told me to go to my room, in which he proceeded to lock me in my room. My father was under the impression that the window in my room was painted shut. It was not painted shut. So that night, I wrote a note saying that I was going to end my life, and left the note on my bed. I packed a few bags of belongings and ran away. I made it far enough away from the house before I stopped at a pay phone to make a collect call to Micheal and his family. I told them that I ran away from my father, and I was scared that he may kill me if I stayed there.

Micheal and his stepmother Gloria got to me in about 25 minutes, where normally the drive should take 45 minutes to



and 1 hour. After they picked me up, we drove back at a normal speed to their place. When we got to their home, I tried to call my mother but the phone was still off the hook. So we talked about what happened in the few hours after they dropped me off with my father. We then went to bed. The next morning, my father called their house wanting me to be returned to him. Fortunately, they had moved since the last time my father had been at their house, so he was not able to find me. My grandmother Emma and my father went to the police station and told the police that they kidnapped me. The police called the house and I spoke to them. I told the police what happened, and they told me to call my mother and let her know where I was and that I was safe and okay. While at the Police station my father threatened to kill me in front of everyone. I finally was able to get a hold of my mother to let her know where I was and that I was safe.

My mother and the man she left my father for ended up moving into the garage at Gary and Gloria's house. I was staying in the house with the family, and sleeping in the same room and bed as Micheal. Mother and the man (Manford) stayed there for a while, living in the garage. Manford ended up marrying my mother. They would both go to his work every day. On his days off, they would go for motorcycle rides, and sometimes would not return until he had to go back to work.

Gary, Gloria and Manford and my mother would all drink, and I am sure they were also doing drugs. My mother was never around while I was in tenth grade, and I was not happy at the new high school, since I did not know any one there. Since



mother was not around, I would write notes to excuse myself from school for whatever reason I could dream up. During Christmas that year, my mother and stepfather bought me a motorcycle. This is also the year that I got pregnant. The school asked me to leave because they did not have insurance to cover a pregnant girl if case she got hurt, in a fight or something to that effect. They also did not have any teen parent education program in the school. The closest teen parent education program was in a city about an hour away from where I was living. I was not going to get up around four in the morning just to take public transportation to get to the teen parent program. So, I dropped out of school in my tenth-grade year.

Part 7

Micheal and I went on our first real date at some point during this time. He took me to the movies. We went to see Gremlin's movie. Then we had lunch out, just the two of us.

At some point before I found out I was pregnant, my mother and stepfather were not living with us. They did not find out I was pregnant until I was about six months along. My mother told me I was looking good and that I must have lost weight. Little did she know at that time that the top few buttons on my jeans were unbuttoned. When I finally told them I was pregnant, Micheal offered to marry me. My mother wanted the marriage to have a confidential marriage license, but she could not get one for me due to my age of only being fifteen. She would have to go in front of a judge to get the confidential license. She did not want to do that. So, we were not allowed to get married.



I know that at one point they found a hotel apartment. For some reason, after they found out that I was pregnant, they gave Micheal and I that apartment. Then they were told by the management that we could not be there. So, thanks to my mother and stepfather, we became homeless. We lived out on the Rio Vista Delta. We were living in tents, along with my mother and stepfather. All while being pregnant, we were living in a tent, we bathed in the delta, we ate fish from the delta. Occasionally we had other food like hot dogs, spaghetti. When I finally went into labor, I was taken to the hospital on the back of my motorcycle driven by Micheal. Just so you know, the hospital was about an hour away. I had not seen the doctor since early in my pregnancy. I was progressing in labor nicely. However, for every contraction I had, the baby's heart rate was dropping and was going into distress. The doctor had me sign papers which gave him permission to do either a vaginal birth or a cesarean section. At the age of fifteen, I had no clue what a cesarean section was; it was not really explained to me at the time. My mother was terribly upset that she was not the one signing for the delivery. She made it known to the doctor that I was a minor and that she should be the one giving permission. The doctor explained to her that it was not her body and that she had no right to consent for whatever procedure that they had to do. The doctor decided that an emergency cesarean section was in the best interest of the baby.

Part 8

I woke up in my hospital room not knowing what had happened to the baby. The last thing I knew was that the baby



was in distress. The nurse came into my room and said that I had a baby girl. In my mind I had meant that the baby passed away due to being in distress. The nurse brought my daughter into my room. I was thinking, why they were bringing me a dead baby girl to see? When I saw the baby girl move that is when I realized that she was alive and doing well. The funny part is that when I found out I was pregnant, I had picked out a little boy's name but never a little girls name. So, I had to produce a name for her on the spot.

When we were released from the hospital, we went home with Micheal to his father's and stepmother's house again. My thoughts were that at least we are not homeless with a baby. We all three slept in the living room. I did not mind getting up with my daughter. However, Micheal was not as accepting to getting up with our daughter. When she was a couple of months old, we went to Connecticut via Greyhound bus so that Michael's mother was able to meet her granddaughter. After we got there, we were only supposed to stay for a couple of weeks, which turned to a few months. I was lonely and sad, with no help from Micheal. Though I do have to say that Micheal was only nineteen years old when she was born. Micheal turned twenty in Connecticut, which, at that time, meant he was able to drink. Micheal did get a job ,though he did not help support our daughter. After a few months of no help from him, I decided to go back to California. We ended up staying with grandmother Lois, grandfather John, and Uncle Johnny (my mom's younger brother). After a few months, Micheal was calling telling me that he missed us, and that things had changed. So, my daughter and I boarded a plane from San Francisco to Hartford Connecticut. When we



got to Connecticut, we found out things had not changed. We left Connecticut two or three weeks later.

We were on a Greyhound bus for four days, and I only had four dollars left to my name. My daughter had everything she needed to make the trip. What little money we had I did not spend on me. There was a lady on the bus who noticed that I was not eating but just feeding my daughter (four or five months old). She asked why I was not eating. I explained that I only had four dollars left which I felt that I needed to use for her, not me. So, this nice lady went into a store at one of the bus stops and bought her and me a sandwich. and handed me twenty dollars. I asked her for her information so that way I could return the money she had just given me when I got back home. The nice lady told me to pay it forward when I could. She did not want the money back. It made me cry to have a stranger help me. It made me feel bad that I was not able to care for both my daughter and myself.

When we got back to California, Micheal called and said he was going to have me arrested for kidnapping his daughter. When we got back to California, we were homeless. I did not feel right asking my grandparents to let me stay with them again. So we were on welfare since my mother and stepfather would rather drink and use drugs than help find a place for me and my daughter. They were contented living at my stepfather's father's house, living in the garage which had been made into a bedroom. My daughter and I stayed with different people and slept out on the streets. Since we were on welfare and did not have a place to live, social services put us up in a motel for a few weeks. While in the motel, I



remember my daughter just screaming. I fed her, changed her, and even burped her, but nothing was working to calm her down. So, I remember shaking her, throwing her on the bed, and going into the bathroom shutting the door when I started to cry.

At one point while out on the street, I left my daughter in the carport where my mother and stepfather were staying. I was hoping they would take care of her, but they did not. Instead, they called child protection services. They put my daughter in foster care. When CPS located me, they asked me what was going on. I informed them that I was only sixteen and homeless since my mother refused to give me a home to help me raise my daughter. So they also placed me in a foster home. My daughter and I were separated into different foster families.

Part 9

After a couple of months, we were given the chance to be in the same foster home. When I went to pick my daughter up a social service, my daughter's foster mother cried when I took my daughter back. After a few months, I turned seventeen and we had to go to court. I had a job where I met the man that would become my husband. After I met him, I changed jobs because the job made me pick between coming to work or caring for my sick daughter, and I chose my daughter. I found another job.

I was working part time and going to school where I was trying to graduate on time. The judge told me that I had six months to get my own place, support my daughter and not have any



help from social services. I realized that I was not going to be able to do what the judge demanded of me. I was making about two dollars per hour, and apartments were about five hundred dollars a month (not including power, food, medical and everything else that would be required to raise my daughter). So, after a few weeks of soul searching, I figured what was best for my daughter. I decided to give her up for adoption. I contacted the state adoption agency. The job I had was working at a fast-food restaurant. This is where I met the man who would become my husband when he walked into the new restaurant.

Sean and I spent everyday together. I even helped a couple that happened to be friends by babysitting their son. This is where I ended up getting pregnant while babysitting. I know, how cliché. I was in the foster home where my foster mother expected me to care for her daughter who only a few months older than my daughter. She was also making passes at Sean anytime he came over. I suspect that she might have been using something illegal. Her husband was nice, but he worked over an hour commute away. He might have been a stoner. Sean's dad Gary loved me. Sean's stepmother Patricia did not like me at all. I feel the reason for her not liking me is because when I first went to their home I showed up on a motorcycle. Sean's dad Gary told me to never let Sean drive my motorcycle. I did let Sean drive my motorcycle when I was at work.

The adoption case manager and I talked about having Michael's parental rights removed since he never supported his daughter. The entire time that I had been pregnant and



during her first year of life, we received welfare. So, having his parental rights removed was simple. Then it was a matter of picking who would adopt my daughter. My stipulation of putting her up for adoption was it being a semi-open adoption.

When my daughter's first foster mother found out I was putting her up for adoption, she asked to meet with me. The adoption case manager, her old foster mother and I sat down and talked about my daughter. I found out that her old foster mother wanted to adopt her. She fit what I wanted for my daughter. She was a single and had an excellent job and a lovely home. When I made my finale decision, I chose the old foster mother. We had a semi-open adoption. I received letters and pictures from them until she was about six years.

Before I signed the adoption papers I did graduate from high school. My mother and Sean came to my graduation. I managed to complete my Sophomore, Junior and Senior year in just nine months of school, which was just after the adoption papers were signed. My future husband (Sean) and I were on my motorcycle, we ended up in an accident where I pulled apart my femur. I was taken to the emergency room at the local hospital where I was told that they would have to amputate my right leg. Before I was transported to the hospital, I refused to leave without Sean. The ambulance company eventually allowed Sean to ride with me, but he had to ride in the front of the ambulance. When I arrived at my insurance-covered hospital, the doctor came in and said I had two choices. Either spend six to eight weeks in traction or have a metal rod placed in my right femur. I made the choice



until the doctor realized that I was only seventeen. So we had to wait for my mother to come to the hospital. I told the doctor that my mother would choose the rod. When she asked me how I knew, I told her that I would stop talking to my mother if she left me in the hospital for six to eight weeks. Sean would come visit me every night I was in the hospital. I spent six days in the hospital.

Part 10

After being released from the hospital, I went to live with a friend who was a known drug addict. I was alone in my room staying at the friend's drug house. I did not have a bed and slept on the floor. I needed to get up to go to the bathroom one day and had to get up from the floor. I tried to stand on both legs, but I was not able to put pressure on the right leg, so I fell back onto the floor. My friend came back to her house and found me crawling to someplace to be able to get up so I could use the bathroom. She helped me get up. After that she also had me start sleeping on the sofa bed so that way I was able to get up. While I was staying with this friend, Sean went to my mother and stepfather and said he had found a place where I could live and get away from the current house which had drugs going through it. The only issue is that we needed to be married. All of this happened from July to August of 1987. Sean gave my mother a twelve pack of Budweiser and about hundred dollars in drugs just so that he could marry me and give me a safe place to live.

The weekend before I married Sean, my mother came and told me that she and Manford will be there to pick Sean and me up and take us to Reno. I asked her why and she told me



that I was getting married to Sean. I told her that this was news to me. We went to Reno after he got back from camping that weekend. I had only been out of the hospital about a week when this happened. I was on crutches. So, when I walked down the aisle, I looked like I was about to be executed. My mother was laughing while Manford was crying. Sean was there. We were married by an Elvis impersonator (again, I know, very cliché). We went out for food afterwards, and Sean was making passes at the female server. Manford and Sean had an eating contest.

As we got back to the Napa Valley, Sean called his grandmother and told her that he had gotten married. Sean's grandmother had no idea about who I was. Sean and I got back to the room he rented. Sean had to go to work the next day. When he left the room, he put my crutches across room. I was not able to get up. Someone called to see if I was at the house in which we rented a room. They told whomever called that I was not there. Finally, someone came to the room to see if I was there. When they saw that I was, they asked me why I had not come out of the room. I explained that my crutches were across the room and I could not get up with out them. They handed me the crutches, and I went to the part of the house where there were people that I knew. We all hung out, cooked and ate. We did this until my husband Sean came home from work early that morning. At this time Sean was working as a delivery driver for Round Table Pizza.

* * *



New Act

Author: Kristin M.

ACT 1

Scene 1

A woman and man are sitting on a BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit, the subway system in the California Bay Area) bench. The man is in his early 20s, neatly dressed in a worn pair of slacks and sweater vest. The young woman is dressed professionally listening to her iPod and reading a book.

The man looks at the people boarding the train. He pulls his legs in to accommodate the traffic and rearranges bag on his lap. He stares into space and suddenly addresses the woman.

Man: Are you happy?

Woman puts down her book and pulls out the nearest iPod bud.

Woman: Excuse me?

Man: Are you happy?

Woman: What do you mean?

Man: I mean what I mean. Are you happy?

Woman: What are you getting at?

Man: I'm a rollercoaster. Happy today, though. Wrote a poem. Got the flow, you know?



Woman: Sure.

Woman chooses another song. Man looks over at her selection.

Man: Nice. None of that mainstream rap. Street beats are nothing but soul. Raw. Poetry at its best.

Woman: You write a lot?

Man: Sure. Comes and goes. Been a while since I had the urge, you know? You write some?

Woman: no, but I read a lot.

Woman gestures to the book she was reading.

Man: Perio-what?

Woman: Periodontics. Dental school.

Man: That's not what I meant. What do you read in your free time?

Woman answers but is drowned out by the BART arrival announcement.

BART Announcement: No arriving at Embarcadero Station.

Man: (emphatically) YES! He is tight!

Woman grins.

Woman: Of course. That's why I read it.



Man: Wish I was like him

Woman: Why?

While man answers, he is distracted by the wave of passing commuters.

Man: Dunno. He's Zen. No agony, no fear. Content. Happy even.

Woman: You're not happy?

Man: Good question. Are you?

Woman: Not yet.

Man: Why not?

Woman shrugs.

Woman: Not yet. Soon. In a couple of years maybe.

Man: Why not now?

Woman: Because I'm getting ready.

Man: Ready for what?

Woman: School, Licensing, residency...

Man: Sounds like a lot.

Woman: It is. But it'll pay off.



Man: You sure?

Woman: It better.

Man: How do you know?

Woman: It will.

BART Announcement: Now arriving at Montgomery Station.

Man: So are you unhappy?

Woman: No. Not that. I'm just...

Man: Just what?

Woman: I dunno. I'm...(beat) waiting.

They pull their legs in as another wave of commuters enter the car.

Man: (carefully) I see.

Woman: What about you?

Man: What about me?

Woman: Are you happy?

Man: Good question.

He turns to look out the window. She waits for his answer.



Woman: Well?

Man: Well what?

Woman: Aren't you going to answer?

Man: What was the question again?

Woman: Are you happy?

Man: I know. I just...

BART Announcement: Now arriving at Powell Station.

She puts away her things.

Woman: I'm still waiting.

Man: I'm still thinking.

She stands, steadies herself, and offers her hand.

Woman: It's rude to ask and not answer.

He shakes her hand.

Man: Sorry.

She leaves and an older businessman sits down in her seat, and opens a newspaper. They sit in silence for a moment, before the Man turns to the business man.

Man: Are you happy?

* * *



Mother's advice

Author: Kristin M.

My mother sat me down
Her mood dark and somber
She know I'd grown and soon
On love and life I'd ponder.

"Want a man who knows you well
Who breathes new life" she did beseech,
"inspires joy and soothes pain
camaraderie he ought to teach.
But aside from this there is
One thing integral to all the rest:
that between you two lies a spark
that answers every possible test
Of distance, time - no separation
cultivates the seeds of hesitation.
My life has shown me this
in all its disarray.
Had I not settled for second best,
Life would not have been this way.
So, as a mother it is my duty
To bestow this sage advice,
Great heights in love are inaccessible
Should happiness be sacrificed."

She's right I know, it's true
But though the crushing weight of loneliness
I continue weathering
I wonder if settling for a compromise



Is preferable to endeavoring.

* * *

The tale of Miko

Author: Kristin M

Once upon a time, there lived a miko (1) in the eastern lands who shone as bright as the sun. She was beautiful and kind and loved unconditionally, and yet she labored under a terrible curse, a curse that anchored her to the world and would not allow her to move on. Always behind her, the curse followed, shadowing her days and weighing her heart.

So across the land she traveled, searching for a way to seal the curse that followed behind her on poison feet. As she searched she met many people, and as her duty she faced down and killed many monsters, but always she glanced back over her shoulder, unable to defeat the beast that loomed behind her.

It so happened that one day the miko met a demon king, pale and luminous as the moon who ruled the lands in the west. However, the king had been betrayed and broken sent into exile, his lands in ruin, his family and household murdered before his eyes. When the miko happened upon him in the forest, he was bent beneath a tree with the weight of his great sorrow.

The traveling priestess could not help but see his suffering and be moved. "My lord," she said, bowing before him, "tell me what troubles so, so that I may give you what assistance I can."



The king was very cold and very proud and refused to even look at her, but she tried again.

"My lord, please allow me to be of service to you."

This time the king opened his eyes to see her there, but still her refused to speak.

For the third time, the miko bowed low. "My lord," she said, "let me be of use to you."

"Miko," the king said, "if you would help me, take away my sorrow."

Sadly, the priestess bowed her head. "My lord, if I could lift such a ghostly thing, I would not be cursed as I am. My curse follows me as does your sorrow. I, too, and searching for a way to lift it. Perhaps together we may find one."

Normally the king would not agree to such a lowly thing, but something about the priestess moved him, and he agreed, and so the king of the moon arose from his place and followed the priestess of the sun across the land. Together they befriended many demons and humans alike, fought many creatures, and traversed many countries, and found many valuable things, until the day when they finally climbed the highest mountain in the north together.

At the top, the priestess looked down behind them and saw the two shadows of their curses falling against the mountainside, and she understood.



"My lord," she said, "come here and take my hand. Embrace me."

And when the king did so, the shadows of their curses mingled and shrank together until they were one, for shadows that fall behind are impossible to lift, but easy to share.

So together they stayed.

1. Miko: Japanese Shinto priestess. Typically thought to have great spiritual purity.

* * *

Anand

Author: Kristin M.

"Bliss"

Is it bliss
his gentle cradle of arms
ensconsing me from the world?
I do not know
for I am immobile.

Is it bliss
his low rumbling croon
blotting all else to silence?
I do not know
For I hear nothing else.
Is it bliss



his sweet gestures
meant to praise and adore?
I do not know
for I am left wanting.

What is bliss? I ask
atop that pedestal towering high
by that ledge creeping close.
I ask those arms gentle
that voice low
the gestures sweet.

But arms merely tighten
The voice loudens,
gestures hollow,
and my tower heightens.

What is bliss? I ask
I wish to know

1. Anand: Punjabi word for Bliss

* * *



We Do.

Author: Natalie H.

We do because we should
We should because they say
They say because...
because...because...

There's one way; theres' many
You're you; you're me
I'm you; I'm me
We try, we do
We do, we don't
We do, do, do
Until we can't see, see, see
see.

The importance of the why, the how, the what, the where
The importance of the who
"the who?"

Yes.
The importance of the you, the me.
* * *

Freshly cut grass of spring

Author: Natalie H.

The smell of freshly cut grass
mmmmmm
my favorite.



The smell of spring
The smell of a blooming flower
The smell of bodies moving
here and there
like wind.
Connected.
One wind, one world
One world, one people
Connected.

A network of bodies of thoughts
of feelings, of smells.
Dependent
on itself, on its pieces
No, it's not a puzzle -
It doesn't fit together
It overlaps; it intertwines; its a mess
of knots, of bows, of twists, or turns
A massive net
Jump in and let it catch you.
And then
Stop.
And take a deep breath
and smell the freshly cut grass
of Spring.



If inspired,
visit our website at:
shastasovereign.com