"Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose."
I Am Beautiful

A Survival Resource
Created by and for Women
Volume 5

“Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose.”

Published by
DISMAS MINISTRY
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
www.dismasministry.org

Copyright 2015
With Gratitude

We want to express our thanks to all the women in U.S. prisons who generously shared their hearts and lives through their writings and art. Their sharing was a true act of courage on their part because of everything they have undergone and have survived. This book is their gift to the sisters walking with them on life’s journey.

Our Logo

The rose is our logo and was inspired by the words of a woman who contributed to the very first volume of this project:

“Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose.”

Cover Art

We are grateful to Donna Marie Slaughter for the drawing of the heart’s pain and puzzle which she contributed. It is a tribute to all women who have survived their own pain and found the missing piece of their beauty.
Always remember...

you are beautiful!

We want to recognize, first of all, the women in prison who sent us their writings and art for this current version of I Am Beautiful—Volume 5. Beyond them, we salute all those who have known the ugliness of abuse.

We were not able to publish all of the pieces that you sent to us due to the book’s size. However, we are deeply grateful to each of you who shared from your minds and hearts, and from your own, unique experiences.

We are deeply impressed, as we are each year, by your courage and survival. You have endured so much abuse on an emotional, mental, sexual and physical level. Yet, you are not just victims of abuse, you are SURVIVORS. We are grateful that you have come forward to share what you have experienced with other women in prisons across the country. It is our hope that everyone who reads this book will be encouraged and strengthened to stand up, count themselves worthy of dignity, and see themselves as beautiful within and without.

This project was not intended to convert anyone to a particular religion, or even a religion at all out of respect for each person’s journey in life. However, it does give space to those of you who shared your spiritual conviction that God was with you in your struggles and called you from darkness and bondage into the light and freedom of a new life.

In a very real sense, this book is also a celebration of victory.

We salute all you, abused and surviving women, for your courage, truthfulness and strength. You are examples for all people – women and men alike - who deserve dignity and respect, as well as the right to be happy.

Remember always, you are beautiful within and without!

With admiration and respect,

The Dismas Team
You may ask what is beautiful; beautiful is all up to the eye of the beholder.
I survived not one, but three different torture cells, my scars are used as beauty marks.
Surviving the monsters of my past has not only made me stronger but more beautiful.
I may not be beautiful to many, but that’s ok because I’m beautiful to myself.
I’m beautiful with or without makeup; why cover up what’s already beautiful.
I finally see what others see; once I realized that, I am truly beautiful.
I’m beautiful no matter what anyone says because that’s how I see myself now.
I’m not captive in the monster’s torture; a cell of put downs, beatings, and forced actions.
They told me for so long I wasn’t, but I am beautiful more and more each day.
Monsters used to tell me that I was ugly and no good; well, they are completely wrong,
I’m very beautiful.
I may not feel it every day, but no matter what I am beautiful every day.
Beauty isn’t just only surface deep; it’s deep down inside of each and every one of us.
I may not be beautiful on the outside, but I’m very beautiful on the inside.
So I ask you once again, what is beautiful?
You’re looking right at it, I Am Beautiful.
Dessert  
*Dena Hankerson*

It happened  
Here, midwinter.  
Whack! Purple-black  
37 times.  
“There’s only 31  
Days in a month.”  
She said, to her daughter of 5 years  
It happened here  
Midnight moonshine  
Meteor flares cheesecake  
I am fresh strawberries  
He chocolate dribbles...  
It happened here mom,  
Sexual assault and  
Darkness fell.

---

Without You  
*Sheila B.*

I felt incomplete without you  
I was afraid I’d be alone without you  
I believed I was inferior; I could not succeed without you  
I was disillusioned I would not have love without you  
In my pain and despair I thought I could not survive without you

Without you, I’ve discovered the beautiful woman that I am.  
Without you, I found I am worthy of the world around me.  
Without you, my choices are achieving the goals I set.  
Without you, I’m healing from the pain you inflicted.  
I’m alive.
Some Advice to Those Who Will Serve Time in Prison...

*Dena Hankerson*

Be attentive of your thoughts before anything materializes. Haunting as ghosts, they will float impressions, taunting you of failures of careers lost, education wasted, gifts and talents unused and accumulated what ifs. The ghosts if surfaced long enough become sheets piped through vents to drape as a necklace, or razors that shave veins seeping secrets that will silently never be yelled. As these views surface, I tell you go slam a cell door to shock you, making you redefine who you now will be.

Be attentive of your words before anything spills out. Vituperative demons will show you reflections of the disposition you displayed while you were descending to your demise. Laughter drifts up and down the halls mocking you. These demons if they come about, be wary as they discord; a little bickering, a small argument, a slight quarrel. Do you like to squabble because words cause fallouts that engage into wars? I tell you go slam a cell door to shock you, making you watchful, but not on guard, alert yet careful not to show weakness and to stop you from vomiting venom.

Be attentive of your conduct before anything manifests. Savage ideas occupy idle time, giving opinion to trivial phantom theories, sprouting solutions of complicity instead of reasonable resolution. If such actions transpire long enough you’ll dehumanize, numb to compassion, having no care...what benefit will you be then?

I could think of pleasurable impressions to ease your anticipated fears, but why should I? So you can give prestige to this institution as if it was a high place of higher education.

I could speak some words of wisdom for you will learn. Learn ways to budget $0.12 an hour income, how to siphon laundry soap from hand washing dispensers, how to rush to make movement only to wait hours to be seen, how to plug your backside with protection or petroleum. You’ll learn to function on 3 hours of sleep, not because of deprivation from drug induction but because your mind won’t shut off thinking about the outside world that carries on without you being there. You’ll learn to not smell or look at the food on your plate in order to swallow the unknown.

And lastly, I could act irresponsible, not saying my best piece of advice to you; for that may show I’m sympathetic, while I am in the boat, but today I choose to share. I say to YOU “change your life and don’t come!” Plead with a God of your choice for a miracle. Ask mercy from the judge; just if it’s still permissible, DON’T COME.
I Want to Be
Krystal Sadie

I don’t want to be statistically another lost woman known as a returnee. I just want to be happy, free, loved, and known to be me, beautifully. How come in these times no one is ever who they claim to be? Why when it comes to the real, no one can be themselves honestly?! What’s so wrong with being who you really are? Be who you see in the mirror; that will truly take you for!!

I do understand all too well what it’s like not to love yourself. I was once that girl. And I must say, those moments weren’t fun. But with time comes growth; (and it sure took a lot of time). And with growth, you gain wisdom and understanding. You gain the knowledge of what you truly deserve; your self-worth is clearer and your bleeding soul is sealed. It took a long time for me to learn that not everyone is your best interest and not everyone has your best interest. Growth and wisdom help to determine who and what is good for you. Who will inject your life or who will affect your life in a good way... I want to be a woman that can affect people’s lives in a good way. I want to change lives even if it’s just telling them to have a nice day. I want to give back and help women discover their self-worth. I want to help them understand that together we’re so much bigger than the hurt. I want to encourage you girls to learn from my mistakes and get them off the streets and back into the schools. I want to stand for something! I want to bring families together, instead of splitting them up. I want to be a role model. I want to be more than just my post. I want to be a woman who did amazing things to help others’ be just as amazing… And when people remember me, they will say “She was Beautiful!” because I Am Beautiful!

J. Barajas
The Future
Pamela Livingston

Do I dare to look into the future; to go beyond this fence, to hope, to dream, and escape into the real world? Most people want to escape from the real world into a fantasy world they’ve created. Me…I want the real world with the rush of traffic, working overtime to pay the bills, cleaning, cooking, helping the neighbors, volunteering for anything and everything, giving up my weekends to babysit and going to a real church. Oh…how I would love to escape this world; inside this fence to live again in the real world where life is real…I want a future, I want family gatherings, I want to help raise my grandkids, I want my friends, I want my church, my house, my bed, my refrigerator, stove, yard, bath, I want to be so tired from all these I fall into bed at night. I want to look to the future and when I’m released no one will be able to stop my future or take it away. That’s a promise I make to myself.

Growing Pains
Sheila B

Staring at this brick wall; wondering when I lost it all
My memories surrounded by a haze; I recognize now it was just a phase
Climbing out of the hole, reaching the surface; finding that all my trials do have a purpose
These painful lessons prove to have a need; with this added wisdom I will now succeed
First Appearances
By Pamela Livingston

Do not judge by first appearances, by what someone says about them, or by the moment of the person. Judge what they say about others, and judge yourself. Instead judge evil for being evil, wrong for being wrong, without putting excuses into it. Look for your own mistakes; forgiving and helping others with theirs. Shut out the bad; look for and keep what is good. Don’t always look out the window, but look first in the mirror. Judge yourself and then you won’t need to be judged. Change your wrongs and then others will look for you to help change theirs.

The Guardian
By Jax

I need something like that for my life, something like a sheet protector or those damn clear slipcovers Auntie Olene used in the parlor of her tiny shotgun house in Nowhere, Alabama. I need something like that for protection from the actions of the ignorant (who I ignore), from the efforts of the evil (for whom I make my prayers), from the mess-makers haphazardly invading, acting like spoiled brats they are (from whom I hide). I need something like that to confound them, to keep their dirty feet and coffee stains from the fabric of my soul, the tapestry of my daily existence.
Scars on my skin, holes in my heart

Tori Hall

Even in my sleep demons give me no relief; tossing and turning I call out in my sleep. I ask God the forever unanswered question; why me? Why am I left with this pain that’s unseen? As the days progress, the ache inside grows, spreading like a cancer. The questions I have may never find an answer. Each day now I thank God for waking me up, when not so long ago I remember asking him to end it ’cause I’d had enough; enough of the words that cut like knives; enough of the sick games which kept me from sleeping at night; enough of the beatings that were meant to end my life. I can’t believe it took me so long to realize it wasn’t right. I had knots on my head covered up by my hair; bruises all over my body that no one ever knew were there. Lie after lie made up for a little more time to spare all of this because I thought that he cared. At times when we were alone, I’d never been more scared. I remember thinking if I could just make it till morning, maybe I’d be able to leave.

When the sun finally rose, there he was showing me a love better than my wildest dreams. Right then the last night was forgotten, slipping right through the seam; looking into his eyes believing he never meant to be so mean. I loved him; there was no doubt about that. Anything he asked I’d do it at the drop of a hat. He was my absolute everything; he had my whole heart. When it came down to it, love robbed me of my smarts. I shoulda known better, shoulda stopped it before it had a chance to stay, but love is blind and this one is one of a kind. He not only had my heart; he had my body, soul, mind, and an undeniable control, an unbreakable hold. Love so incredibly hot and yet so inscrutably cold. I became his slave, only doing what I was told. Everyone asked me if it ever got old, but I always answered no because I believed in the dream I was sold. He was my man so I stuck by him, stuck up for him, and became a master at denying. When the door closed behind it, I’d be crying. There were times I felt that living was worse than dying. He had my head all screwed up, still does. A fist to the face followed by a kiss and a hug. The more that he hurt me, the deeper his claws in me dug. One minute balled up in the corner praying to the God above, and the next curled up tight next to the man I loved. Scars on my skin, holes in my heart, memories in my mind, nightmares seem to rewind. Thinkin back to them, not one did I win.

The only thing I regret is not standing up to him. I was such a coward, which is why he held all the power. Enough was enough when every time he moved I flinched; genuinely afraid to even move an inch. Screaming inside praying for someone to pick up on my hints, staying away the first time would have made sense; but when you’re in love, you’re dumb. When he called, I would run. My absolute everything, he had my whole heart. The only good thing he ever gave me…my son. The deciding decision that I was finally done. Scars on my skin; holes in my heart. I guess me and him were always meant to love apart. Although not having him sometimes brings me great sorrow, I’m ever so grateful not having to beg again for tomorrow.
Violence  
*Patricia Vance*

Warned, looking in  
Consumed  
I don’t stand a chance  
Nightmares, flashbacks  
Wanting death  
Who am I?  
The door is closed  
There’s no view  
Blinded by the darkness  
No sunshine; help  
Can anyone hear me?  
No, silence is the only sound  
Manipulation, Pain, accused  
How can I escape?  
The door is locked;  
Confined  
Liar, cheater, hate; in his face; heartless  
Drowning in my tears  
Fake grins, excused, scared  
Sexually assaulted;  
Was it my fault? No, but I was told so  
Kicked around, strangled, pistol-whipped  
Everything he could just to get his fix  
This was my life  
Physically abused  
Cuts, bruises, blood  
Is this love?  
I have no rights  
Hungry, rejected, alone  
No money, No mail; no phone; controlled  
Walk on eggshells, Don’t move  
Don’t speak; mute  
Mentally broken; No self-esteem  
Emotionally destroyed; numb  
Tears no more; dried up  
Battered, tortured, lost and confused  
What can I do?  
Leave, No, he says he loves you  
Will he change? No, Don’t believe so!
I was born on a Sunday morning, April 18, 1965 Easter. Gramma and Grampa used to tell me being born on this day made me special. If that is true, I am special in ways I never imagined. My birth parents are Sandra Martinez and Leonard Peltier. Yes that Leonard Peltier. As well known as my father is, irony would prevent me from knowing he was my father during my youth. My parents divorced when I was two years old. My mother remarried and had three more children. I grew up thinking we all had the same father.

Some years and events are blurs. I cannot be sure of exactly when some events occurred. I believe I was eight when my mother’s second husband began to molest me. Like many childhood victims, I told no one. A child is simply not equipped to express such a violation. I filled the role of my mother apparently, both maternally and sexually. When I wasn’t being raped, I served as a surrogate mother to my three siblings. We were left alone for days at a time. I remember crying quite often, wishing our mother would come home and spend time with us. I grew up fast and missed a lot of school as I did. My mother’s second husband kept alcohol in the house and I began to help myself. When I was eight years old, my aunt exposed me to vodka and we became instant friends, as it numbed whatever feelings I was having. Ultimately our mother would divorce the molester and in turn dissolve her parental rights to all of us.

We were in and out of foster care for a couple of years until a German American family adopted the lot of us; another name change. The family would prove to be abusive, both physically and mentally. My last name by now was Mueller, as my mother had remarried. I left home often and fought with her on a regular basis. I understand now I resented her and felt the issues with her mother and hadn’t had the best examples of how to live a good life. Maybe she did the best she could. In my event, the turmoil inside of me was reflected in my behavior.

One night in was staying with my cousin Deanna and she told me for the first time who my real father was. Over much weed and alcohol I learned that Leonard Peltier was my father, and that I had Mexican/Indian heritage. All this time I had thought I was white! I had been forced to always be like a chameleon changing with my surroundings in order to survive. I even developed a grasp for learning other languages, and knew both Spanish and German. I grew up thinking I was a plain Jane white American, then European, and finally Indian! I would meet my father later that year when my grandfather Leo took me to the federal prison at Marion, Illinois. I had to see my father for the first time behind glass, unable to hug him or
kiss him. I was nervous, but it was a good first visit. For the first time I had an
inkling of who I really was. I went to prison for the first time in 1989. I continued
to use cocaine even while incarcerated. I got into a fight and landed in solitary
confinement for fifteen days. While there all I wanted to do was die. I was in this
dark place, alone with nothing but my pajamas, blanket, and mattress on a cold
floor. I reminisced about my childhood and all the times I had spent in dark
places alone.

After my release, I continued to abuse drugs and alcohol. I entered rehab several
times. I neglected my children. I had sworn to never treat my children the way I
was treated, but there I was doing that very thing. Make no mistake, substance
abuse, and I guess all forms of abuse are cyclical. Without intervention, they cycle
will definitely continue to repeat itself. I had two more abortions and was married
and divorced several more times. I couldn’t even keep track of my own names. I
still felt alone and haunted by a dark presence.

I am now forty-seven. I only know I want a productive, constructive life. I want to
help my loved ones and grow roots so I can stop being transient and call one place
home. I want to be independent and not have to rely on others. I want to help
those who like me struggle with substance abuse. I want to tell all of them that
they are not alone; stay positive, have faith. God is good. I pray, read scripture,
and I attend church. I know in my past I hurt many people. I hurt those I love;
family members through neglect, physical abuse, stealing, lying, and cheating. I
am amazed at how poorly I acted towards those I share blood ties with. However,
as part of recovery, I have been able to make a mends with several family members.
To my great surprise they have forgiven me and welcomed me back with open arms.

I stopped blaming my mistakes on my mother and father and forgave her in a very
healing experience for both of us. I forgive those whom I have anything against so
that my prayers are not hindered. I finally feel I am coming out of a shadow that
always hung over me. Perhaps it was my shadows. Physical abuse is a shadow.
Psychological abuse is a shadow. Molestation is a shadow. Abandonment is a shadow.
Loneliness is a shadow. Insecurity is a shadow. Substance abuse is a shadow. The
history of my family in Indian Country is a shadow. My father’s case certainly casts
a large shadow. I seek to be a light for others hiding in shadows. I hope I can be, I hope.

My fiftieth birthday is a few months away. I know I’ll make it whether I am inside
or outside of prison.

God Bless

Stock Photo
“Regina Mae”

Dx Killian

Regardless of what I’ve ever done
Every time you were the one
Giving me love in my time of need
Inviting me home when I needed to sleep
Never caring if I was right or wrong
Always there to sing me a song…

Momma you’ve always been here for me,
And I’ll Love you forever, through
Eternity…

This poem is dedicated to my beautiful,
courageous mother who is currently fighting
the battle of lung and just recently brain
cancer. Momma, no matter what happens;
I will pull strength from the courage, hope,
and beauty that you display every day.

Nutcracker Sweet

Jax

It lay at the bottom of a box surrendered to the attic; that great depository of forlorn clutter.
In a cramped room, flushed with the musty scent of wayward memories and elfishly
dancing dust mites.
With chipped paint and a broken arm, it lay in the bottom of a box.

We purchased the nutcracker together when days were rich, gloriously bright with
tomorrow’s dreams, floating on the tide of last night’s promises.
A silly trinket it was, a kitschy memento for a knick-knack shelf, seemingly insignifi-
cant and never used; camping just out of my vision near the high ceiling.

It’s not even clear when it happened, when it was crated with faded photos; aged,
unremembered love notes, posies where dry fragrance lingers left to languish like my
heart with all the things I once considered important where it lay in the bottom of a box.
I’m Sorry
Brandy Eighmy

I’m sorry for all the times I lost my temper
For the times I was rude
For all the gifts that were given and never received thank you
For all the love you’ve given me and I haven’t given back
For all the times you were patient, a virtue that I lack
I’m sorry for all the people to whom I was so cruel
To all the people I laughed at, I acted like a fool
I couldn’t see past your imperfections; I couldn’t see past my pride
Your feelings I trampled all over, on my high horse I would ride
I’m sorry for all the times I lied
For the people I hurt along the way; not a day goes by that I don’t regret it
I would take it back any day
The only person I cared about was me and only me
Now I’m truly sorry and I only wish I could make you see
I’m sorry for everything I’ve done, for all the people I let down
I’m only asking for a second chance so I can turn things back around
I know that it’s a little late, my deeds can’t be undone
I realize not that I was wrong, and I’m sorry everyone

Wounds
Brandy Eighmy

There’s a huge cut that a Band-Aid can’t cover. There’s a wound that won’t heal. They say time heals all wounds. They say you can make it heal. Ha, ha, the wounds are too deep that I’ve caused. The cuts just keep coming up. Will it ever stop? Will they ever start mending? It seems like when they start to heal something traumatic happens again. I should know; I’ve caused plenty of cuts. I caused more deep wounds. I’ve hurt the ones closest to me. I’ve caused pain to one certain person. I hope one day I can heal the wounds I caused to my very special person who means the world to me; Dravon Josiah Drayton.
Changing the Past

Brittiny Dick

The past is the past for a reason
That is where it is supposed to be
But some cannot let it go
In their heads it eats away
Until all their focus becomes the person that they used to be
The mistakes they made in their life
Oh, if only they could see that you cannot change what happened
No matter how hard you try
No matter how much you think about it
No matter how much you cry
What happens in your lifetime happens for reasons unknown
So you have to let the card unfold
Let your story be shown
Don’t get wrapped up in the negativity
Be happy with what you have been given
Live for today, not tomorrow
Get up, get out and start living
Because the past is the past for a reason
It’s been and now it’s gone
So stop trying to think of ways to fix it
It’s done, it’s unchangeable, move on...
My Angel Friend

Sharon

People come and go in your life. There’s some that walk on bye, there’s the one that touches your life, and there’s the one like an Angel, an Angel like Tara. My how they can change you. She’ll be leaving us soon to be with Father God. She’ll always be smiling with ease, making sure she hurts no one. With a hug and big smile she’ll tell one and all she loves you so. Without haste father put her in your hands to take all the pain and hurts away. I know she’ll have a new life with you for no more hurts and pains to endure. I thank you Father for the time you’ve shared your Angel with us all. One day we shall meet again in the gates of wonders of joy and happiness. So smile my friend, I shall see you again in the hand of milk and honey. God Bless you Tara

Follow Your Dreams

Voycetta

Follow your dreams
Take one step at a time
Don’t settle for less
Just continue to climb

Follow your dreams
If you stumble, don’t
Stop; keep your eye on your goal
Press on to the top

For on the top
We can see the whole view
We then have the vision to seek something new

Press on and follow your dreams
Dear Me
Ashley Chapman

If I could go back and un-break your heart, I’d do it no questions asked. I would love you and cherish you. You would never come last. No job, drink, or relationship would keep me from you. I’d stay by your side, you’d never know abuse. Siblings wouldn’t call you mommy; you wouldn’t be forced to grow up. Your brothers would stay brothers, and you’d all be shown the same love. Being called beautiful wouldn’t make you feel unsafe. I hate that you felt that showing your face was a mistake. Little girl, you are beautiful. So many people treated you wrong, although your pain and suffering has made you so strong. If I could go back and un-break your heart, I’d do it, no questions asked. I love you and I cherish you…I’m sorry, I’d do anything to change your past.

“I WILL SURVIVE”
Leanna Millen

Thank you for making me laugh
Making me grab myself by the collar and shake myself
Question my views
Kick myself in the rear
Pat myself on the back
Be kinder to myself
Be considerate
Be brave
Go against the norm and know beautiful things can happen
Learn from my mistakes
Most importantly, know I WILL SURVIVE!
I am now in Tutwiler prison, known by a number instead of a name! I once let a man say I wasn’t beautiful, but now I know I am! He terrorized my nights and restricted my days. For a long time, I believed the horrible names he called me, yet never was it beautiful. I dodged all the questions from family and friends. However, one day questions were no longer needed. Beatings, bruising, screaming, rapes, and fear all became normal routine. The outside scars on my body and internal abuse lingered believing what he told me…it’s all my fault! Battling mental torment and fear for my life was an everyday thing. It was a good day if I wasn’t hit or threatened.

One day, I finally found the strength to gather my kids and to get away. In the car riding, I had nowhere to go and no idea how to make it. I found a shelter who gave me no advice; yet because of our system I didn’t get far enough away. Bad days turned to worse which landed me in prison even though it was self-defense. I’m now an inmate #296141 in Alabama State Department of Corrections Tutwiler for Women.

Through tons of counseling and prayer, I now know I’m beautiful no matter how I look or feel. Beauty comes from within, I am Beautiful! Anyone in an abusive relationship, I advise you to google abuse resources in your area or call the National Abuse hotline. So many people and places are set up to help, so you don’t end up like me; PTSD and Battered Women Syndrome is real! Get help now and know you are also beautiful!
“I Love You”
*T.M.D.*

I love you in so many ways, for so many reasons.
I love you for all you do for me when I can’t.
I love you for pulling me up when I’m down;
for giving me reasons when I find none.
For loving me when I don’t love myself,
I love you for seeing something in me when I don’t.
I love you for fighting for me when I have no fight,
and when there’s nothing left—there’s you,
and for that I love you always.
When this life tries to keep us apart
I love you for standing for me,
when I can’t stand for myself.
When I feel like I’m in a dark and lonely place,
it’s your love that lights the way,
and for all this I love you always.

---

**Blood on the Leaves**
*Nay Na*

It’s pretty and sunny outside; fall time has just begun. With my nice dress on, I feel and look pretty. I hear the motor of the car and I rush to welcome him home. One last breath as I open the door. Our happy reunion, me running into his arms, shattered in an instant stinging as it swells. Stunned, I stumble back to protect myself. I fall into a pile of golden leaves. The blows to my head come relentlessly. The blood and curses run hot. Suddenly, it is silent, but I don’t want to move. I get to my feet and all eyes are on me. The blood on the leaves tell me the worse is yet to come. The blood on the leaves says run and don’t look back. I don’t listen to the warning of the crimson stained golden leaves. No! Not this time. Why bother with the blood on the leaves?
I was kicked, punched, and tortured every other week or so. What do you think you’re doing is what I heard if I tried to go. Every move I’d make he’d be there. Everything he had to know. Every accomplishment I’d make all he could say was “so!” The first time he said “I love you” will be an evening I’ll never forget. He showed me just how much he did with his hands tightening around my neck. I would always tread so softly knowing his every mood. He constantly accused me of cheating if I even glanced at some random dude. I can still recall Thanksgiving with his Aunt Tamara and Uncle Fred, but I also remember that very same night when he put that pistol to my head.

Oh how much I loved him. I thought my love would make him change. He would say “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it”. In his eyes were tears of shame. He would constantly belittle me. I was stupid, ugly, or fat, but nothing compares to that frightful day he broke both of my legs with a bat. Interest is still climbing on the bills from the injuries he caused. Allow me to reflect back a moment as I take a very quick pause...

Black eyes and bloody noses, endless nights he’d scream and shout are the instances I preferred over all of them; they seemed the easy way out. I often tried to call the ones who were supposed to protect and serve. It only made matters that much worse “you called the police, you got some nerve”. Mind games with manipulation, isolation from family and friends; my loved ones I wouldn’t allow to help me, I loved him to the Earth’s end.

Ladies, please listen carefully. Men, they can tell the best of lies. Some are so extremely violent that from their hands a woman dies. If you find yourself in these situations, don’t fight back. Many states, just like here in Georgia, don’t recognize self-defense. Please be aware of the warning signs like jealousy, control, and rage. Domestic violence doesn’t always leave bruises, some scars cannot be seen. Abusers are often professionals, not just alcoholics or dope fiends.

Ladies, please, this is no joke. With our voices, let’s take a stand before our children become the next victims. Healthy relationships make a demand. WE ARE ALL BEAUTIFUL WOMEN! We deserve love, honor, and respect. We do not deserve abuse from our loved ones; don’t allow him to dissect your self-esteem.

If you find yourself in abuse with nowhere to turn and no place to go here is the number to help you: 1-800-799-SAFE. That is the number to the National Domestic Violence Coalition hotline.
“What doesn’t kill you makes you wish you were dead”  
Jessica H.

She hit me, kicked me, called me names; always made me feel like I was to blame. Messed so much with my head; made me wish I was dead. Her Heaven was my hell; she had me under some sick spell. She brought me down so that I wanted to disappear; then she’d cry apologies and hold me near. I used to love her beauty; I thought she was the best thing that ever happened to me. Her million-dollar smile had deception; she made me feel she was my only protection. She smothered every one of my thoughts; it seemed it was my unhappiness that she sought.

The amazing parts were all a delusion; our entire relationship was pain and confusion. She trained me to keep things deep inside; she was the reason my spirit had died. She drained every piece of my innocence; she had me trapped in her ugly barbed-wire fence. It took 7 years to try and break free; every now and then I fear she’s still got a hold on me. Her wicked grip won’t let loose; memories of her make me wanna hang a noose.

I’ll die before I ever go back to that place; she made me feel worthless, like a waste of space. Her heart seemed so full and pure; but something took her soul and there is no cure. I find it depressing she’ll never be human; she leaves a path of destruction and left many lives ruined. I may never get back the pieces of me she stole; but she taught me a valuable lesson and now I know.

Never again will I get so insecure; maybe I’m not worthless and have nothing to fear. She had the power to make me stay; by screaming and crying for me to go away. If I tried to leave or run and hide; she’d call me up with a click of a gun, threatening suicide. There was no hope, no way out; there still isn’t—I wonder what she’s doing now.

No screw that, leaving was the best choice I ever made; I’m free, I can breathe and have no reason to be afraid. They say what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger; well I’m not gonna stay to find out any longer. All it did was make me wish I was dead; so I’ll find someone to truly love me instead.
“NOT ON THE SAME PAGE”

Juli

He is...I am not.
He is sick in his addiction...I am not.
He is responsible for his substance abuse...I am not.
He is unsafe and at risk...I am not.
He is a danger to himself and others...I am not.
He is opposed to treatment...I am not.
He is stuck in a rut...I am not.

I am peaceful...he is not.
I am blessed in my recovery...he is not.
I am healthy...he is not.
I am growing...he is not.
I am a new person...he is not.
I am able...he is not.
I am moving forward...he is not.

More than Words

“Then and Now”

Lisa M. Freeman

Sadness; Mistreated; Manipulated; Hurt-Reviled; Unwanted; Hit; Kicked; Spat-upon; Tired; Hopeless; Devastated; Low; Dirty; Scared; Lost; Confused; Screaming; Molested; Victimized; Used; Persecuted; Oppressed; Worthless; Violated; Dying; DEATH-UGLY!!!

Now A Survivor

Gladness; Pampered; Washed; Saved; Smile; Needed; Clean; Hopeful; Confident; Colorful; Deserving; Recovered; Blessed; Grateful; Refurbished; Great-hearted; Assured; Certain; Positive; Home-bound to Heaven; Spirited; Helping; Self-worth; Liberated; Loving; Quiet; Peaceful; LIVING; ALIVE; BEAUTIFUL!!!
OLD ME/NEW ME

Maria Young

When will I wake up and get it? Yeah, I say that to myself at least a thousand times a day. I don’t understand what it is I’m looking for in the world. Is it love, peace, or maybe I just joy and happiness? I just don’t know. I’m so confused. I let men use and abuse me anyway they wanted to and accepted it as love. I bet that some of you can relate. I beat myself up day in and day out because of the mistakes I’ve made and the things I’ve allowed people to do to me. Why can’t I be loved normally with happiness? I ask myself that every time I see a movie with a fairy-tale ending, every time I read a romance book about the knight in shining armor, every time I see a couple on the street, holding hands, walking and talking. I say yup, they’re deeply in love. I wonder why I can’t have that or why I never had that before. When I love, I love hard. I love myself; I tell myself that every time I look in the mirror. If you don’t love yourself, then start now. Tell someone I am beautiful and you are too. Tell yourself: yes, I am LOVED today. I will be loved no matter what. From all the hurt and pain I went through to today, I say I AM LOVED AND I LOVE MYSELF. REPEAT THESE WORDS TO YOURSELF EVERY DAY AND YOU’LL START TO BELIEVE.
Normal

Maria Young

Sometimes I wonder what my life would be like if only I could be normal… I just wish at times I could be normal like the others so I could have all the fancy clothing, be pretty, have long hair, have all the boys play with me, be popular, have a nice house, have friends, and a family that loves me. Instead, I’m the outsider, the weirdo, the one who gets picked last at the games, the one everyone says eeew to, the one everyone calls baldheaded, the one who has no friends, family, or nice clothes; no boyfriend, no love, the not normal one. If only I could be normal I would be smart and pretty; I would be somebody. Instead, I’m the weirdo, the one everyone seems terrified of. Why? Why is everyone terrified of me? Why am I the weirdo? Why am I so different? I wonder sometimes what my life would be like if I was normal. I have been the one who is not liked so much; the one who has short hair and a chunky face and body. What if I had a pretty smile, a bunch of boyfriends, a nice house, a family who cares, and nice clothing? I would have my own characteristics. I would be different. I wouldn’t be the same as everyone else. I wouldn’t be a weirdo; you know why, because that’s just normal life for someone like me. I’m me, it’s me. THIS IS ME. If only I could be normal; hold on, wait…I AM.

Unseen Sights

Nay Na

Do you really think that I am invisible? Do you not see me? Do you not feel my pain? How could you do me like this? You told me that you would never hit me; but you lied, now didn’t you? Look at my eyes, they are black and blue. My lips are split and fat like a balloon. My front two teeth are gone. How do I look at myself in the mirror? My hair has patches like a shedding dog. You did this horrible thing to me. What do I tell my family and children? You think that my bruises are unseen; well they are not. They are in plain sight.
Hiding Away
Shana Miles

Hiding away the pain; guilt of yesterday, rather many more yesterdays
The screams, fighting, the pain, the fear.
Hiding away from the others’ eyes, so they can’t see the bruises or the
shattered person that was once there.
Crying, pleading, begging him won’t stop; it will do no good.
Every plea falls on deaf ears; the police are men and I no longer trust them.
The rape and then the broken heart of a mother mourning the death of a
daughter not yet ready to see the world.
I sat there on that bathroom floor holding my dead daughter,
only 26 weeks along.
He said I had to take it, the pill of death;
if I didn’t, hell would ensue.
In his hand he fed me the poison that
would kill my daughter.
He made sure I had no one to run to, no
one to believe me.
On that day in June, almost a year to the
date I write this, I think back on what
could have been.
Meanwhile he sits a free man, free to
abuse another.
For the first time in almost 3 years I feel free.
It will take some time to heal and get past this.
I will still carry what happened to me and my daughter forever with me.
There is no law in Kansas that prevents a man from killing his own child.
Yet a woman who finally fights back is persecuted.
The world of men is still that of the medieval era.
We are still weak, helpless, and seen as nothing.
Little do they know that we by getting away are free and strong.
We share this with many battered women.
We are strong, smart, beautiful, and free in our hearts and emotions!
I’M CALLING; NO ANSWER. HOW COULD THIS BE? WHY DON’T YOU WANT TO LOVE ME? IT’S RAINING AND IT’S COLD; I’M RUNNING IN CIRCLES. WHY CAN’T I JUST LET THE HURT GO? I DIDN’T DO IT; IT’S HONESTLY NOT MY FAULT. I’M A LITTLE GIRL TRAPPED IN A BIG SCARY VAULT. I WASN’T PLANNED, BUT YET GOD SAW ME THROUGH. I ONLY DO WHAT I WAS TAUGHT TO DO WHEN YOU LEFT ME ALL OUT IN THE OPEN. I HAD TO DO SOMETHING TO START COPIN. I’M TAINTED AND RUINED FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE; I’M DAMN SURE I CAN’T BE SOMEBODY’S WIFE. THERE’S A TUNNEL, AND IT’S DARK. NO LIGHT FOR MILES, THROUGH ALL OF THIS I STILL WEAR A SMILE. IT AIN’T CAUSE I’M HAPPY OR FILLED WITH JOY; I’M LOOKING FOR MORE LIVES TO DESTROY. I SALUTE YOU MOMMY AND DADDY OF MINE. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT BEAUTIFUL MONSTER YOU DESIGNED.

Really don’t care

Nay Na

You put me in the closet for three days cause you say I was naughty. No food, no water, nothing. I cry until my eyes hurt, but do you hear me? No, you don’t, cause you don’t really care. Warm liquid slowly runs down my legs; I want to wash my body, but you don’t really care. I’m so cold and all I want is for you to hold me tight. What did I do to deserve this treatment? You can’t even look me in my face and tell me cause you really don’t care. Or do you even know, so why? Please tell me why am I still here, why do I put myself through all this trouble? I ask myself, why, and nothing. Then I ask you, why? Now you’re gonna tell me to wait. No, you wait! Matter of fact, hold on, you know what? I really don’t care!
Sorry, blame it on me
Nay Na

The alarm clock went off three minutes late...
Sorry, blame it on me
The bath water was a slight bit warm...
Sorry, blame it on me
The eggs were too cheesy and hard...
Sorry, blame it on me
The kids were loud and having fun...
Sorry, blame it on me
Kids, go outside and play with the dog.
The back door opens with a squeaking noise...
Sorry, blame it on me
I hear my heart beating too fast and so does he...
Sorry, blame it on me
He walks around in circles so frustrated...
Sorry, blame it on me
There’s no liquor in the house...
Sorry, blame it on me
No money cause I had to pay bills...
Sorry, blame it on me
He wants drugs, so what am I supposed to do...
Sorry, blame it on me
He wants to take it out on the kids, hell no...
Sorry, but take it out on me
He pulls the gun out; I hear the single shot to my head.
I see the white light, but it’s too late because all I did was say the words...
Sorry, blame it on me
That’s what he did, blamed it on me, without any “sorry” first.
**I Am Beautiful**  
*Nathalie H. Livingston*

I never thought that I would say how beautiful I am at the end of the day.  
My childhood was rough for a child like me.  
I wanted so badly to feel alive and free.  
I was beaten on a regular basis each day.  
I tried to hide my marks from unfamiliar faces.  
I was judged by skin color day and night.  
I tried to defend myself; I put up a fight.  
Two of my uncles touched me where they never should.  
I tried to tell my mother, but never could.  
I wanted to be happy, but they took so much from me.  
Knowing how much I hurt, could someone have sympathy?  
I started to drink and use drugs to ease my pain.  
Hanging out with “the cool kids”; new family members I gained.  
My actions started to get out of control  
So I decided to drop out of high school.  
I was sent to a placement for bad kids like me.  
The only thing I accomplished was getting my GED.  
When I got out, things only got worse.  
I was hidden in misery; struck with a curse.  
I was raped and taken advantage of,  
Trying to find a man to show me some kind of love.  
But four of them took what they wanted from me.  
My roommate did not help, she just let them be.  
How could these men be so cruel?  
Knowing my surroundings will forever be a rule.  
I’ve always tried to do things to the best of my ability.  
Hoping one day my mom would finally want me.  
Because she didn’t, I have low self-esteem.  
I grew up to be a drug addict and a fiend.  
I’ve been in and out of jail for so many years,  
No one to stand by me or wipe away my tears.  
My journey on the path of self-destruction Has led me to prison for a brand new production.  
I am in treatment trying to get closure and some healing  
So I can deal positively with the pain I’ve been feeling.

My mother, her boyfriends and family  
Have had a negative impact on me.  
Some people will never know just how much  
Pain they’ve caused me;  
one cloudy day I will need a crutch.  
But me being willing to change my ways.  
I know eventually I’ll see brighter days.  
Sharing with others just like me  
Will give us hope and strength to be truly happy.  
Talking with others feels so good.  
If you get the chance, I really think you should.  
Say to yourself, I am beautiful, every day;  
because you’ll come to believe the words you say.  
Don’t give up even if you think it’s too late.  
Only you can choose your destiny and fate.
Remember

Samantha Harris

Do you remember when we met; you said I was the one. We were head over heel in love, our fairytale had begun. I thought you were special, one of a kind. I never imagined I could’ve been so blind. Do you remember asking me if I would be your wife? I was in Heaven and though you had blessed my life. I told myself you’d change, looked into your eyes and said I do. I was ready to start our journey and give my all to you. Do you remember the first time you hit me in the face? You told me I needed to listen, so you put me in my place. At the time, I didn’t think that it was a big deal. I ignored the signs cause your love was supposed to be real. Do you remember choking me out, leaving me lying on the floor? I asked you why you did it as you were walking out the door. It was always my fault, at least that’s what you’d say. I tried to be perfect, but it was impossible every day. Do you remember all the women, how many times did you cheat? They got all your charm, while I was the one getting beat. I was never enough for you. I never did anything right. Why couldn’t you let me go, why even put up the fight? Do you remember how many times you held a loaded gun to my head? You told me to disobey again and you’d make sure that I was dead. I was so scared of you…you made me feel so weak. You made me lose my voice…with you I couldn’t speak. Do you remember pistol whipping me, then dragging me by my hair? I was screaming and crying, but you didn’t seem to care. You threw me on the bed, and then tore off my clothes. I was treated as your property, it didn’t matter that I said no. Do you remember all the separations, only to reunite again? You didn’t even have to try, all you had to say was I love you. I was so dedicated that I took you back every time, sentencing myself to life and loving you was my crime. Do you remember the night you thought I had died? You lay beside me, apologized, and even cried. We argued in the bedroom, and then I woke up bloody on kitchen floor. I didn’t know what had happened, but my head and body were sore. Do you remember all the bruises, busted lips, and fallen tears? Can you imagine how much pain you put me through over the years? I did fight back, that’s without a doubt; but that only made things worse, I soon found out. Do you remember finding out that I was carrying your seed? After more than 4 years together it’s something we couldn’t believe. My joy didn’t last long, it ended horribly one night. You took away my dream, you took away my light. Do you remember dropping me off at the hospital, and then going home? I had surgery, then woke up in the recovery room…I was all alone. There was an empty feeling in my stomach where our baby used to be. I laid there crying and finally realizing you never truly loved me. Do you remember all the times I saved you from going to jail? I never called the cops, but our neighbors didn’t fail. I kept you out of trouble. I did everything I could to be the best wife, so by your side I stood. Do you remember the day that at last I found my voice? I wasn’t scared anymore…it was time to make a choice. As you were walking out the door, for a change I started to smile. I felt like the old me…strong and independent; I’d been gone for a while. I remember marrying a man that I treated as my king; I couldn’t predict the hurt and pain he would bring. I left my husband with only a few regrets. The lessons he taught me, I will never forget.
**Condemnations Unreal**

*Jax*

People vilified tend to come off as cold or uncaring. She was convicted of the most heinous crime a human could commit, even though the evidence—that god in which we’re all told to believe—didn’t support that conclusion. Her character, (all that which she had worked so hard to achieve) was assassinated while she dumbly gaped at the furious disaster of her life. All she had was stolen from her, including her faith in self, God, and country. So, when she comes off as being cold or not emotionally connected to the rest of the world, just remember that it seems like it would be unrealistic to expect her to be anything else.

---

**“Second Chance”**

*Sharon Smith*

Can you really have a second chance; I wonder can you really turn time back? Can you really undo your mistakes? Where would you want to start if you could turn it back to a child? How about when you were a teenager, or when you just turned 21? Would you be willing to lose everything; all your family and friends in your life right now?

Is there really a second chance to make everything back to the right way? I know you can change your work. You can change to better your life, but you will never be able to turn the clock back to where you want it to be.

So take a deep breath, look at yourself. Brush yourself off and say “It’s going to be ok cause God’s with me always, my family and friends are here too”. So smile and let the world wonder why you’re smiling, and they’ll smile back cause today is the day for your second chance.
Life’s Test

Voycetta

A young woman lost in a dream, life built on lies, nothing was what it seemed
Family or friends betrayed her to the end; sex, lies, and alibies is where it all began
Things that were wrong seemed all so right, until tragedy hit that fateful night
Abused, used, and traded for sex; oh my God what was next
The life she lived was close to hell; no wonder why that lil girl rebelled
Time and time again she tried to win; everything she touched turned to sin
She was determined to win and be the best; however, she had to go through life’s test

Butterfly

Nay Na

Like a butterfly trapped in her cocoon trying to escape the straight jacket
Can’t move, can’t breathe, can’t see, can’t even fight back
The only thing I can do is stay still, but then this voice pops in my head
I know you’re not gonna just stay still and let him win
I’m yelling inside of my head silently No! No! No!
I am strong and I will win this fight; all I have to do is: fight, fight, fight
I begin to move, I begin to really move
I hear the cracking of my cocoon
I feel my wings stretch out; my wings are finally free
The cool air feels so good and refreshing
I burst out of my cocoon finally
I look at myself and I am the most beautiful butterfly in the whole universe
My colors are bright, shiny, and so silky
I flap my wings and fly high in the sky cause I am finally free
like the rest of the butterflies
CRUSHED WINGS (PART 1: THE BEGINNING)

Dawn Dobbs

CAN YOU SEE ME INSPITE OF MY SMOKEY FAÇADE? OR TASTE MY TEARS WHEN I’M SO NUMB...AND DUMB? TELL ME WHEN IT HURTS, I CAN NEVER RALLY TELL ANYMORE. SO BECOME ME, WHEN YOU SEE YOURSELF IN MY EYES, AND BELIEVE ALL THE LIES I NEVER SAID. HOW CAN I LET YOU IN MY HEART WHEN IT’S DEAD? I’M REACHING FOR WHAT’S SOLD...AM I DOWN IN A HOLE, REALLY? I CAN SEE NOTHING CLEARLY ANYMORE EXCEPT MY WARPED OBSESSIONS. I’M SO SORE; REJECTION RUNNING RAMPANT WITH PARANOID QUESTIONS. AND WHAT WILL BE LEFT; SAND, RUNNING THRU MY OPEN FINGERS. I’M SO NUMB, I HAVE TO BE...I CAN NEVER LET THEM KNOW. NOW I’M CLINGING TO THE SOUND COMING FROM THE LOST AND FOUND. IN THE CHURCH COAT CLOSET, IF YOU DON’T REPENT, YOUR SOUL WILL BE LOST TO HELL FOREVER. I HAVE NO CHOICE; I CAN NEVER FIX WHAT’S BEEN SMASHED. JESUS HATES WHO? AND WHAT AM I, I’LL NEVER TELL...NEVER SELL OUT LIKE THE PUPPET STRUNG MONKIES. A FIX TO A JUNKIE (ME)...I NEED TO BE SAVED FOREVER GLORIFYING THE MOST HIGH GOD. SO I’LL ASK AGAIN, CAN YOU SEE THRU MY FAÇADE? I’M STANDING HERE SCREAMING THRU THIS SMOKE SCREEN, DREAMING OF LIVES, STUCK IN THE PAST, WATCHING IT GO SO FAST. SEEING THE WORLD THRU BLOODSHOT EYES; MY CHEST AN EMPTY CHAMBER, BLEEDING HEART BURNED TO ASHES. I STAND HERE NEXT TO YOU, AND WATCH ME FALL APART...WE LAUGH AT THE SPECTACLE. MISERY STANDING NEXT TO COMPANY, AND AS I WATCH ME I STILL CAN’T FIGURE OUT WHERE, WHERE I LOST ME. MAYBE IN THE LAST GAME WE PLAYED.........UNCLE, OR MAYBE HOW I LIVED MY LIFE ON DRUGS, ON DISPLAY. EITHER WAY, I’M GONE WITHOUT A TRACE. A BLANK EXPRESSION IS ON MY FACE, WITH HALLOWED OUT EYES. I USED TO SEE THE OUTSIDE, BECUZ INSIDE I HIDE. UNCLE EVIL USED ME UP AND CRUSHED MY WINGS...YOU BEST BELIEVE I HATED THE RIDE!!!!!
I HAD NO CLUE HOW TRULY BROKEN I WAS. 40 YEARS OF DRUG ADDICTION PLACED MY BRAIN, BODY, HEART, SOUL, AND VISION IN CONSTANT FUZZ! I LIVED MY LIFE AS A PROGRESSION OF REBELLIOUS PHASES; STOLEN CHILDHOOD INNOCENCE, TURNED DELINQUENT INTO A BLACK SHEEP OF STATISTICS OF INTER-FAMILY CASES. I FIT THE PROFILE! I FIT THE TERM! LIVING MY OWN SELFSISH WAY, TAKING EVERYTHING FOR GRANTED, IT’S 2009. WHEN WOULD I LOOK AT MYSELF? WHEN WOULD I LEARN? I MADE IRREVOCABLE DECISIONS, UNGODLY, OUT OF CONTROL, CRAZY CHOICES! MY WHOLE LIFE I LISTENED TO THOSE LYING VOICES! I BELIEVED THE WORDS THAT WERE SAID…I KNEW THE WORDS WERE TRUE! I WAS TOLD “YOU’RE DIRTY, FAT, DISGUSTING, UNWORTHY, AND NO ONE WILL EVER LOVE YOU”! THEN ONE DAY, I SAID OUT LOUD “I’M NOT LIVING, ONLY EXISTING, AND I’M DONE”! IT’S OVER, NO MORE! ALL I WANTED WAS TO BE WITH MY POPPIE (MY BELOVED DADDY 1928-2004)! SO I HUNG MYSELF IN MY CELL, #201, GIVING MY LAST BREATH AND ALL I DIDN’T HAVE. THAT’S WHEN I HEARD HIM. HE SAID “MY CHILD, YOUR JOB IS NOT DONE. IT WAS NOT FOR THIS THAT I SACRIFICED MY SON!” I JERKED, AWAKE, LOOKING AT MY CELLIE. I SCREAMED AND CRIED AND STARTED YELLING! “WHY’D YOU LET ME LIVE?” I’D FORGOTTEN WHAT HE’D SAID. I RANTED AND RAVED “HOW COULD YOU BJ, I WANT TO BE DEAD”! IT WAS A LONG HARD ROAD FROM THERE TO WHERE I AM NOW. I NEVER WALKED ALONE, MY CRUSHED WINGS HEALING SOMEHOW. I HAD TO GO BACK TO WHERE IT ALL STARTED WITH REPEATED RAPE FROM MY UNCLE AT THE AGE OF 4, AND OVER THE LAST 2 YEARS, OUT OF 21 IN PRISON, JESUS’ SACRIFICE OF HIS BLOOD GAVE ME WINGS THAT SOAR.
Beautiful That I Am
Maria Young

Beautiful that I am-
From the inside out,
From my head to my toes,
From my spirit to my soul

Beautiful that I am-
From the light in my eyes-
To the joy in my heart;
From the pride in my voice-
To the pep in my walk

Beautiful that I am-
God has made me-
The person I am
I cherish the beauty
From beginning to end

Beautiful that I am

Untitled
Jessica Trent

Looking through the bars you seem so far.
I don’t know the fence, don’t make no sense.
Razor wire all around, my soul is searching to be found.
My struggle is real; oh, how much I feel.
Is this despair; please GOD, this don’t seem fair.
Looking at you with a stare; take a chance if you dare.
Searching for my life, it cuts like a knife.
Broken, beaten, and abused; so tired of being used
I have so much to lose; who will you choose?
My faith, my sight; oh, I think I might put up a fight.
I want to make it right so I can see the light.
Pain, hurt, and shame; I’m trying hard to maintain.
For time and distance keeps us apart; oh, God,
where do I start?
Growing up I was always bullied. I am hearing impaired. I always wore hand-me-down clothes that were out of style. I was a welfare child raised by a single mother with a brother that was six years older than me. I never had the prettiest smile or the cutest hair. I was called so many names. “She’s the deaf kid.” “She stares at everybody.” “Look, its Beaver Cleaver.” “Four eyes, metal mouth, brace-face, ugly creep, bum, geek, loser” were the names that I was called. Nobody tried to understand that I was reading their lips when they spoke, not staring at them. Sure, I had buckteeth, but I suffered four years of braces and surgeries to fix the problem. I always tried to catch up to the current style, to fit in, but I continued to be the butt of everybody’s cruel jokes. Now, new names are added to the list. “Psycho, slut, whore, fat a**, trick, mooch, homie hopper, college dropout, screw up, junkie, trash, and diddler lover” - the list never ends. No matter how often some people told me that I’m smart and beautiful, I never saw it in the mirror. I saw the labels written all over my face. I binge eat out of depression. I used to do anything it took to feel loved and fit in. By the age of 22, I had over 70 sexual partners that I regret. I used to self-destruct through self-mutilation, drugs, alcohol, and sexual activity. I have destroyed homes, families, and friendships because of my own selfishness and greed. Look where I am sitting now, a state correctional institution; a prison. My mother, former step-father, spiritual advisors, and programs offered here have all helped me heal and continue to do so. I used to always see myself as the ugly, fat, deaf psychopath. Now I know that I am just another very unique woman in search for the right crowd. I know I am loved. I also know that I AM BEAUTIFUL in my own way.
“Better Days”  
Lisa M. Freeman  

I awaken in the middle of the night;  
Mad at myself for wasting my life…  

How many times do I have to go through;  
it is never right for you, or you, or you…  

When you strike me is it right, or is it wrong?  
It’s been a part of my life for so long.  
Is your idea to break me or make me strong?  

I fail to see what you see; I do not see it in me.  
Do you feel better when you see me hurt, or  
do you enjoy treating me like dirt?  

I guess I’m supposed to go along with the plan;  
since I am “WOMAN” and you are “MAN”.  

Is this how it should be for you, for me,  
for them?  

Keep smiling; they won’t know that you say…  
As I smile over hurt and pain…  

I know there will be a better Day!  

Creation  
Elizabeth Tera Sims  

My life on pause for an unprecedented cause, left with no more tears to fall  
Tormented to no end, I often feel there’s no fight left within  
Each day passes with rose-tinted glasses, making me wonder if my soul has been  
burned to ashes  
Wheeling and dealing inside myself, angrily placing the blame on my own shoulders  
Often questioning why I wasn’t murdered  
Despite it all, this time has allowed me to regenerate; given me the faith I can appreciate  
Taught me not to hate the ones that fault me  
In the dark halls of my personal hell on Earth, my soul has given birth  
I’ve become the beautiful woman I was meant to be,  
proving that this soul still carries its own beat
There was a time while I was sitting at the kitchen table for dinner that I mentioned something that seemed very innocent to me, well not to my father. He picked up his plate of food and threw it across the table at me. I was 12 years old at that time. One time while we were playing a game and having fun, he suddenly got very angry with me and began washing my mouth out with soap.

At age 17, I had a fight with my father verbally. I told him I was going to move out. He stood outside my room so that I could not leave. He would tell me I was ugly when I was all dressed up and had a little make-up on.

At the age of 19 I had a plan to leave. I climbed out of my bedroom window onto the roof, and then down to the porch. I ran to a near-by store to call my girlfriend and ask her if I could live with her. When she told me yes, I went back to my house to get my things. I then waited for her to pick me up. My mother, not my father, tried to stop me. I told her I could not take his temper or the beatings any more. I did not speak to him for over a year. One day, I went to see my mom. I told her I wanted to talk with him. When he found out that I was there he left, but he finally came around.

When he went into the hospital, I went to visit him. I was not there when he died, but I did get to say good-bye. My mother died a few years later.

Now I am without my mother and father, but the beatings and things he said to me still hurt. There is still one thing I do know and that is I am Beautiful. As a result of his beatings, I prefer to be alone. I have come to terms with what he said. I know he loved me in his own way. I bare no ill toward him.

I am a much greater person now. Don’t let anyone tell you that you are ugly or look terrible. No one is ugly in God’s eyes. I am beautiful, and when people tell me this, I simply say thank you.
LOVE

Billie Jo McGlown

Love is a word I’ve yet to define;
for so many people it’s different in their mind.
If we truly Love, do we get to pick and choose the parts we want?
Then get rid of the rest with words so sharp, judgmental, and blunt?
Do we get to pick, pry, shape, and bend to get the person we want to love in end?
Can we dictate, punish, manipulate, and purge,
trying to change the ones we love because we feel the urge?
Do we stop loving when they stop yielding?
Do we stop loving when they start shielding?
Do we still love them when they won’t mold to our pressures,
or do we love and call them our treasures?
CHOICES
Billie Jo McGlown

I chose what was easy; it looked to be fun
Turned out that it was harder to live life on the run
I chose the fast lane; I really thought it to be best
I assumed my fate wouldn’t be like the rest
I chose to run, block, and hide who I really was; what I felt on the inside
I chose to numb and kill my pain; now I just can’t feel things the same
I chose heartache when I was only looking for love
These are choices I’ve made; consequences have all been laid
Now new choices enter my life; I choose the ones that cause less strife
I choose life and the joy and trials it brings; to work and strive for important things
I choose ME because it’s time I’m first; I choose to walk instead of ride in the hearse
I choose the tears and happiness a drug free life will give; I choose to LIVE
Whether many or few, they are all up to you
There’s some right and others wrong; you’ll figure them out before too long
These choices are yours to avoid strife; choose carefully because it could save your LIFE!
A tangled life…
Sherry L. Ryan

There’s nothing I haven’t been through. I’ve been beat down, despised and spat upon. Saw my life flash before me many times. Somehow I always found the strength to rise again on my feet.

Feels as if I walked a million miles with my heart dragging behind. I continued to fall down the same hill. Broken many hearts and cried endless tears. Tired of running away from the pain.

I now realize all that pain is a blessing in disguise for happiness and the true meaning of love lay within myself.

My heart dances with a joy knowing I made it thus far due to my gracious Father above. Any injustice in this life is offset by the honor of choosing my destiny in the next. I am grateful.

If fear should overwhelm me, I know that I can reach out my hand into the darkness and my Father above will guide me through.
Beauty by Thorns
Julissa Maradiaga
(Translation of the Spanish version above)

Remembering the things
I arrived at a
Conclusion:
That despite how painful
Certain past experiences have been,
Today I have begun to dream
Again for myself.

Today I have begun to dream
Again that wherever I am
There too will be my
Dreams.
Because for as long as you live in me
I will know that there will be a
tomorrow
And in that same way more paths
will
Continue to open
With avenues for new journeys.

God only is deserving
Of my extreme gratitude
For having returned you to me...
Beautiful smile of mine,
And sincere friend in
Adversity.
Thank you for being a
Sincere companion for me
In my life.
Stay here with me
Joyful smile of mine.
**Remember When??**  
*Pamela Hostler*

Remember when you came into my life  
and we just became friends.  
And you cut my heart in two with your knife?  
I treasure each day I saw you  
even though I could not touch hug or kiss you.  
I still could not see the light.  
You grew on me more and more  
And I told you I love you  
and you asked me to be your wife?  
Was it just a joke or did you mean it in the end?  
We had great times just the two of us.  
Do you remember when?  
I will always love you  
more than you probably know XOXO.  
Amen

---

**I Won’t Say I Do**  
*Katherine Ayuso*

You couldn’t understand this thing called life  
But if I told you about it would you still want me as your wife  
Would you say I do or have to think twice  
Would you love me through sickness, poor, till death does us part  
Would you want nothing from me but only me heart  
Or are you one of those people bite bigger than bark  
Can you help me finish my dreams that I once start  
Everybody says they love you but what there to love  
If God stripped my hair, clothes, money will I still be your angel from above  
If you have to think about it you answer me already  
Nobody gave me nothing but I always gave plenty  
I kept everyone’s glasses full while mine stayed empty  
People lie, deceive with a heart full of envy  
Show me to understand that will never be you  
Until that time comes I won’t sat I do.
I Am Beautiful!
Delilah Dumais

I thought this picture was beautiful and it reminds me of nature, growing up in the country, playing in the yard, all my mom’s flowers and gardens, riding bikes or walking up to the little town, and swimming at the bridge and meeting people when they came from canoeing and tubing upstream all summer long. But there was a lot of pain growing up too. My parents had divorced and re-married by the time I was 3 years old. There had been a lot of fighting. I lived with my mom but the abuse she was put through before I was born took over and she eventually turned to alcohol. The alcohol took over her life, we ended up going from bar to bar, many nights drunk-driving, many nights my step dad fighting in the vehicle, sleepless nights crying and too tired to go to school. I hated school ‘cause I was picked on and bullied a lot. I hated the smell of alcohol on my parents’ breath, the way they changed and got different once they started. They fought, drove drunk, embarrassed us in front of others. I was scared and ashamed when I went to school and I struggled terribly to focus and pay attention in class. This is just a few of the bad memories of my childhood growing up and most would always say get over it, move on, but it’s hard to do that when it doesn’t stop. The wounds kept getting ripped open again and again. I was in a hard relationship with the father of my 2 children. Things got bad when he started getting into drugs behind my back. He was more aggressive. It turned into being physical, sexual, emotional abuse. I finally left for good with the kids. I had a lot of trouble finding support from family or the women’s shelter. I have been and out of treatment centers trying to stay sober because I don’t wish this on no one. Both my daughters have been in bad car accidents and now my oldest one is partially paralyzed. I lost a nephew and my brother lost a son to drugs and alcohol. How many more lives will it take for us all to stop. We should not have to suffer and live the same kind of abuse or neglect as my mother did, or her mother did. This is till happening. I feel that people still need to stand up and do more to help victims of abuse before its too late. They never got the chance and now neither are we. We just need someone to really care before its too late and more women get hurt or killed. I want help. I want to change. I deserve better so do my daughters and grand-daughters. I am beautiful and they are too!
You are made of stars...
never forget your beauty!
Making Choices

John 3:16

Forgive my wicked ways
I Am Beautiful

Jamie D Selkey

I grew up so angry, so full of rage;
I felt deep inside myself
like I was locked in a cage.
Unable to be who I wanted to be,
living in freedom yet I wasn’t free;
No one could accept reality,
And allow me to be me…
I was in and out
Of institutions all my life,
Amazingly I became a other,
And a devoted wife…
Yet still I feel lost,
So alone deep inside;
Running from the pain of my past,
No longer could I hide…
I looked into the mirror,
Day after day;
Yet nothing I did,
Too the pain away…
Two beautiful children, depend on me;
Yet the drugs and alcohol,
prevented me to see…
to see the damage,
in everything I did;
all because of the memories,
of when I was just  kid…
then one day I found Jesus,
He lead me to the light;
He opened up my eyes,
it was a beautiful sight…
It didn’t happen instantly,
He came thru my sister’s love;
He showed me a brand new world,
Blurred Perception
Elizabeth Tera Sims

Feeling your presence even when I can’t
Seeing you leaves me wondering if you’re envious
of my human form over your hollow shell
The sight of you gives me sensory overload
My skin burns like fire, while my heart loses life
as it slowly breaks piece by piece
My mind is perplexed by the emotional splatter,
congealed to why you would jeopardize my life continuously
Immobile is my soul regardless of how dark and cold
your inorganic matter is composed
A permanent creed instilled inside of me since birth;
generating a virtue that will never let go
Slaughtered by your hypnotic spell for the last time;
my life no longer yours to undermine
Impossible
Maria Young

When all things go wrong-
When all your dreams have failed
When all your accomplishments are looked over-
Don’t think of the impossible.

When all your opportunities are gone-
When all you feel is shame and loss-
When all you’ve done is washed away-
Don’t think of the impossible.

When all your wounds are open, and all you feel is pain
When all your relationships are broken, and all you feel is heartache
When all your feelings are hurt, and all you feel is drained
Don’t think of the impossible.

At the end of the journey there’s a door and it’s called opportunity;
It’s knocking, so when all else has failed you,
Do not think of the impossible; it’s called the possible
Free From Fear

Patricia Vance

Living my life in fear
I’ve tried so hard but I still can’t shed a tear
I want to escape but there’s nowhere to hide
No one can save me even if they tried
All alone in the dark, I still lie
While the Life was being sucked out of me
I was hoping to die
I don’t deserve all this pain
God I need you to save me
Please take it all away
I want to be free
Free from the inside
God please help me and tell me why
God please help me, so I’m able to cry

Conviction

Jax

Sophie answered his mislaid phone. On the other end, a strange woman’s voice asked for her man. Whose man? Questions asked and answered- and the sun disappeared and the air disappeared and her strength disappeared leaving Sophie a ragdoll forsaken on the glacier of the kitchen tile’s floor.

That’s how he found her more than seven hours later, sticky with the lost faith pooled about her numb limbs. She was too weak to even lift her head when he called to her softly, unsurely from the darkened hall. Harsh fluorescence bloomed suddenly, bouncing off the hard, sterile surfaces where no dinner had been prepared. Baby, honey, is something wrong? Dropping to a knee, he lifted Sophie’s chin, forcing her haunted eyes to meet his. He jerked his hand away as is if he were the one who’d been burned. As if, as if she had been the traitor.
Rise Up
Misty Ospina

It has once been said that there is nothing in this world that we cannot endure. It is not about how hard we fall; our strength is measured by the way we rise and persevere. Our hearts beat to the rhythm of dedication and determination, of tenacity and self-worth. We as women carry the beauty of creating change for tomorrow. Do not judge us, because you don’t know. Do not judge, for you will never know how to love. When they tell you that you are broken and brittle just smile. When they say you are worthless, you scream back with a powerful force. We should be heard, not hushed up. We can overcome and conquer all. Nothing is impossible, we are unstoppable. So when others push you downwards, you get back up and push forwards. When you find yourself around negative people who gossip, are critical, complain, have little faith, create much drama, and are negative in general…either you will fit in and speak their language, or rise up on your own. We shall gravitate towards another kind of people and conversation that is positive, productive, progressive, solution-oriented, loving, creative, hopeful, caring, and proactive. As we grow older, we will grow wiser. Our pain will grow deeper, but soon you’ll realize there are some people and some places you can’t afford to hang around emotionally, spiritually, nor mentally. This is a successful law for living with your whole heart. Live to your fullest potential. Do not let your past define your future. You are far stronger than any situation dictates, so please don’t sit in this prison thinking that you have failed. Failure is never final. So therefore, this is not our end. Don’t be afraid, we can rise up. We will rise up… so never give up!
Desperate
Brandy Eighmy

I’m drowning in this mess
I can’t get out…
I’m being suffocated!
My oxygen is very low!
My chest is very heavy
Can someone pull me out?
Can someone show me the way?
Please it’s too overwhelming
I don’t know where to start
I’m looking and there’s so much chaos
Is there a way out?
Help! Help! Can you please get me out?
Everyone who I ever loved has given up
Everyone who was blood washed their hands
Strangers point and shake their heads
Is there anyone left who cares?
I’m desperate, help!

My Life
Patricia Vance

What is my Purpose, do I have a future?
Because I seem only to exist
I’m a drug addict who I can’t resist
I have so many regrets, I can’t forget the past
I’m stuck in time; I can’t seem to get ahead
I am full of guilt and feel ashamed
I’m wrapped in Bondage so much pain
With no direction, I can’t seem to break free
Chains of addiction have a hold on me
My life is a mess, I’m such a wreck
Standing in the dark, with nowhere to go
I’m all alone in this Big World
My life is a mess, I’m such a wreck
Standing in the dark, with nowhere to hide
Someone come to my rescue
Save me from myself I don’t want to die
Untitled
Tamara J Kvansnicka

Jesus came to destroy your past- sanctify your present and secure your future. I was dead inside- hiding in my tomb. Then I heard the voice-like the sound of many waters…calling my name. Untying me by the power of your grace from the “things” that held me in my past. TODAY; I am free in Jesus’ name; for my flesh has been turned inside out-my spirit soars where no human hand can reach me. My grave clothes have been burned. I shake your hand- “it’s nice to meet you.” You knew me back when, but I’m sorry- I don’t think we’ve ever met before- because I didn’t even know myself until the day I met my LORD.

I Am Beautiful and Strong
Judy E. Brown Wolf

There may be burdens and heavy cares that you must bear today. Your heart perplexed and so weighed down; it’s hard for you to pray. Just take it day by day. God knows your hurts and pains of yesterdays. He in love caused me to think of you; and so dear beautiful friend, because I care, I want to pray for you. I cannot know, it matters not what your needs may be; but God does know, and He will hear. His blessing you will see. You are in fact beautiful.
“I Will Rise”
_T.M.D._

I will rise above all the things that come up against me.
I will rise above every pitfall the enemy puts in my path.
I will rise above with the wings I grew with every adversity.
I will rise above and fly high, soaring even higher than where I used to be.
I will rise above, because it is where God wants me to be;
put behind all the things past ever looking forward to where he wants me to be.
To rise above lifting spirits, lifting hearts, lifting lives,
touched by the Spirit of God to persevere
Through all this, no matter what comes, I shall rise above.

---

_Cries of the Night_
_Sharon_

Do you hear it? Do you hear the cries; roaring through the mountains, through the
trees, look beyond the hills. The tears falling like a river, beaten down to a ball of
shame. Cries that cry no more of pain. In a distance you see lightning and thunder.
The faint cries _“What did I do wrong”_? Whispers come through the rain. Oh please,
please, someone help me! I’m sorry for what I’ve done. All I want is someone to love
me _“for who I am”_. I promise to be faithful and obedient to you. All I ask in return is to
be loved. I’m sorry I’m not pretty anymore, for the years have taken a toll on me. All I
ask is to be loved once more, not beaten and shoved in a closet. Please Father help me
find the One that will love me for who I am.
Waves
SpGetti

It hurts to secretly hope for what you know you cannot have, and it’s hard to hold the pain when you hide it with a laugh. It’s such a thin camouflage, like hiding brick beneath plaster; catching rain with your laughter. You can’t stave off disaster, but if you push through it you can start a new chapter.

As painful as it is to secretly hope, it’s even more so to reach the end of your rope; the last of your hope. You realize without it, you can’t cope. You’re just a captain with no ship, so you can’t even float. You’ve beaten and tossed on the backs of great waves with no hope left; there’s no cause to be brave.

The road that brought us here is the road that WE paved, but in all the world’s madness there’s a way to be saved…

When you’ve become lost and you’re drowning in tears
When you’re surrounded by darkness and consumed by your fears
When your voice has been silenced and you think nobody hears
When you’ve run out of time and you just KNOW you’re gonna die
As you draw your last breath, you don’t even ask why.
With your face to the sky you finally cry “God! Where are you?!“

Right at the end when you think your life’s over, just when you realize that you’ll never get older… That’s when the storm flees and the waves lay still. You don’t sink; you don’t die; by the grace of HIS will.

Maybe your waves were the waves of abuse, or you were lost in the seas of your own drug use. Maybe you were owned by a low self-worth, and no matter what happened you expected the worst. Did you dive beneath the waves and into your depression without even realizing you’d chosen oppression? You may have sold drugs; you may have turned tricks. You may have been broken, torn down, and soul sick. You should look at your life and how you’ve been delivered. No matter what, don’t forget to remember that the waves still crash upon the sandy shore because you can choose to get wet, though you’ve been restored. You could end up back where you were before.

The power of God’s in your story because of how far He’s brought you through the chaos and pain that this world has taught you…

Tell your story to others so that they might be strengthened and encouraged. The same God that saved you loves them enough to save them too!
A SINNER’S PRAYER
ASHLEY BARNETT

LORD, I COME TO YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS TO PLEASE TAKE WHAT’S LEFT OF THESE PIECES. I’M TIRED OF LIVING A LIE. I’VE LET THE WHOLE WORLD DOWN BECAUSE I GOT HIGH. AS I GO TO BED ALONE EACH NIGHT, I WAKE UP WITH A LITTLE LESS FIGHT. I PAINT A SMILE ON MY PRETTY FACE SO NO ONE KNOWS HOW MUCH I REALLY HATE; WHO YOU SEE IS JUST AN IMPOSTER SITTING HERE TRYING TO BE A HIP HOPPER. SO MANY MASKS I HIDE BEHIND; I DON’T KNOW WHICH ONE IS TRULY MINE. WHO I AM WITH YOU IS WHO I WANNA BE. WHY DID IT TAKE BEING LOCKED UP TO SEE? DAY TO DAY I STRUGGLE WITH MY ENEMY. FOR SO LONG I THOUGHT HE WAS A FRIEND TO ME. I’M TIRED AND DONE; THIS LIFE HAS BEEN NO FUN

Beautiful Forever

Rebecca GunHammer

She’s been broken and battered and through so much; please Jesus heal her with your gentle, loving touch.

They have told her lies all her life; no wonder she has so much strife.

You see her tattered and torn like a bruised reed; you want to reach out and touch her in her time of need.

She longs for your voice to answer her prayers, but sometimes she doesn’t feel you in her life anywhere.

No matter what she’s done, her sins you’ve forgot; with your blood on the cross, these you have bought.

You want her to know how much you love her; she’s beautiful to you always and forever.
Who Cares?

Juli

God cares. I care. We care. They care on all fronts when times are hard. We care about the reasons why one or some of us can’t, don’t, won’t, or have stopped caring for oneself, others, and God. With gentle and patient questions, we ask why. Then we ask how can we help? Our strength through Christ is a light in their darkness. I am not alone, but with Jesus. You are not alone, but with us. We are all together NOW in the present moment. Each and every moment of every day we care about ourselves and those around us in all ways. If any part of this statement is untrue to you in the moment, please ponder the reason why and ask yourself what might help you return to a peaceful state of mind. We need you to care and continue to care about each of us, yourself, and God.

“I am Beautiful”

Cheryl Hodge

Yes, you and me; we have been made as God chose us to be. Look in the mirror, but see inside you; Jesus is in there, yes this is true. We were created in His image, and because of Jesus it is finished. So look up and stand tall; Jesus loves us one and all.
Ever wake up and realize your past was messed up? Your childhood was full of every type of abuse possible, yet somehow normal to you. Your brain blocking out so much and making you wonder if what you do remember could possibly be real.

Ever do drugs to mask pain you didn’t even know you had? You accept the misuse from others simply because you didn’t want to be alone or have them not like you.

You say okay to things you wouldn’t normally do just to try to find some excitement or acceptance.

Ever let anyone who told you “you are cute” take you to bed just to feel desirable? You float from meaningless, unfulfilling relationship to another looking for love. You never really care if you get hurt or not because no one would notice even if you did?

Ever feel like you are incapable of love? Do you feel like you are unimportant? Do you feel like you can’t experience emotions of happy or sad? I did. I wonder why, and if it’s normal.

Then one day, I met someone who told me I was beautiful; that I was fearfully and wonderfully made. I am perfect in his sight; loveable, full of worth, important, and washed as white as snow.

Someone told me everything was for my good. My wrongs were made right; my past forgotten forever.

He gave me gifts and appreciated my talents. I was shown unconditional love; a love that I didn’t have to “feel” because I just knew it was there no matter what.

He gave me a promise, a purpose, and a plan. He gave me the Earth, the moon, and every star in the universe. He knows my every thought, need, and desire.

Who could make me not only feel beautiful, but also act and think beautifully? God did!
Broken
Patricia Vance

My life was broken
Scattered around like puzzle pieces
I was running in the wrong direction
Going to the wrong places
I’ve been strangled, beaten, left for dead
Broken
No matter how I tried I couldn’t find my way
Satan filled my head with lies
He is the master of disguise
You’ve done too much, hurt too many
You’re worthless, a reject, Nobody loves you
So I believed all these lies
I was so full of pain, I wanted to be numb
That’s when I turned to cocaine
My kids are gone now, they were taken away
I can’t live without them, I’d say
I’m so filled with shame
I’m falling apart-Broken
I’m the only one to blame
Thought I could do it on my own
I had to learn the hard way
My Addiction got worse; I created a case
I went to Prison again and again
Still nothing has changed
I was still empty inside, no drug could ever provide
I wake up wondering, why am I still Alive?
Alive, why? I want to die
I have no purpose I’m nothing, a zero
Broken
I was all Alone, Nobody in my life
My family don’t trust me, They’re tired of my games
They lost their faith that I would ever change
Where do I turn? There’s nowhere to hide
Wait, there’s still God, I’ll give him a try
God had a plan, one I could not see
He broke my chains, he set me free
God has made a change in me
He did things for me, I could not believe
He even restored my family
I put all my faith and trust in him
Because of God’s love
I’m whole again
I finally found what I was looking for
I have a future, God gave it to me
I’m no longer Broken
Beautiful
Patricia Vance

Sometimes the most beautiful things in life we take for granted
Waking up in the morning
Being able to walk, run, or climb a tree
That is beautiful
I’m able to see all the beautiful things God has given me
Watching my children play
Their hugs and kisses
The way they smile when their big brown eyes are looking at me
That is beautiful
Dancing in the rain
Making an angel in the snow
Watching the leaves change color or a flower grow
That is beautiful
The light of the moon when it’s dark
Feeling the breeze of the night air
Watching a bird fly
Looking up at the stars in the sky
The Sunset and the Sunrise
That is beautiful
Reading the Bible before bed
Saying a prayer before I lay down my head
Being at Peace when I sleep
That is beautiful

The Miracle in the Mud
Tamara Jean

I had to almost die to know that I will always live
I have become the substance of your Marvelous Mystery
Spit in my eyes
Turn this dirt floor into your sanctuary

Arteaga Sharidan
All the crying, trying, yelling, and playing
Tears, fears, beers, blows, cocaine flows
Looking, searching for a father that isn’t braying
Failing, not telling about all those horrid blows

Smoking, drinking, snorting, brews, and powder
Crying, slowly dying as I gaze at the beautiful flowers
Pain framed, legs lamed by kicks
Chest black, trying to breathe with Vicks

Blurred vision, eyes blocked by tears
Living without him is my fear
But dying is my family’s faith,
That maybe I’ll leave, that away I’ll flee

Terrified, I walk out while listening to his pleas.
My blood on your hands, my heart squeezed
by a vise like band
I fall to my knees; crying, whispering, begging
I’m tired; pleading, help me, I can’t take this anymore
Spirit battered, soul fractured, body sore

Growing up, I didn’t believe in God. Then, as a teenager, I believed but was infuriated with Him. How could I live such a horrible life if God was so loving and caring? Now, looking back, I can see God was with me every step as I stumbled and fell. He wanted to help, but I wanted instantaneous results. Now I try to help others believe, and every time I tell them my story, along with my age, it shocks them. God blessed me with a second chance and I plan on sharing His Grace with everybody. I pray that whoever reads this is inspired and accepts God into their life.

“Being confident of this very thing,
that He who has begun a good work in you
will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”
Philippians 1:6
Father of a Sparrow
Sharon K Smith

Like a feather of a sparrow; they fly with grace and love
As we look at something so small; so graceful as they fly
The Lord has graced us with beauty, and yet we never stop long enough to just
thank you God for all you’ve done
As we take our steps one after another, we don’t stop and think before we step
and realize what he’s done for us
Of the wonders and love he’s given
And then the troubles we bring ourselves
He’s given us a mind and a heart to be able to feel, think, and love
As like a sparrow in flight
For we have caused troubles
and hurts in life
We don’t stop and think
of whom we hurt, our children
and family, most of all God
As the Lord blesses us
and we’re forgiven
We shed our feathers like a sparrow
Our sins fall out with ease
The Lord has blessed us well

Untitled
Geneva Watts

My name is Geneva Watts and I am 50 years old. When I tell you I have been
in an abusive relationship, I mean it. I am surprised I’m still living. Being
abused by a spouse is the reason I am serving time now. I was so beautiful that
I modeled for Ebony Fashion Fair while being in a relationship with him. I
started to use drugs and I lost my kids and my career. So what I’m trying to
say is be careful who you choose to love cause he may have a past. Treat your-
self like a Goddess and always keep God Almighty on your side. Pray and go
to church and you’ll see a change in your life.
Jesus and the Junkie
Tamara Jean

You’re keeping me alive just by loving me, Jesus and the junkie.
“Wilt thou we made clean?” I spend so much money on these soars
Lunch money to mansions, unresponsive to the imagination
Ballerina dreams stolen by back door whores
Sandaled feet beside the ocean
Letting go of all that pollutes me, poisons me
Start here
Down the beach there are those famous footprints in the sand
Carried to safety, running and telling
A storm inside a storm
Watch. You’re almost home

We Dance
Tamara Jean

Every morning I will build an altar
In Jerusalem the sun is so bright
Full of potential, I see your face
Yahweh-better than a dream
Better than a chance
Look at the sons and daughters...
Beautiful how they dance
Sonshine
Jetaun Wheeler

Dazed: so confused as the rain thunders over her instantaneously
Life flashing before her eyes as drops falls splitting into calamity
So many seasons to be had, but only one reality
When it rains it pours; she’s stuck, drowning mentally
Lord have mercy on the child stuck unconsciously

No idea of being on a path of self-destruction
Claiming she gonna make a change, but having the same assumptions
Looking into her own eyes in the mirror, still uncertain
Caked up face, stitched up weaves, still chasin an imagination
Lord have mercy on the child stuck in imperfect perfection

Double minded, two timing, spiraling downward, can’t find the way
Sleeping, dreaming, old things have passed away; but you stay
Dreading to walk on the path alone to find happiness
Sunshine turned to haze, clouded, and can’t see the dismay
Lord have mercy on the child stuck throwing life away

Free your mind; with God you are a new creation
Look deep inside yourself; let old things pass on
Lift off every yolk allowing the Son to shine in
Everyone can be free no matter what their situation
Lord bless the child that makes you their foundation
Untitled

Tamara J Kvansnicka

It may seem I have nothing left to give. Truth is- I have nothing left to defend. Tonight as the moon turns to blood...my dreams turn towards you. Remember that fire; the one that went out that bitter-sweet morning? It faded into the atmosphere as the sun peaked over the horizon. You dropped my hand and walked away. Why did I ever let you let me go? Why didn’t you come back for me? These are not to be answered in haste. They need to be spoken from places that can’t hold on unless they are broken. Maybe it’s the mellow drama of the evening. Maybe even the lack of sleep. But I don’t think it’s either of these. I think it’s the confidence in your love for me that I can’t seem to shake. Your silhouette haunts the shadows tucked away in the dark. I chased you through the rain the other night, cried for you. Hung up the phone and fell asleep in the park. During the third watch the footsteps grew louder. I bent myself in between the trees. I laid there and let the acorns eat at my feet, while the wild things scratched at my knees. The wind blows in the other direction, away from me. It’s leaving with you. I don’t know if you’ll be coming back this time. I think I’m always too late. Is this my curse; an unforgiving fate? Tormented by own decisions. I must bring these demons of my own compromise. Do you know that I say sometimes if you forgot all about me? Like I somehow slipped out the back door of your heart and banished myself from your memory. So I throw myself back and forth between what I want to say and what I think is right. But “my” right has always been wrong. I thought I could say good-bye. I thought I could blend these tears with reasoning and all too familiar fears. Is it wrong if I said I just couldn’t hang on? Because sometimes I get so tired- standing still beside this fire. The flames went out long ago, but the smoke still lingers. The billows have risen above the trees and I can no longer see in the midst of it all. Where are you? Do these words find you? Do they faze you? Where do you lay? Where did we fall? When did we become so proud that we forgot how to crawl? Tonight there is a total lunar eclipse of the moon,. Meet me on the dark side of the faithful witness. We will dance like there is no tomorrow. Dance with me like before. Hold me so close one more time, until your breath becomes mine. It’s 12:43 a.m. and the Earth is about to see a mystery in the heavens above. Are you watching? Are you waiting for our heavenly Father’s fingerprints to show up all over you and me?
God Help Me

*T.M.D.*

Countless times I lay in my bed unable to sleep. 
Dear God, please help me is all I could speak. 
My mind races on all my regrets; things past, things present, 
and things I haven’t done yet. 
Wishing I could turn off my mind, I stare into nothing; 
whispering the words dear God, please help me. 
Sleep is what I long for as I lay awake, tossing and turning 
I feel like I’m flowing in a lake. 
Dear God, please help me. 
Finally, the time comes; I start to drift asleep, 
the moment I long for after much time has passed. 
The last few words I remembered I said, 
dear God, thank you for helping me.
Dear God

Heather Steinhardt

God, can you hear me? I’m down here on my knees, begging for forgiveness. Can you give it to me please? I do try not to bug you with every little thing, but I don’t know where else to turn, so onto you I bring. You know my mind is heavy with burdens of the heart. I have so much I want to say, I don’t know where to start. I want to beg forgiveness for all I’ve said and done. I don’t even have to name them, you know each one. I want to thank you for joy you put into my life just so I wouldn’t forget I had some pain and strife. Dear Lord, you sent your son to take away our sin so when we die we have no fear for we know we will be with you again. Thank you, God, for being here and listening to my prayer. I feel much better knowing that you’re always here.
It’s Amazing

Voycetta

It’s amazing that I’m here today
Able to stand up and even pray
It’s amazing that I’m here today
after all I’ve been through, wouldn’t you say
It’s amazing that I can sing and praise
Stand up and God glory today
It’s amazing that I’m here today
Life tried to bring me down and take my sanity away
It’s amazing that I’m able to give thanks today
For all God’s blessings I’ll be the first to say
It’s amazing and I thank God today
that I’m able to stand up and shout and praise
It’s amazing, wouldn’t you say
A Special Tribute

To each of the courageous, strong and beautiful women who contributed to this book,

Thank you for who you are—precious gifts to the world.
It would not be as beautiful without you.

Believe in yourself and the gift that you are, always worthy of dignity, respect, and love.

Never forget...

You are beautiful!
I Am Beautiful
A Survival Resource
Created by and for Women

“Life is a journey and a spiritual unfolding is its purpose.”

Published by
DISMAS MINISTRY
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
www.dismasministry.org

Copyright 2015