

The image features a central vertical wooden post, heavily weathered and textured, with a small, spindly plant growing from its top. The plant has thin, reddish-brown stems and sparse, small leaves. The background is a deep blue with a complex, cracked-glass or ice-like texture. The title text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

# GLIMPSES of a Fractured Soul

Mercedes Lewis

## Advanced Praise

These are the songs of Mercedes Lewis, true to herself and her life. They are unique in style, and in form. As she writes in her poem “Keep Up,” “I love to rhyme/ though some poets/ look at me as if/ it is a crime.”

Defiant, too, about meter, I call meter visceral rhythm and we’ve all got our own. Mercedes Lewis will not have anyone imposing their rhythm on her. “Reading,” is one of my favorites: “Are you reading/ what I think I wrote,/ or/ are you reading/ what you need to believe/ My world, colored/ by your crayons.” The poems are Lewis’ unique voice—very personal, inspirational, courageous, sometimes deep, sometimes funny—her voice is strong and I’m grateful to hear it.

~ Lee Lynch, Author

From the tearjerker of a “dedication” holding a plethora of names and a collection of emotions, to the comedic porcelain Queen, I began my journey through the poems of a friend. Onward I travel. Through the erotic innuendo-decorated alleyways inhabited by a woman who can slay without killing, holding the gift of a little death in her hands. As I meander, I glance in the windows built by words. I inhale scents, savour tastes and catch the occasional glimpse of a soul once fractured that lives in the memory of this extraordinary poet. I even recognised someone I met once.

Mercedes Lewis runs the gamut of emotion in this, her debut book. The poet hopes to take us, the readers on a journey. She does ... but it is one urged, compelled and inspired by her own journeys. This is what makes a poet worthy of being read. I’m so glad I took the time to take a trip with Mercedes.

~ Chris Parsons, Author

*Glimpses of a Fractured Soul* is a polished, yet raw collection of poems that linger. In “Touching Live Wire” and “Blues and Soul,” Mercedes Lewis finds the beauty and strength in confronting pain. In “Keep Up,” she engages and challenges the reader to look beyond the rhymes to the soul-wrenching imagery. This celebration of language and living transforms suffering into joy and the prosaic into the imaginative.

~ Elizabeth Andersen, host of the Sandra Moran Radio Book Club

# *Glimpses of a Fractured Soul*

by

**Mercedes Lewis**

*Troubadour Books*

*by Regal Crest*

**Tennessee**

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## **Acknowledgments**

It takes a lifetime to live a life. I am not finished yet, but thank you to all the people who have influenced my life thus far along the way.

My publisher and my editor have infinite patience. Cathy had years of persistence and patience in encouraging me. I finished much of the writing ages ago; it was the fear that held me back. For me, writing poetry is a solitary, cathartic and personal endeavor, and the level of emotional exposure almost paralyzed me. Nevertheless, I have decided; those that see me see me anyway.

Thank you, Cindy, for your encouragement, and your editorial eye.

I hope every reader who picks up this book, even if only for a moment, glimpses themselves somewhere within.

## **Dedication**

To Floretta, “little flower” who bloomed fully and lived a large life in a small space of time. Thank you, Mama. I miss you so much.

To Joseph, “he will add”, gracious enough to be pained when he learned that all he meant for good did not turn out so. Nonetheless, in the end, ALL IS WELL. Thank you, Daddy.

To Stella, “my star”, you were my angel, my savior, my advocate. Thank you for saving my life, for saving me.

To the Culps, for prayer, for not giving up on me, and for delivering me to the “work it out” hospital. How old am I again? LOL

To Andrea, “beautiful lady, little warrior”, my saving grace. Thank you for choosing me as your mama, thereby helping to bring calm from chaos, beauty from ashes, and restoration and redemption to a bruised and fractured soul.

I love you all.

# Chapter One

## Life Is Fun and Funny

### Style

Row upon row,  
aisle upon aisle,  
looking for that perfect fit,  
looking for my style.

A little bit of this,  
a little bit of that,  
odds and ends to make a whole,  
throw on a fancy hat.

Jewels that sparkle,  
boots that gleam, put on a tiara,  
and step out like a queen.

A tie, a fedora  
some slats, or stacks,  
some thought femme yesterday,  
today, taken aback.

Now THAT is style!

# Microwave

It's a simple thing really  
and it shouldn't drive me crazy  
and I'm sure she doesn't do it  
because she's mean or cuz she's lazy

After all of this time  
and the things that we've been through  
you would think that by now  
she would know just what to do

Please RESET the fucking microwave

# Partners

In sickness and in health,  
is what the words say.  
So, even in illness,  
we'll stay together anyway.

When we are older,  
and our backs won't bend,  
our knees won't raise,  
or our hips won't mend.  
When our arms are too short,  
and our legs are too long,  
we'll need someone's help  
To get our socks on.

I'm glad you will be there.



# My Queen

When I stumble in after a night of debauchery,  
she is there, waiting  
for me.  
No judgment.  
I subjugate myself,  
to her,  
resting my head on her.  
She is cool to the touch.  
So refreshing,  
so welcoming.  
I hug her closely,  
and give her my deepest offering.  
She willingly accepts.  
My porcelain queen.

# For All of Us

As we grow older,  
one thing we *must* have,  
is someone with whom to grow older  
and laugh.

Laugh at each other,  
laugh at ourself,  
but no matter what,  
don't climb up on a shelf.

When drivers think your car  
is the kind that you bump,  
and one of you is sporting  
a shiner or lump,  
when your body aches,  
and your teeth fall out,  
it's really good to have someone about,  
to remind you of when  
you could catch a ball,  
or sport 5-inch heels  
without taking a fall.

It may be a brother,  
or lover, or friend,  
but with this one person  
there'll be no pretend.

No matter what else you forget,  
make a deal,  
to laugh right out loud  
now and then,  
til you squeal.

# Circular

Sit here, grasshopper,  
I'll teach you a thing or two,  
add some wisdom to your living,  
to live better than I do.

I will teach you many lessons,  
some you'll grasp, some you won't.  
You will get your bumps and bruises  
learning those things that you don't.

Sit here, grasshopper, now,  
and let me learn from you.  
Yes, the teacher is the student,  
and the student teaches, too.

# Season's Greetings

Happy winter, spring, summer or fall.  
I feel that there are reasons we should celebrate them all.

Each has its own charm, each one, its own reason.  
There is cause to celebrate, and find joy in each new season.

Winter brings us holidays, for giving thanks, and to receive.  
Goodwill, gifts and family are all reasons to believe.

Starry night and warm showers, hoping new life to bring,  
are but two special happenings which alert us that it's spring.

Heat, beaches, pests and sand all herald in sweet summer.  
If no water is nearby, it could really be a bummer.

Cooling breezes of autumn, as the leaves begin to fall,  
reminds us of the sweetness, and the beauty of it all.

So, welcome in each season, with its happy, and its sad.  
Just remember there's no season that can truly be all bad.

Celebrate each new season, its course in life to chart.  
Make special memories every day, and keep them in your heart.

# Cooking 101

Everything you cook  
doesn't have to be on high.  
Everything you cook  
doesn't need to boil or fry.

Back that heat up,  
slow it down.  
Some things should be  
a little brown.  
Some things simmer, braise, or steam,  
some things should still be brightly green.

Pan sear, sauté, muddle, reduce  
all are ways to cook.  
You can cook by trial and error,  
or, you can use a book.

If you cannot relax,  
and enjoy the cooking craze,  
save the pots and pans,  
and just use the microwave.

# Beauty

Beauty is a strange thing,  
to which it doesn't matter,  
what ugly place it finds itself,  
what chaos, or what clatter.

Beauty is found in peace,  
beauty is found in war,  
it's deep beneath the sea and,  
on eagle's wings it'll soar.

Beauty is found in girls,  
and yes, beauty is found in boys.  
Beauty's found in quiet, still,  
and beauty's found in noise.

Beauty is found in others,  
who have yet to decide,  
how much of self is beauty,  
and how much self to hide.

Beauty is in the mind,  
and, beauty's in the body.  
Beauty is in the things we do,  
some nice, and some, seem naughty.

Beauty is a strange thing  
no one can find for you.  
Beauty is what you make it,  
so, unto thine self, be true.

# Blue

I want to write a happy song,  
I really, really do.  
But, each time I put pen to paper,  
words just come out...blue.

It's not the type of happy song  
you might be used to hearing.  
Minor chords of pain  
make this song oh so endearing.

Born of a fresh new love,  
dropped from the nest too soon,  
no other song to build upon,  
I made my own strange tune.

See, I know why the caged bird sang,  
and though she was set free,  
those things still buried deep within  
will never cease to be.

So, hear in this,  
my happy song.  
It's different,  
but it is not wrong.

And, if your happy song seems sad,  
or just a little blue,  
forget what others say, or think,  
and sing your blue song, too.

# Silver Bullet

No, my dear,  
not the one you're thinking of  
though I love that silver bullet  
most especially with my love.

No, not that one either  
although you could win a bet  
after that silver bullet  
I might need a cigarette.

Not that silver bullet either,  
but I hear it is a blast  
when you're really in a hurry  
and you need to get there fast.

Yes, that one, darling  
and it's true what they say  
that to end a werewolf fantasy  
it is the only way.  
Ouch.



# Shopping

Got what I needed,  
did the self checkout line,  
now I'm sitting here waiting  
as you lag along behind.

In and out, in and out,  
is the way we said we'd be,  
not a stroll up and down each aisle  
to see what we could see!

Don't try to persuade me,  
don't try to change my mood,  
I'm done with this, I tell you,  
now I really want some food.

You can just go ahead,  
let me sit here and rest.  
For the sake of peace and harmony,  
that truly would be best.

# **SLEEP**

Sweet  
Languishing  
Elusive  
Energizing  
Powerful  
Sleep. I wish I could.

# Homage to my Hairstylist

While combing my hair  
I found a split end,  
which made me wonder,  
when I would see you again.

My roots are screaming  
bloody murder, they cry  
Because I'm in need  
of a fresh hair dye.

Now those holidays are over,  
and the fun is all done,  
I find myself wondering  
if I will be the one.

Dye, wash, condition, massage,  
has me singing this little homage.  
Hair stylist, hair stylist, my talented dear,  
please make me lovely, I say with a tear.

# Con Fun

Another Con,  
another year,  
with happy Brits,  
and room-temp beer.

More Coffee Chats,  
and authors to pursue,  
I get all of this,  
and lesbians too.

Old and new friends,  
skits and a dance.  
One might even find  
that elusive romance.

Awards,  
readings,  
membership pins,  
keynote speakers who bring us grins.

I'm so glad I found this salvation.

# Auto Correct (I type, it types)

Worrier  
Warrior

Dies  
Does

Love  
Live

Worrier dies, love.  
Warrior, does live.

# Chapter Two

## Women and Such

### Bits and Pieces

If what they say is true,  
then I am bits and pieces...

bits of my first love,  
pieces of another,  
I guess, in reflection,  
I am the sum of all my lovers.

Does it have to hurt  
so much,  
when they leave,  
and I am  
in bits  
and  
pieces?

# Mindset

Forgive me  
forgive me she said  
eyes glistening with  
unshed tears chin quivering

How could I have known  
it was not the first time  
How could I accept  
that it would not be the last

Marry me she said  
but, I said, as far  
as I am concerned  
we were already married

Years ago she showed up  
on my doorstep her marriage over  
she left her husband for you a  
dear friend said

No, she did not  
I would never allow that  
I would never cause that  
I would never accept that

But in her mind...

And so like grandmother said  
the way you get them  
is the same way you lose them

# Kaleidoscope

The warm yellow glow of friendship,  
shy smiles, talking, laughter, laughter,  
and more laughter.

The pink blush of budding romance,  
subtle glances, gentle touches, shy smiles,  
and the first kiss.

Love bursts forth, vibrating orange,  
verdant green, a growing, living thing, this love.

Quenching blue, as I drink of you,  
red, hot passionate nights.

Red, puffy eyes, orange flames leaping,  
burning off the chaff.

A confusion of colors, going round and round,  
sometimes fading to black.

And then,  
The warm yellow glow, of new friendship...



# Horse and Pony Show

You'll love riding the horse  
she said, as she harnessed  
up the pony.

She was right.  
We rode hard,  
well into the night,  
and sometimes even into morning.  
She would not let me ride  
the pony, no matter how I pleaded.  
And then she left,  
taking her horse and pony with her.

I got my own horse and pony,  
and a new rider.  
Now, I ride whichever, I choose.

# Certainty

Well,  
this is not the first  
mistake I've ever made.  
And, I can say,  
with absolute certainty,  
it will not be the last.  
I only ask that you  
walk with me,  
talk with me,  
bear with me,  
care with me,  
as I continue this journey of life,  
learning as I go.

# Finally

Finally.  
I cried for you.  
It was the deep, sorrowful,  
soul-wrenching sound  
only the heartbroken can make.  
Now, I can move on.  
Finally.

# Her

She sent me flowers,  
beautiful flowers,  
with just a blush of color.  
They look like her.

She sent me flowers,  
with just a hint of scent,  
that climbed my nose,  
and permeated my senses.  
They smell like her.

She sent me flowers,  
they are tall and beautiful,  
strong and tough, yet soft to the touch.  
They feel like her.

She sent me flowers  
that are unbreakable and hardy,  
born out of adversity.  
They are like her.

She sent me flowers  
that reach across the room,  
assault my heart, and soften it.

I did not taste them.  
I wonder,  
if they taste like her.

I would rather have her.

# Not Mine to Give

The situation is pretty grim,  
makes me think I should retire,  
since she broke my heart in pieces,  
and she stole all of my fire.

I wish I had something,  
just a little piece to give,  
a small piece you could nurture,  
'til it gained the will to live.

I wish I could say,  
take it, take another  
little piece of my heart,

But alas, woe is me, it is not mine to give.

# Last Dance

Last dance,  
what last dance?  
I never even had a chance,  
to know it was the last dance.

I would have held you closer,  
and savored every word,  
had I known they were the last words  
from your lips I would have heard.

You could have used your thumb,  
to wipe away my tears.  
We could have reminisced of all the  
good times through the years.

Like, remember the first time you used your thumb?  
Bliss

I would have cherished those last moments,  
that's all I would have asked.  
But you didn't truly know me,  
thought me not up to the task.

I know what love is darling.  
I know the ebb and flow.  
I know you can't hold on to it,  
when love chooses to go.

I am a phoenix, my love.  
ALWAYS rising up from the ashes.

# Is Chivalry Dead?

I must live in a fantasy.  
Is chivalry dead?  
Please someone tell me.

She didn't open the door.  
She didn't hold my chair.  
She didn't help me up  
or down the stair.

No flowers, no chocolate,  
Not one single daisy.  
Am I tripping?  
Am I crazy?

What's wrong with this butch?  
I mean, well damn.  
Doesn't she know the caliber  
of femme that I am?

As we walked,  
she stayed on the inside,  
I said nothing,  
in order to save her pride.

Is it just me?  
Is it all in my head?  
Are the days of chivalry long gone?  
Dead?

# She Clung to Me

Headed out for a stroll  
along the familiar streets of P'Town  
I walk the cobbled streets  
perusing the familiar shops  
I spy a friend across the way  
and cross over for a hug

She clung to me  
a wonderful full body hug  
I tried to release  
She clung to me still  
encasing cocooning  
and healing me  
She took me in  
I held until she released

I'm okay  
Is she okay  
I don't know  
I should have asked



# Let's Keep it Straight

Now it's time for you to go,  
and I haven't said goodbye.  
So I hide in the corner,  
trying so hard not to cry.

Life is funny,  
You are my best friend  
. How could I love a woman  
who is only into men!

My heart is foolish,  
these thoughts I have aren't cool.  
These tears will keep on flowing,  
but I will not break my rule.

Look at you,  
looking at me,  
like a trapped animal  
that wants to be set free.

I refuse to lose you, friend,  
to the thing you think is sin.  
There would so much to treasure,  
but just one way it could end.

I won't go there,  
won't be used as a whim.  
so if you want me darling,  
then you must be free of him.

# Peach Tree

I love the peach fruit,  
but I want the whole damn tree.  
The tree is life, strength, cover,  
and protection for me.

The tree guarantees  
fruit for more than just a season.  
The fruit calls you out,  
But it's only for one reason.

Eat me, it demands.  
The fruit is sweet, succulent,  
as it drips upon my tongue,  
but in just a little while,  
all its essence will be gone.

The tree puts down roots,  
to hold fast, and it blooms,  
dancing with color,  
offering fruit for many moons.

I want the peach tree.

# The Professor

Snug, lightly faded, neatly frayed jeans,  
that surely must have their own doctorate.  
Checkered, long sleeve, button down shirt,  
red bow tie,  
and a fedora.  
Please, oh please.  
Teach me.

# Thoughts

I thought she was plastic when first we met.  
Not the soft, pliable plastic, but the hard, brittle,  
unyielding plastic, the kind that breaks if you bend it.  
What is she hiding? What is she running from?

Better than being paper, I thought,  
easily soiled, easily bruised,  
easily molded, easily ruined,  
unable to withstand anything.

But, my mistake.  
I've found that she is wood.  
Strong wood, with rings of age, and experience,  
warmed by the sun, shapeable, but, almost unbreakable.

Able to stand through  
the storm alone, but willing to  
hold, protect, and support others.

There are scars, cut, etched into her soul.  
They add to her beauty, they do not weaken her.  
She does not flinch when you touch them.

But, one does not get in easily.  
Like the warmth of the sun, like water,  
she will soak you up slowly, absorb you,  
absorb you, allow you to penetrate deeply

.  
I thought she was plastic, or paper.  
I was so wrong.  
All of her running and hiding is done.  
She is petrified wood, softening around the edges.

I should apologize to her.  
But, she doesn't know my thoughts.

# **A Soft Hard Woman**

She is a soft, hard woman.  
One with strength, and muscles,  
but does not get into tussles.

She has the kindest heart you've ever known,  
but is able to stand up on her own.

She is firm, yet gentle.  
When you touch her just right, she melts.

She is a soft, hard woman.

# Lavender Descends

Breathing deeply  
lavender descends  
floating down, a butterfly  
strong as the wind  
restless as the tide  
light as a feather  
delicate as a flower  
sharp as a thorn.  
Lavender descends,  
drifting down  
clouding my mind  
My eyes are misty  
thinking  
of you

# You Slay Me

Cascading  
falling  
spiraling  
floating  
tripping  
dripping  
down  
I am tongue-tied  
You slay me  
Your eyes  
Your mouth  
Your beautiful curls  
Your scent  
Your soul  
Your hands  
Oh god, t  
hose beautiful strong hands  
I am spent  
You slay me

# Fog

Like a heavy fog  
memories of her  
roll over me  
trapping me  
in a sweet  
savor  
that  
will not  
be  
forgotten  
Paralyzed  
I cannot move forward  
to a now  
that bears  
no comparison  
And yet  
a light misting fog  
and still  
I hope  
for new reign



# Tell me Lies

Tell me lies.  
Fiction is hope.  
I want hope.  
I need hope.  
So,  
tell me lies.

# Understanding

I vacillate,  
between pain, anger,  
and understanding.  
I hope understanding  
reigns supreme.

# What a Ride

From chat room  
to instant message,  
to private chat,  
have you ever met a woman like that?

Daytona Beach,  
toes in the sand.  
sex on the first date,  
man oh man!

Coast to coast,  
foreign places too,  
life was so exciting  
as my love for her grew.

Space, time, distance,  
could not compete,  
her hugs and kisses  
were oh so sweet.

Wait, she wants to end it now?  
But we had just begun.  
Was I the only one  
who was really having fun?

Like every ride  
at the fair,  
you just got on,  
and then, you're there.

But what a ride!

# Chapter Three

## Family Matters

### For Grandmother

I send you cards and flowers,  
while you can see and smell.  
I tell you that I love you,  
while you can hear, as well.

I touch your face, caress your brow,  
while you can smile and feel,  
absorb your wisdom, cherish your words,  
each moment is so real.

Our treasure is this life  
is the souls we come to know.  
We are sad and broken-hearted  
when our precious ones must go.

We must not lose faith  
when the Great One calls one home,  
it is a fate we each must keep,  
and each will keep alone.

So, there's no need to fuss,  
when it is time to leave, we must.  
It is His timing, and His will,  
and so we should just trust.

I love you Gramma, this know,  
not cuz the bible tells me so.  
I love because you were and ARE,  
and though you leave, you won't be far.

You are always in my heart,  
as you have been, from the start.

So as we pass this way in life,  
it seems through turmoil, joy and strife;  
we smell, touch, feel, and show,  
love is life's blessing for all to know.

# The Last to Know

It's okay darling, said grandma,  
patting me on my knee.  
It's okay baby,  
There's one in every family.

I thought she meant my cousin.  
Fey, fey, so gay Lee,  
The gayest baby  
you ever did see.

My world fell apart,  
my girl and I were through,  
I wasn't quite sure  
What I was gonna do.

Grandma looked at me boldly,  
stared me straight in the eye.  
You know, that kind of look she gives  
when daring you to lie?

That's okay love,  
there's one in every family.  
All those years ago,  
She was talking about me.

I didn't know she knew.

Smiling I realized  
that I was the last to know, that everyone knew.

# Her Story

Too black to be white  
too white to be black  
no zipper to get out  
of this skin she's in  
Nope, neither side has been easy  
Where does she stand?

She can tell you about the black child  
feeling motherless  
She can tell you about the black girl  
feeling lost  
She can tell you about the black woman  
finding a way to make it work  
She can tell you about the black female soldier  
hiding in plain sight  
She can tell you about the black mother  
full of wonder pride and fear  
Oh God, the fear

She can tell you, looking into a  
mirror darkly, that there is peril  
on both sides

On one side  
she has a drug addiction problem  
They said, I never expected this from you.  
She said, do you really think it was a part  
of my five year plan  
One the other side, she is a crackhead  
They never expected it either

Too black to be white  
too white to be black  
no zipper to get out  
of this skin she's in  
Nope, neither side has been easy  
Where does she stand?

On either side  
she is timid yet strong

On either side,  
there is love and loss,  
laughter and tears,  
fear and hope

Too black to be white  
too white to be black  
no zipper to get out  
of this skin she's in  
Nope, neither side has been easy  
Where does she stand?

Why must she choose a side  
Why must anyone  
Why must we wrestle  
with ourselves and others

Too black to be white  
too white to be black  
no zipper to get out  
of this skin she's in  
Nope, neither side has been easy  
Where does she stand?

when  
can  
we  
just  
BE



# February 17th

Such a momentous occasion  
yet no different than yesterday  
or the day before  
no different yet  
as different as  
the sun and the moon  
as different as  
night and day  
as different as  
wet and dry  
as different as  
hard and soft  
how can it be so different  
in all its sameness  
blessed with fifteen more years  
than Mama and yet  
it feels no different

# The Promise

He peered across the table at me  
after a masterfully executed  
hand of pinochle  
We were knocking them down

Promise me, he said, promise me  
Promise you what, I asked puzzled  
wondering if I had made a mistake  
in our hand

Promise me you will never use heroin  
Don't even touch it  
Don't even smell it  
Promise me  
You think too much like me  
You think too much, like me  
Promise me

He died many years ago  
I have kept that promise

# The Scapegoat

The straw that broke  
the camel's back.  
The one too many.  
The reason her love would never return,  
or so she chose to believe.  
The reason her life was ruined.  
The reason she could not  
stand to look at him.  
The reason he bore the brunt  
of all her anger, hate and fear.  
The reason he rarely felt her love.  
The reason, no matter what,  
no matter how hard we try,  
he will never feel secure  
that he is enough,  
prayed for,  
cared for,  
loved,  
or worthy.  
He is.

# Too Much Stuff

She had been visiting two weeks,  
and signs pointed to time being up.  
You've got too much stuff, he said,  
struggling to get past suitcases and gain access to a closet.

Her heart was immediately pierced.  
He did not realize how he had just wounded her,  
how he opened up a very old hurt,  
painfully pulling the scab off of very old sores.

She began to get small right away,  
placing all her belongings in the suitcases,  
lining them up symmetrically, by size, large to small,  
near the bed, not touching any walls,  
prayerfully not in any path.

She had felt this way all her life.  
As if she had nowhere to belong,  
as though she were always an outsider,  
as though she were not a part OF.

She closed herself in the room,  
sitting on the bed quietly,  
making as little noise as possible,  
barely daring to breathe.

She had two weeks remaining.  
She hoped they would pass peacefully.  
She would make no demands.  
He would hardly know she was still there.

# ISSUES

Issues,  
yes, I have them.  
I told my brother to “Kiss my BLACK ass.”  
Is there EVER a reason to say such a thing to your  
brother?  
Perhaps not, but let me explain.

He used four little trigger words in one message.  
ALWAYS, NEVER, US and YOU.  
With those four little words, he reached in  
and awakened the sleeping two year old deep within,  
the two year old who may never fully heal.

Most often, she lies dormant,  
in the fetal position,  
sucking her thumb,  
watching the world go by.

He reached in and snatched the scab off a very old  
wound.  
He stirred memories of separation, and police, and  
aloneness, and searching.  
He drove a wedge in a chasm that has been under repair  
a lifetime.  
He made her realize the world of difference between  
them.  
STILL.

So, yes, I said it for her.  
I apologized. I even tried to explain for her.  
He said, you are too old to be hanging on to that shit.  
Get over it. Move on.

He tells me these things, but has he?  
I am sure he will keep that message a long time.  
However, not for as long, I am also certain,  
as that little girl inside.  
No matter how much I work on making it otherwise,  
the hurt, and wonder, and search, and ache remain.  
Especially when triggered by four little words.

That little girl, I fear, is with me for life.

Issues?

Yes, I have them.

Don't you?

# Little sisters

Two came to stay  
I have to be me  
I told them I am gay  
Later, I heard them whispering  
what does that mean,  
the little one asked  
I don't know,  
the other responded  
I think that means  
she's funny

Funny  
what a strange term  
but yes, yes, I am.

# Time Stands Still

Time stands still  
until you walk before a cursed mirror, or  
you look at a beloved child.  
Then.  
Suddenly.  
Tempest fugit, is too slow.  
Too slow to describe  
how quickly time is moving.  
Too slow to describe  
the rush of emotion like moving ice.  
It is difficult to reconcile this disparate  
perception of time.  
In a flash you wonder;  
what happened to the time?  
When did it move so silently, so quickly, so  
stealthily by?  
Where did the time go,  
and why does it take life with it?  
How did this happen?!  
Then you remember a moment.  
A frown.  
A smile.  
A tear.  
A person you hold dear.  
And, suddenly.  
Time stands still.



# Seven

Is seven too young?  
Too young to know you want to die,  
that life is worthless and unfair.

But, old enough.  
Old enough to realize that if you die,  
that means they win. Old enough to decide  
THEY DO NOT DESERVE TO WIN.

# Good Times

Remember when Mama took us to the Bahamas?  
It was something, flying in that little airplane.  
It didn't take us long to realize we were driving  
on the wrong side of the road either! I think we lost  
some hotdogs and food, swerving to the right side.  
We laughed so hard. Mama sure sounds funny when  
she cusses.

It was the summer of Sadie, by the Spinners,  
the summer of shorts and swimsuits, and conch  
fritters. Mama made good conch fritters.  
Playing in the pure white sand, amazed at how  
the water was blue in the morning and green  
in the evening. Remember how clear it was?  
You could see all the way to the bottom, but  
we found out how deep it was when Stevie  
tried to get the money thrown from the ships.  
Boy, was it deep. Boy, did we laugh.

Remember we took the boat, headed out to  
one of the smaller islands, and didn't know  
that Billie built the boat with her own hands?  
It started to sink and we had to bail, bail, bail.  
I thought we would sink. We didn't. We never do.  
But, boy did we laugh.

# I will always protect you

It was magnificent.  
It was glorious.  
The animals were amazing.  
I remember Sun City.  
The door to our lodging was open.  
The monkey made a break for it.  
Signs were posted everywhere,  
“Don’t feed the animals.”  
Nobody listens. That creates problems.  
You yelled and turned to shoo it away.  
The monkey turned to you,  
chattering and advancing.  
You backed up in shock, and fell.  
The monkey kept coming.  
“Hey”, I yelled,  
“You get away from my brother,  
you son of a bitch!”  
I advanced.  
The monkey paused and looked at me.  
He looked into my eyes  
and saw crazy.  
The monkey took off  
in the opposite direction.  
I will always protect you.  
All of you.

# Star

The warrior woman  
entered the room  
wading through palpable  
despair and doom

The creature child watched warily  
as the woman carefully sat on the bed  
and gazed into the deep soulless  
eyes of the wounded thing  
Only she could see  
the tiny spark of life that remained  
Only she believed  
Only she had hope  
of saving the beast  
before it became a  
full-fledged monster

Stella, so aptly named,  
you are my star  
who brings beautiful light  
everywhere you are

# Oatmeal

She is being nice  
I can look out of the window  
I can come out of my room  
I can go outside and play  
some of these kids are new

Why am I eating so much oatmeal  
giant bowls of oatmeal  
salad bowls, mixing bowls  
lots and lots of oatmeal  
oatmeal with butter and sugar  
oatmeal with milk and cinnamon  
oatmeal with raisins  
oatmeal with fruit cocktail  
oatmeal  
oatmeal  
oatmeal

Why am I eating so much oatmeal  
Oh, Daddy's coming home  
I hate oatmeal

# Trey

I call him Trey,  
the baby that got away.  
We did not meet  
until he was in his thirties.

It is very difficult  
building bridges,  
after the cement  
has already hardened.

We try anyway.

# Oh Daddy

I  
really  
thought  
you  
were going  
to do something  
with those gymnastics  
he said

Oh Daddy  
if  
I had known  
that you noticed  
I  
would have  
won Olympic gold

# The Savior

the  
one  
who  
made  
it  
all  
okay  
again  
until,  
it wasn't.  
and now,  
it will  
never  
be  
okay  
again.



# DCBR

I am DCBR.  
I am damaged.  
I am cracked.  
I am broken.  
I am revived.  
This is a tale of triumph,  
of overcoming,  
of being a victor.  
Don't cry for me.  
Or, the child that was me,  
the child that may have been you.

Damaged  
As a child, damaged,  
a crack full of fear and angst but,  
that's not the crack I speak of.

Cracked  
The crack that shows you something beautiful  
the first time,  
then, has you chasing ghosts and falling off cliffs,  
until you realize that, no matter what it promises,  
it will never take you there again. For long.

Broken  
Not because life or crack broke me.  
But, because one day I looked up from the pit of hell,  
after chasing one lie, one ghost too many,  
after almost hurting someone over almost nothing.  
Really, literally, almost nothing,  
because the runner's need was greater than her fear of  
consequences.  
I frightened us both that night.  
Later, I cried out,  
Lord, I've gone as low as I care to go!

Revived  
That's when He saved me.  
When I asked.  
Not a moment too soon.

# Mother and Daughter

An eighteen year old child bride  
she cried alone  
faced with a mother-in-law who would not look at her  
she cried alone  
A seventeen year old husband and father off to war  
we cried together  
moved from the white house to the male boarding house  
we cried together succumbing to the loneliness of the unwanted and alone  
we cried together  
surrendering to the police who came to take the child back to the white house  
we cried together  
reunited after twelve years  
we cried together (they always come back to their mother)  
unable to express so much love and so much pain  
we cried together  
unable to repair the damage  
we cried together  
unable to make it work  
we cried together  
sick and tired at forty-five  
we cried together  
gone  
far too soon  
I cried alone

# Varied Responses

If you're going to spend all your money on a woman,  
spend it on me.

Does that mean she's funny?

Is there a man in your life?

No.

Is there a woman in your life?

No, but thank you for asking.

We don't care about that, just come home.

Come home to your family.

Love the sinner, hate the sin.

But Auntie, we all fall short of the glory of God.

Do you say that to everyone,  
or is it reserved for just the gays?

It has never come up as a topic of discussion.

All is well, as long as it is  
the thing that shall never be spoken of.

# Chapter Four

## Glimpses

*One day I looked into a mirror; just some random mirror that I must have passed over a thousand times. But this time I saw someone I never saw before; myself. And it wasn't a carbon copy reflection, no. It was deeper. This time I saw my true self. All of me—the good, the bad, and the ugly. I saw the effects of what the world can do to a person, and what a person can do to himself. One day I looked into a mirror and I saw my soul, battle scars and all. I saw my arms, my hair, my skin; my beautiful chocolate skin. Some people think we don't dream. They're wrong.*

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## Glimpses of a Fractured Soul: Touching Live Wire

It's not the words, words are easy  
it's the wondering what to share  
it's the worrying about how much  
of my soul I should lay bare

How deep into my fractured psyche  
will I let you peek  
how much of my hard-earned  
truth do I let you seek

Every stroke reveals more  
opens up a long closed door  
every sentence shows you me  
they say the telling sets you free

It's not the words, words are easy  
it's the wondering what to share

and after laying myself bare  
worrying if you'll still be there

So, I show you little glimpses  
small doses at a time  
of this bruised but healing soul  
of this sane, but troubled mind

Are you the one who'll keep my secrets  
are you the one to understand  
are you the one who'll hold on tightly  
never let go of my hand

It's not the words, words are easy  
it's the feeling of despair  
it's that longing and that hoping  
and that praying that you care

It's not the words, words are easy

And yet, discarding fear  
and all the other things that mire  
I give myself, but careful  
it's like touching live wire

# Triboluminescence

It had to be this dark to see it,  
to write it, to believe it.  
The light that comes from breaking,  
the light that comes from scratching,  
the light that comes from being pulled apart.  
Broken, crushed, smashed, ripped, fractured.  
Multicolored light, bursts forth, from such a place.  
Then, just as promised, beauty for ashes. joy for sorrow.  
Walk in the beautiful light.  
Triboluminescence.

# Because

Because,  
even with  
all that we lack,  
we ourselves,  
can be all  
that we need.

# Adrift

Adrift at sea  
no land in sight  
the sea waits calmly  
waiting for a decision  
it offers no guidance  
how do you know  
the way to salvation



# Again

When you open yourself up  
and you let people in  
the thing that's bound to happen  
is that you'll get hurt  
again

But this hurt that pains so deeply  
this time is not caused by lies  
this deep and sorrowful hurt  
is caused when someone you love  
dies

Oh this journey of humanity  
this thing that we call life  
with its puzzles and its pitfalls  
and its triumphs and its  
strife

She would want me to go on  
she would want for me to smile  
to take one step, then another  
til I've gone another  
mile

So for her I'll lift my head  
and for her I'll soldier on  
though she's not with me  
in body in my heart she's never  
gone

# Bad Hair Sunday

I saw the moon yesterday  
in the middle of the day  
while the sun was shining  
like that was the natural way

There she was  
big  
bold  
bodacious  
beautiful  
Beautiful  
for all to see  
as though saying:  
Who told you  
I cannot be here  
at this time  
Who told you that it is not  
my time to shine

I looked for rainbows

# Blues and Soul

The sounds of blues and soul  
are buried deep within me.  
I have embraced the soul,  
but always been ashamed  
and maybe a little afraid of the blues.

The blues are so telling.  
The bass walks around,  
stomping, in the front,  
leading the way, yet  
seeming to support,  
and hold the whole thing together.

The guitar wails and moans,  
the runs and progression  
tell all the secrets of  
an aching heart.  
Cry baby, cry, it seems to say.  
Cry. We will cry together,  
and scream,  
and plead.  
What purer love  
can there be, but pain.

The guitar invites the horns,  
they dance and parley,  
bringing crescendos,  
and depths that force you  
to close your eyes and see.

The violin takes your hand  
and walks with you  
to that place.

That's it.  
It is all defined by blues  
and soul.

# But, Realize

The singer  
put me on blast talking about  
dragging all my  
bags from the past

The thing is  
I wasn't so  
concerned about  
the bags

But, what she made me  
realize is that carrying  
all my bags like that  
everyone can see  
all my shit

I switched to luggage  
I try to leave it home  
but, realize,  
I have shit

# Darkness Came First

I view my life  
much like all of creation.

Darkness came first,  
and then there was light,  
the evening and the morn  
were the first day.

Sometimes it has been  
darkest before the dawn,  
and great sadness has always  
preceded great joy.

I have been born into death.

Death of hope.

Death of joy.

Death, of loved ones.

Will I die into life anew?

# Few words

I am a woman of few words  
and yet  
I have so much to say  
words swirl  
cascade  
somersault in my belly  
they burn me  
they cause me to tremble  
wanting their escape  
but words betray me  
often they do not express what I mean  
words are powerful they frighten me  
just as they can heal  
they can hurt maim and kill  
leaving souls and spirits crushed  
and bleeding  
dying  
why does my love sound like anger  
why are you angry at me, you ask  
I am NOT angry with you  
I am afraid  
I am afraid that you might be hurt  
I'm afraid of losing you  
I am angry with myself  
for caring enough to BE afraid  
I am angry with myself for  
not being able not having the words to tell you these things  
fear sounds like hate  
how can I hate what I do not know  
I hate the not knowing  
pain is a chameleon  
pain hides in plain sight  
in words and in silence  
that have no way to represent the pain  
I am a woman of few words  
and yet  
I have so much to say  
please  
look into my eyes  
and SEE what I am truly saying

With my few misguided  
WORDS  
I shall never master words  
so please please  
look into my heart  
And FEEL what I am  
TRULY wanting to say

# Fallen Leaves, Lost Sisters

Do we hear when each leaf falls,  
when each sister is lost?  
How can we know? We cannot.  
Nor can we count every vein, every triumph  
of those we think we know.  
We can only do what we can, what we know to do.  
We know though,  
that every leaf that falls,  
every sister that is lost,  
leaves behind a legacy, a light,  
a space in someone's heart that can be filled by no  
other.  
Will those we know not of be upset,  
feel left out, abandoned or forgotten?  
We pray not!  
Whether or not we knew of their light,  
now extinguished in this realm,  
it shines on.  
We know.  
It shines on.



# God's Child

God's Child must be:

a rainbow  
a light  
a beacon  
shining bright

A student  
a teacher  
a guiding voice  
a preacher

The worst  
the best  
able to lean on Him  
and rest

The beginning  
the end  
the one  
who's will He'll bend.

I am God's Child

# Handwriting on the Wall

I am afraid to write,  
not just the words  
but the WAY you write,  
reveals so much.  
If the line slants up,  
you feel happy and light,  
but, if it's headed down,  
there's depression in sight.  
Mix cursive with script, unsure,  
unable to make a decision,  
the same for mixing upper and lower case.  
All small capitals? Uh oh,  
Insecure with low self-esteem.  
Leaning, looping,  
these things reveal so many things  
I'm afraid to write.  
It may tell someone something  
I don't want them to see.

# Help

I can't stay here.  
They are romancing the stone  
. I want. They make me want.  
They make me want more.  
No.  
I want to get away from the talk.  
I must do something different.  
Yes.  
Yes, my poison was in a different glass.  
A rock glass.  
That will work.  
It works if you work it.  
Thank God.  
The serenity prayer  
helped save my life.  
One day at a time.

# I Do Me

I do me, better than anyone on earth,  
every new morning is like a spring rebirth.

I do me, like the sun in the sky,  
nurturing and warming, lifting you high.

Lift your face.  
Can't you feel my love radiate?

I do me, like the noonday rain,  
I nourish and replenish, and don't try to tame.

I do me, like the waves hugging the shore,  
I rush up to meet you, begging for more.  
Like that wave, I sweep you away.  
Hold on tight, if you want to stay.

I do me, like snow.  
Falling gently to cover,  
Landing heavily, wet,  
Like an exhausted lover.

I do me, like the stars.  
Twinkling and smiling,  
and inviting you to play.

I do me, like rumbling thunder.  
Sometimes soft, sometimes loud,  
always rolling through to chase away a cloud.

I do me, like a volcano.  
Erupting, hot, sticky, and yes, totally  
unpredictable,  
But I, do me.

So, let me do me,  
and you do you,  
and **we** will be just fine.  
I promise you,  
that makes for the very best of times.

# I see you, Sister

We are all souls and spirits,  
trapped in these decaying bodies.  
Some are more trapped than others.

I see you, sister,  
staring in despair, into a mirror  
that does not reflect back what you see  
in your mind's eye, and in your heart.

Most, even I,  
cannot begin to imagine how you feel,  
the pain of you and those you love,  
trying to reconcile what you see,  
with what you know.

Others do not see your beauty,  
your sensitivity,  
your big beautiful heart.

I see you, sister.  
You have a beauty most will never know.  
You have a courage most will never envision.  
You have a strength most will never need.

You are beautiful.  
I am proud to call you Sister.

# In Retrospect

I watched a timeline slip by,  
not even realizing my place in it.

In retrospect,  
those were good years.  
I should have leapt and ignored the fears.

Oh, my goodness, that was love?  
I squandered a gift that was sent from above.

I could have done that? I had the will?  
In time I would have acquired the skill?

I should have said, "I love you" more,  
not doing so has made me poor.

I should have done that thing right then,  
instead of wondering how, or when.

I should have ridden that timeline,  
like a surfer boldly through a pipeline.

In retrospect.

# Infinity

Time is a construct  
within timelessness  
Live life like the things  
you do go on forever  
They do  
whether you see them or not  
Be careful  
especially with words

# Praise

I would be remiss,  
to not praise my Creator,  
so I'd rather do it now,  
than to put it off till later.

When He looks at me,  
I see love in His eye.  
A love that has lifted me,  
to soar beyond the sky.

He did not see a crackhead,  
someone whose life was done.  
He saw me as His daughter,  
for whom He sent His Son.

There was no kick when I was down,  
there was no angry shout.  
He watched and waited patiently  
so He could bring me out.

There is no shame I find in Him,  
as He has none in me,  
so I will share with anyone  
just how He set me free.

Praise, and blessed be.



# Keep up

I love to rhyme  
although some poets  
act as though  
it is a crime

Noses turned up  
mouths in a smirk  
as though I don't  
understand that  
my music  
my poetry  
does not have to have meter  
does not have to stand on its foot  
does not have to have pace  
it can vacillate  
take its time  
stop and smell the roses  
I may be the only one that gets it

But I understand  
and I rhyme anyway  
keep up

# Lois' Poetry

Silently  
I weep  
I weep  
for raw emotion  
poured out  
searing  
my  
very  
SOUL

I weep  
for love  
for love  
too strong to hold  
for beauty  
too  
amazing  
to  
BEHOLD  
D  
THIS is the gift  
This  
is  
BEAUTY  
FOR  
ASHES

My heart is full  
I am without speech  
Soul behold, beauty for ashes

# Reading

Are you reading  
what I think I wrote  
or  
are you reading what you need to believe

My world colored  
by your crayons

# Monday Morning

As I sat outside  
having my morning respite  
a flock of five birds flew overhead  
two dragonflies playfully chased each other  
one butterfly flitted gliding by  
a lone peregrine falcon surfed the air channel high above a plane roared past in the distance  
the palm trees swayed gently in the breeze  
I noticed the leaves had finally turned red on  
one huge bush due to the cold snap  
everything was peaceful  
majestic  
beautiful  
and serene  
not a bad Monday morning at all

# My Haiku

Since we are here now,  
visiting pain. Here, take mine.  
I do not want it.

# The telling

Gently,  
she said,  
as she pulled me in  
for a hug.  
I wrapped my arms  
around her.  
She felt slight,  
almost empty, this vessel,  
exquisitely ethereal  
more spirit than substance,  
spirit before spirit,  
light before light.  
I looked into her eyes,  
to see if she knew  
what I now knew.  
Soulful eyes gazed back.  
She knew, and,  
she knew that I knew,  
there was no need to ask,  
no need for words,  
She also knew, that I  
knew she has known  
for some time,  
no doctor need tell her.  
No hopeless hope imparted.  
This,  
her gift to those she loved,  
to go swiftly into the night.

# My New Rainbow

I've been sad  
Mother Nature commiserated  
Each day dark and brooding  
clouds, no blue sky  
no thunder  
very little lightning  
bucket, upon bucket of tears  
On the third day  
against the backdrop of  
soft white clouds  
to the west  
a beautiful  
brilliant  
full  
new  
rainbow  
My neighbor asked  
Did you see that rainbow today!  
I've never seen one like it  
I smiled through my tears  
Today,  
there are still clouds  
but beyond that  
the bluest sky  
all is well  
I will look for  
my new rainbow

# My Thing

As a poet and artist,  
it's my thing,  
to step up to the plate,  
and take my best swing.

Sometimes I hit the fence,  
or I pop up in the air,  
I would I never know the score,  
if I never took the dare.

Yep, it's my thing.



# Night

It seems better at night  
when the sun has set and  
is no longer sapping energy  
the sun seems to rejuvenate  
and drain at the same time

The moon calms, offers  
a balm to spirit and soul  
as well as body  
it feels safe and serene  
I am less afraid when the  
night is inviting me in

# That Day

My eyes are leaking.  
My soul is weeping.  
I know not why.  
And yet, I cry.

It feels of loss.  
And yet, of gain.  
A deep  
and aching,  
throbbing pain.

# Relationships

I was thinking about circles.  
And relationships.  
I have a huge outer circle.  
But, when did my inner circle  
shrink to almost nonexistence?  
Was it ever larger than this?

I look at others and their  
easy relationships. They send  
each other cards, and cookies  
without a second thought.  
I torture myself over every thought.  
When does one get to that carefree place?

I have a feeling getting into my inner circle  
is like a sperm looking for that tiny sweet spot  
on that one in a million, fortunate egg.  
Why is that, I wonder?

# Nothing

I have nothing  
of consequence  
to say today.  
It was a day,  
and now it is night.

# On Being a Poet

I can write a poem sometimes,  
quicker than taking a drink.  
I can make a new rhyme,  
before you can even blink.

You'd think I would be arrogant,  
confident, and sure,  
but I am rift with feelings  
no person should endure.

Is it childish, or too simple,  
is it worth the time to read,  
I hope it will empower,  
planting courage, as a seed.

Will it make the reader laugh,  
or rend a heartfelt sigh?  
Will it make her leap for joy,  
or will it make her cry?

So, when words come to me,  
as the first thing in the day,  
should I write them down quickly,  
or just push the words away?

Words just crop up on their own,  
like a random, errant weed,  
and to get them down on paper,  
seems to be more than a need.

Once the words slow down,  
it's like pulling teeth I think,  
trying to find them and to shape them  
as they drive me to the brink.

Like trying to rhyme with orange,  
everybody knows it's true,  
doesn't matter how you frame it,  
it's impossible to do.

All the rhyming, all the rhythm,  
Maybe too much Dr. Seuss,  
all the catchy, rhyme books  
once devoured as a youth.

I don't want to write the words down,  
I don't want others to see,  
but the words just soldier round,  
taunting, till I set them free.

I will let the words flow out,  
I will even write them down,  
hoping that when others read them  
they won't see me as a clown.

# Peaceful

Morning breaks  
full of light  
the sky  
is one large cloud  
no blue is sight  
it is calm  
so still  
and quiet  
Beautiful  
a lone bird  
flitters across the sky

I breathe in and out  
to an unheard rhythm  
Peaceful  
THIS is that moment

# Just Don't

It is not a good thing  
to stay up all night then  
expect to greet the world  
all chipper and bright  
I try to act normal and  
calm as a rule but  
Invariably I run into a fool

Don't start with me today  
about  
politics  
or religion  
or any other  
ridiculous thing



# Uniquely Mine

My story is  
not unique.

But, it is  
uniquely, unequivocally,  
mine.

I tell it  
unapologetically.

# Playa

Am I just a player  
in other people's lives  
When will things start  
happening to me, for me  
On the fringe  
In the periphery  
Amongst the shadows  
Around the corner  
What I need is for things t  
o come back to the middle  
I want to play too

# Thy Name

Death,  
cancer is thy name.  
There was a time when  
you had many other  
names, and, we have  
always known you are  
inevitable, but, of late,  
the only name  
you bear is cancer.  
You indiscriminately maim  
and claim, young and old  
alike.

This is not the equality  
we have hoped, prayed,  
sweat and fought for,  
the kind of equality  
that we have bled,  
and wept, and died for.

cancer, death is thy name.  
We want to change it.  
NOW.

# Should BE

I should write these things down,  
these ideas,  
these words,  
these fully formed visitations,  
these things that magically disappear,  
the moment I grab paper and pen.  
These things should be remembered.  
These things should be told,  
should be shouted,  
should be said,  
should be sung,  
Should be.  
Should Be.  
Should BE.

But, like butterflies,  
they flit away,  
like butter,  
they melt,  
No.  
Like ice,  
like ice they melt.  
They melt into water,  
then disappear,  
without a trace.  
Wait.  
Let me write this down,  
before it disappears.

# Sowing

Yes, yes  
you reap what you sow  
but the thing is  
did you know that when you sow  
it is much more than  
planting a seed

# Tend Your Own Garden

Don't go looking 'round girl, someone's always got more;  
someone's always had it worse, someone's always at the door.

Just tend your own garden, get them weeds, use your hand.  
After all that it's done been through, tend it gently as you can.

Others tried to kill your garden, scratch it out by the root,  
drown it, starve it, burn it, grind it underneath their filthy boot.

Don't be like them, it's your garden, so tend your garden, little girl.

Don't you let it die by your hand, though it seems a hopeless task,  
Like a valley too wide, an ocean too deep, a thing too hard to ask.

You have come this far by faith, you've endured the worst storm.  
You have hung on tooth and nail, believing for a brighter morn.

Watch it blossom, watch it bloom, watch it break forth and grow.  
Hang on through those darkest hours, and you'll have so much to show.

You will quiet all naysayers, like the one that lives inside.  
Let your light shine through that bushel, there won't be no need to hide.

Tend your garden, little girl.

# **Three Things (Because there are always three things)**

You can make it.  
You can take it.  
You can own this bitch called life.

Say it with me.

I can make it.  
I can take it.  
I can OWN this bitch called life.

Now go.  
Make your mark.

# Victor

Growing from strength to strength,  
you are making the journey.  
Sometimes baby steps,  
sometimes giant steps,  
sometimes leaps of faith,  
sometimes,  
faltering backward steps.  
You soldier on,  
scarred, damaged.  
Tender.  
You are an enigma to many.  
That's okay.  
Some will never understand you.  
Yet,  
you grow,  
from victim,  
to survivor,  
to victor.



## About the Author

Mercedes retired from military service after 20+ years. She was one of the first female soldiers selected to attend West Point. Mercedes studied Business and Human Relations at the University of Phoenix. Under the pen name Ms. M, Mercedes is currently published in the erotic anthology Women In Uniform: Medics and Soldiers and Cops, oh My! and the poetry anthology Roses Read: Sappho's Corner Poetry Series, Volume 3.

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Mercedes is currently Director of Events for the Golden Crown Literary Society, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization for education, and the recognition and promotion of lesbian literature (<http://www.goldencrown.org>.)

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