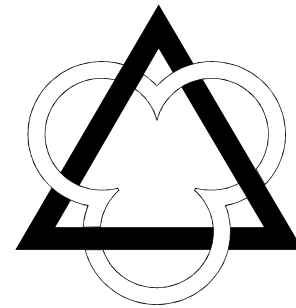


Spiritual



From Two to One

Two souls, once one, now must become two again.
 Two lives, once one, now are breaking apart.
 Two hearts, once in love, are now going their separate ways.
 Two bodies, once bound together, are now astray.
 Two promises, once made, are now just memories
 of yesterday.

—*Karen Smith*

I Am Free

Once I was a prisoner
 Lost inside myself
 With the world surrounding me
 Wondering through the misery
 But now I am free . . .

You gave me a breath of life
 Unclouded my eyes
 With sweet serenity
 Lightening a ray of hope for me
 And now I am free . . .

Free to soar
 Free to live
 Free to laugh
 Free to shine
 Free to give
 Free to love
 Free enough to fly.

Once I was so alone
 Unsteady and cold
 But your love rained down upon me
 Washing away uncertainty
 But now
 I am free . . .

—*Stephanie Doane*

Mama's God

Mama is sick
Oh God no
She's only fifty-six

Mama is good
Please God
Wait if you would

Mama's got a lot to do
Please God
I beg of you

Mama has the faith and trust
Please God
There's no rush

Mama knows the time is near
Please God
Do you hear?

Mama's asleep
Please God
She's in your arms to keep

Mama has gone from this earth
Please God
Give her your warmth

Mama can never be replaced
Please God
Take her in your grace

Mama is sadly missed
Please God
Help me with this

—Sandra J. Zile

When a Baby Howls

I was just like a seed ready to bloom when I was thrown into a womb. Like a widow spider. What a web did I spin. I felt like a bug caught in its trap. I was trapped—no way out—for helplessly did I scream, without a shout.

I felt that I was brought into this world only to see such terrible sights. What to my father's bloodshot alcoholic eyes did appear, was a toy to him—not a child. When it was my father's turn to "rock me to sleep," he would use me like an old dirty sheet. I would lie in my crib trying not to cry, because I felt like I would die. I had a cry, but not the cry of a newborn child. It sounded like a howl of a wolf. The only bonding I received was an abuse bonding, like when a cat will hold down another of its prey—just to have its way.

I began to grow older, fast, faster, and faster, like a racing roller coaster. As a toddler I was smacked around, thrown from room to room, kicked like a rag doll. I was beat for things I never did or deserved. Life for me had no meaning or no turn. Everything around me became so dark. I sat through my toddler years wondering what it would be like to have someone who cared. I never did own a doll or any toys to play with. I think the reason was I would be seen as a child, and not his to do with as he pleased.

As I grew older, much more trauma did I have, more frequent, worse. I became afraid to go to sleep because that's when he would sneak. I stayed real thin for this trauma I was in. When I was approximately 7 or 8 years old, I started using drugs, trying to find an escape or a way out. Nothing worked. There was no drug for the cure. I hid in closets from him for days at a time. There were 9 of us children. I was his pick of the crop. My sister would bring me food and would try to keep me hid. I would relieve myself in the closet with terrible smells that would make you sick. I could hear the screaming voice of him saying "Where is she? I'm going to kill her, beat her." He would be outraged. I would be so scared. I'd never cry, but so

often I would let out a yell, like a helpless rabbit being eaten by its prey.

I bet you're wondering where my mother was through all of this. She had been so abused by him she was in a mental institution—always trying to kill herself. I came home one day and found her on the kitchen floor with a knife in her. I was so scared and helpless. They had given her so many shock treatments she knew nothing. She had a mental illness called paranoia-schizophrenia.

When I was 14 I wandered off to get pregnant—that was my escape. I became pregnant at the age of 14 and quit school. My father never permitted me to go to school. He was always in court for neglect. I was still doing drugs at the age of 14, even when I was pregnant. I stayed married to my baby's father for 9 years. He mentally abused me also. I found out I inherited my mother's mental illness. I started repeating history by trying to kill myself. I ended up in a mental institution. The doctors overdosed me on all kinds of pills.

I bet you're wondering through all this how I survived and how old I am. I am now 37 and found a Savior, Jesus Christ. I have three children—one boy age 20, and two girls ages 11 and 12. I'm now seeking God, I'm off the drugs, and I'm back in school to finish my education. I have a wonderful family now, a new wonderful husband that is a saint. I am now an incest survivor. There is a lot more to tell, maybe someday in a biography. But to this day, I have no tears or doubts or fears. I have an unusual cry that's a different sound, never before heard. I will never repeat my family's lifestyle, and never will I take my own life. It means so much to me now, unlike before when life had no meaning.

If I could ever help anyone through this kind of trauma, I would do so. I would dedicate my whole life to helping others. I have God to thank for my survival and my outcome, which is not over yet. God is going to help me soar to my highest.

—Vickie Hargraves

God

I can see God everywhere—in a baby's smile,
in a mother's eye when she cries.
I see Him in a love that never dies.
He's the maker of roses, trees and things.
He writes all love songs.
He's the master of the wind.
He can make the sun shine again.

He makes me feel like I can soar like an eagle to the sky.
He can calm all your storms and make a
troubled sea stand still.
I have a friend who watches over me.
He's the master of all kings.
The greatest love of all.
He's God.

—Vickie Hargraves

Morning Song

You are the music in my heart,
My morning song.
You are my moon and stars
When the night is long.
You are my sun
At the break of day.
You are my sculptor;
I am your clay.
You are my laughter
And my tears.
You are my strength
Midst all my fears.
You are my hope
Of a bright new dawn.
You are my dreams
When all else is gone.
You are my sky
When I look above,
But most of all
You are my LOVE.

—Elizabeth K. Pierce

Too Busy

My body may age,
But my mind will stay young.
I have much left to do,
Many songs to be sung.
Many problems to solve,
Many oceans to explore.
Much love to express
For those in distress.

I will spread cheer, love and laughter
As I pass by your way.
The world is my treasure
To have and to hold,
For I am far too busy
To ever grow old.

—Tammy Jesse