

Favorite Childhood Memory

A Creative Odyssey
By Shasta Sovereign
November 2024



Participants

Alex	4
Ali	5
Alice	6
Amber	7
Anastasia Beaverhousen	8
Autumn	11
Ayodhya	12
Babygirl	16
Brit	17
Carly	19
Dansant Invisible	20
Daryl	21
DLS 35	22
Dudley	23
Dustin	24
Erik	25
Girl of the many arts	26
Golden Sapphire	27
Grace	28
Greeneyed Mystery	29
Gus	32
Jax	33
Kelly	34
Lola Young	35
Maggie Mina Lee	36
Marilyn	39
Max	40
My Wild Songs	41
Sharon	42
SKS	43
VDUBSLT	44



Dear Reader:

As we enter the winter season, many holidays are on the horizon. We often look to our past as a framework.

Do we want to build on the experiences of the past? If they were pleasant, moving forward is not too difficult. But what if we had bad memories? How do we move forward? How do we break the cycle?

In either case, we need anchor points to move forward.

What anchor points do you use to launch yourself forward in life? How do you make a structure when you don't have a model to base off of?

Despite the perceived dearth of positivity when looking back on memory lane, there must be something we cling onto. And this is where the healing and the growth take place.

We hope you enjoy these pages and we eagerly await your voice as well.

In Inspiration,

Shasta Sovereign



By Alex

It was a warm and sunny day Naples, Florida in September 1988. I can still feel the anticipation and excitement coursing through me as this moment was my 11th birthday. I was always excited about birthdays when I was a kid. There seemed to be this electricity in the air, as friends and family celebrated me. There's something so special about being validated and being asked the question: "What do you want for your birthday?" Those seven words, although are a simple question, carry the power of choice. Well, this particular year, I had become very fond of skateboarding. And although I had a board to ride, I wanted a pro skateboard. Something that would make me stand out from the rest. I wasn't the most skilled rider. But I loved the freedom of being on my board and the challenge of learning new tricks.

As the final bell rang, I hopped to my feet and dashed towards the car pick-up line at school and anxiously looked for that old blue van that my dad drove for work. He was a pool builder and the van was loaded with concrete tools, bags of Portland cement, was dusty and carried the scent of gasoline. I didn't care. All I cared about was going to West Coast Surf Shop to pick out my own personalized skateboard.

As we pulled into the parking lot that was freshly paved, I was nervous but yet excited. I wasn't sure what skateboard was going to pick me this day, but I knew once I saw it, it would be the one. We made our way inside, and the shop employee said (we'll call him Fred) "What's up guys?", in a stoner kinda fashion. I looked up at him timidly and said, "It's my birthday and I'm getting a skateboard." He roiled, "Well, we have lots to choose from. There's pre built boards or you can build your own with your choice of deck, trucks, bearings and wheels. What would you like to do?" I responded. "Well, how much are they?" I was always worried about money as a kid simply because my parents were always scraping by to make ends meet, and as the youngest of 3, I seemed to be the empathetic one of the bunch. I was sensitive as a child, and I still am as a man.

After a few moments of looking around the shop I asked my dad "What do you think I should do?" He replied "I think you should build your own." I grinned ear to ear and said "Okay!" I looked around for a little bit and finally my eyes caught the image of blank panther tearing out of the jungle staring at me. That was it! That's my board, it was an 88 Natas Kaupus! Full of excitement, I pointed to the board and said "This is the one!" Fred grinned "Great choice buddy." Next it was on to my choice of trucks, bearings and wheels. I stared into the glass case and said "I want the Independent trucks!" Fred grabbed a pair and set up them up on the counter. As I made my way to the wheels, I couldn't help but think about the word Independent and that's what I felt, independent and the power to choose.

As Fred began to put my board together I stood and watched his every move. Seeing how he installed every part because I know one day I would be working on my own skateboard. The fresh grip tape was the best part, it was coarse enough to shred skin and I loved the smell of it.

As Fred completed building my board he handed it over and said "Here she is." I couldn't believe it, I was in shock. It was my very own personalized skateboard that I chose.

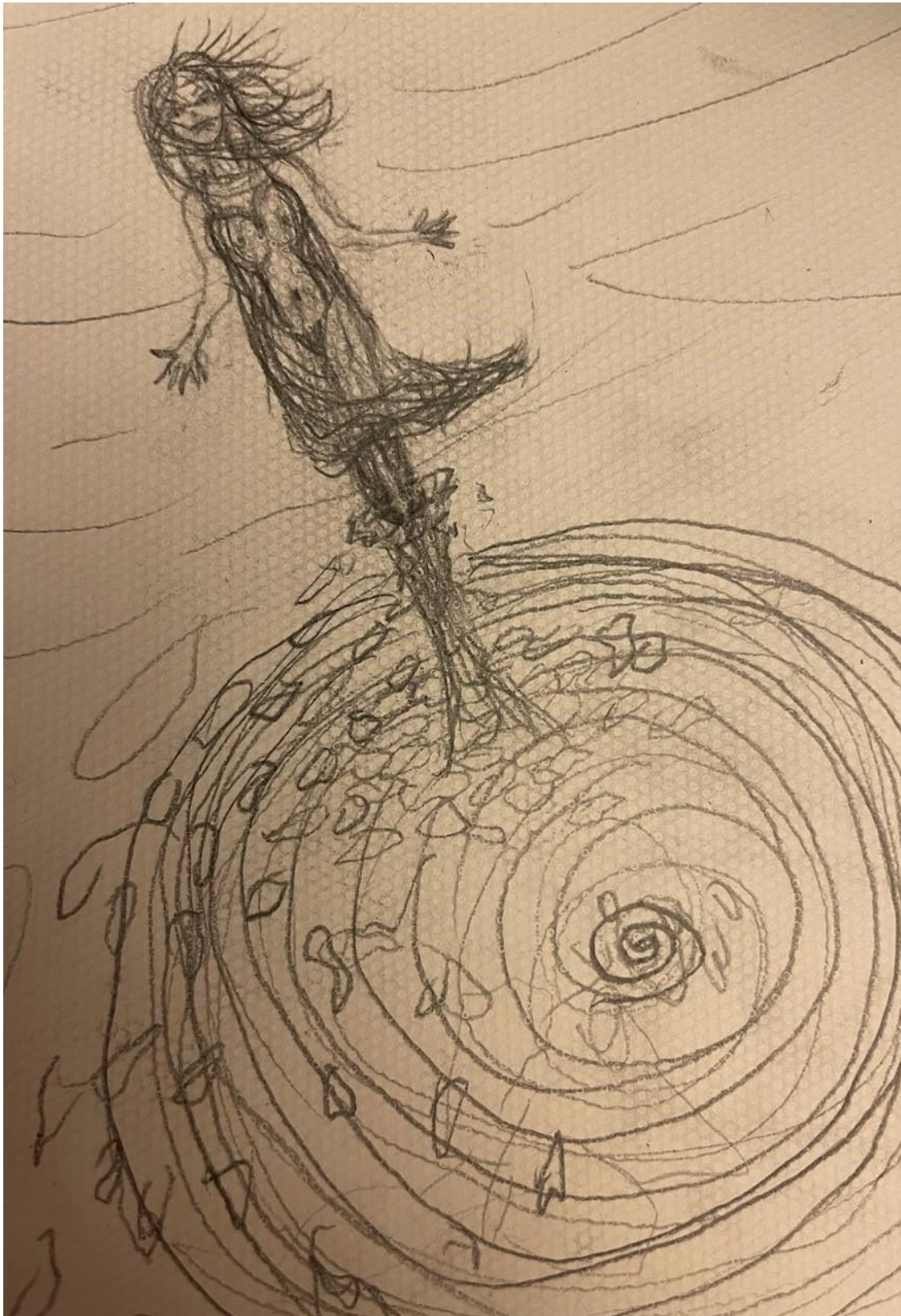
As I reflect on this day, I'm reminded to choose to find the good in life and to make that a space that I live from and to do my best to find gratitude in every moment.

* * *



Crumbling Foundation

By Ali



God is my safe place

* * *



By Alice

My fav childhood memory
Is a Christmas
Where me and my brother got a lot of classic adventure theme Legos.
They are extremely rare now
And he has them all.
But his transphobic wife
Made him ghost the entire family.
He has now been cut out of the will.
Every childhood memory is now bitter.
I spent every moment with him
And my childhood burns.

* * *



By Amber

My childhood favorite memory
Would have to be me going to church
When I was about 8 years old
To get away from the family abuse
That had going on.
But going to church at the age of 8 years old.
I didn't know that I would finally find God
And know what purpose I had in life.
I really honestly don't know what else to put.
I went to church just to get away from my family issues
But I guess you could also put in there
That now at the age of 37 years old,
I have my own house,
I live in a different city
And I am doing great.
And following God's purpose that he had for me when I was eight.

* * *



The Ramblers

By Anastasia Beaverhousen

Growing up I spent a lot of my time with my grandparents.
My mom usually had to work in the summer.
From the time I was two, we would take their motorhome
And drive to my family's (great grandparent's) house in Arkansas.
Sometimes we would take my cousins,
And if one of them could not come,
My childhood best friend would come.
She was, and is, like family to this day.
My grandparents made it a point to stop
At national Monuments,
Such as Crazy Horse, Mount Rushmore, the St. Louis arch, and the Grand Canyon.
As we were driving.
Of course we got bored in an RV,
So we would play lots of music, sing, and dance.
One day my cousin and I made a group name for our wonderful RV opera.
We called ourselves "The Ramblers."
The RV we travelled in was named "Rambler"
So that's how we came up with the name.
We all had so much fun and made so many good memories.
My family is not too different from anyone else's.
We all have problems, issues so we might not want to remember,
But I am thankful I was able to go every summer
And experience something different.
Because of my grandparents I have been to at least 24 states.
My aunt and uncle also took me on two trips
One to Disney World and Disneyland.
Those were some experiences I will never forget.
I also added in the picture my "Coolio" concert ticket.
As much as my mom worked, and the other things that were going on that night,
I remember it like yesterday.
My mom, my aunt, my old friend and classmate, and myself attended the Coolio concert.
This was when Listerine strips first came out,
And we had to make a stop just to get Listerine strips.
We were so fascinated with him.
So silly but good memories once again.
These are moments I enjoy talking about
And I am thankful that I have these experiences and family.
That always included me, and made me feel loved.



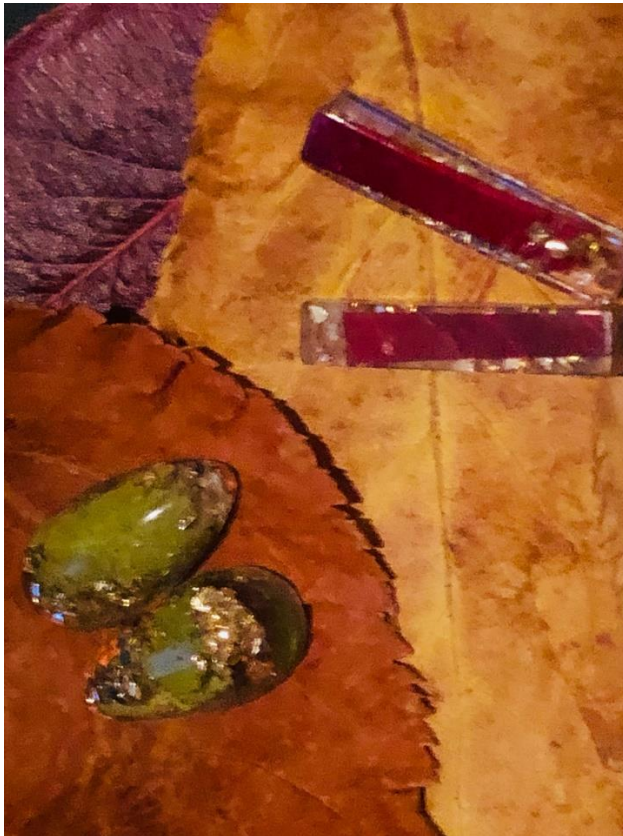
I made a collage with the original picture I took.

* * *



Apples to Apples

By Anastasia Beaverhousen



**Good Times, Few and Far Between**

By Autumn

In the silence of a house too loud,
Where love was bruised, and hope was drowned,
There were flickers—small sparks of light,
In moments rare, the world felt right.

A family drive, no map, no place,
Just leaving the house, the ache, the space,
We'd wander roads with no direction,
Finding peace in our imperfection.

A couch, a movie, just me and mom,
Laughter soft, where there was calm.
Her smile would shine, her heart would heal,
In fleeting warmth, the pain would feel
Like something we could almost bear,
If only for that moment, there.

Dad and I, hands in the dirt,
A bond forged in the grease and hurt,
Together we'd fix what had been broken,
The language of silence, unspoken.

And then my siblings, fierce and wild,
We'd steal away, just a quiet child
Among the noise and chaos loud,
Finding in each other, a space unbowed.

Those were the moments, good and true,
In a house where love was pulled askew.
The good times, few and far between,
But in those hours, the world was clean.

The pain was constant, sharp, and near,
But those small joys, they wiped the fear.
In love's fragile moments, I found my place,
In the car, in the laughter, in a mother's grace.

* * *



To Cherish or not to Cherish

By Ayodhya

Asleep in my sleeping bag on the floor next to the other girls in their sleeping bags. 3:30 AM sometimes earlier the lights would pop on along with the sound of a female ashram teacher telling us to get up. Sometimes they would sing "Jiv Jago! Jiv Jago! Wake up sleeping souls!" For the act of sleeping was in the mode of ignorance, which had negative connotations. Out of the three modes of material nature: goodness, passion and ignorance really only goodness was not negative but far from ideal because it was still on the mundane versus spiritual platform.

Growing up in Gurukula, the Hare Krishna boarding schools, nothing was simple. It all had philosophy to go with it. We couldn't be in the bodily concept. We were supposed to deny what the body wanted, aside from going to the bathroom, (and even that had many rules around it), eating, sleeping, every aspect of existence, being in a human body was complicated, came with rules and lengthy, philosophical explanations reinforced into us constantly. We were not here to enjoy; in fact, using that word, unless it was with regards to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead was never done Unless it was in reference to Him enjoying. We never said to another, "enjoy your day".



Some doodle art enhanced by carpel tunnel

If we didn't immediately arise, the teacher would drop water on us from an achman cup. If any kid crawled to the bottom of their sleeping bag because they were tired or cold they would be unceremoniously dumped out onto the floor. As we rolled up our sleeping bags and stored them in a cupboard and wiped the floor, where our sleeping bags have been with a wet cloth submerged in a bucket, we had to say prayers.

There was never a dull moment where we were allowed to listen to our minds, and let Maya (illusion) creep in. We had to hurry as well. They had us compete with each other, offering some prize incentive to make us want to be the fastest and first. Sometimes the prize would be being able to hold the teacher's hand for a few minutes during a ceremony. That was really the only physical contact we would get aside from a hug at night if we had behaved ourselves throughout the day.



Showering was easy to do quickly, because the first shower in the early morning (basically the middle of the night) had to be ice cold to snap us out of our ignorance. Austerity was good for us, kept us from focusing on our bodies. They were so strict about the cold shower that a hand would reach inside as we showered and check the water. We did not have normal shower curtains, (at least not in upstate New York where I'm picturing us at while I'm writing this) but rather big gray slabs or thick sheets of roofing vinyl. We also used these for sledding. I'll write about that another time. I do recall waking up one morning before it was time for us to get up and seeing steam coming out of a couple of the showers, meaning the teachers got warm showers or at least two did on that particular day.

There were more rules with regards to the shower, such as having to wash certain parts of our body three times with soap. Usually in the mornings because the water was so cold we were try to just do a rinse off. And the rule was even in the middle of the day if we had to have a bowel movement, we had to take a shower afterwards. Using the bathroom in particular, going to the toilet was also complicated. We had to call it "servicing our body" versus "going to the bathroom." And it wasn't "go pee or poop" but "pass urine or pass stool." Also to wash after toilet use we had to use water out of a metal cup or lota, and use our hands and water to clean up after a bowel movement. Only our left hand (our muchhi hand) which we never ate with. To simplify things, or in order to accommodate so many of us using the bathrooms they gave us water (epi, I guess) bottles that we were supposed to fill up before we went into the toilet. Sometimes we would forget to fill it and we would have to ask another girl to fill it up for us and that is where we could have a little bit of fun by either filling it up with super hot or super cold water(cruel, but wickedly fun).

We didn't always get to use toothpaste. I remember in Dallas we used a mixture of mustard seed oil and salt to clean our teeth. In other places we used baking soda. And sometimes tooth powder.

The use of mirrors was also complicated and the rules about it impact me to this day. Looking in the mirror, aside from when we were applying Tilak or sacred clay to our forehead and 12 other spots on our upper bodies (mantras for that too), or making sure our slips or petticoats were not showing at the bottom of our saris, was considered the bodily concept, and we could get punished by humiliation or some other reminder for doing it. To this day, I feel embarrassed, or ashamed for looking in the mirror, especially if someone sees me doing it. Sometimes I feel numb or panicked, not recognizing who I see in the mirror, not able to connect that it is me. We were taught that what we saw in the mirror was not us, but our body and we were not our body. The body was just a gross bag of blood, pus and stool. It could be purified by following the rules of bathing and other purification processes, and also by using it to perform devotional service to Krishna which began early every morning.

After we were already, we would walk from our ashram, which could be in the same building or as in the case of our farm in upstate New York, clear across the other end of our property, down to the temple room. In upstate New York in the winter, we would slide down on our clothed bottoms as we slipped on black ice during a blizzard at 4:00 AM in order to make it in time for mangal arati at 4:15 AM. I can remember, slipping and sliding with the other girls, and two of us would have to carry a crate, filled with our metal plates and bowls and silverware for breakfast which we would be eating a few hours later.

When we arrived at the temple, we would take our shoes or boots off in the shoe room; no footwear allowed inside any building, residential or temple, and hang our jackets in one of the many hooks lining the walls. Then we would enter the temple room where we would prostrate or bow down with



our heads on the floor and say the obeisances prayer and wait for the altar doors (large carved and wooden), gates (wrought iron and it gold or silver plated), or curtains to open.

Behind these protective barriers, revealed to us now were murtis or Deities of Krsna and His consort Radha and other expansions of Krsna, along with His family members and associates. The Deities were made from different materials, such as marble, brass, and wood, solid gold in one case. The altars were made of marble or hand carved wood simhasanas. Flowers were everywhere; exotic flowers, such as gardenias and lotus flowers sometimes. A lot of carnations and marigolds and roses. The Deities were dressed in beautiful outfits; first in the morning they would be in their pajamas and that is how we would see them for mangala arati. The samsara prayers were lead and we would all repeat, singing to the accompaniment of various instruments: mrdanga (a 2 headed drum), karatals (small brass cymbals), sometimes harmonium. We would step dance and at times jump up and down with our arms raised.

After mangala arati was japa time and I found this to be tedious, it was not my favorite. We had to chant for 2 hours the Hare Krsna mantra on beads. Little children got to do it for maybe an hour. It was repetitive and boring. But we would never dare complain, because they would make us do more chanting later if we did, like during playtime or whatever. While we were chanting, adult devotees performed various services, some preparing food in the huge kitchens to be offered to the Deities and for all of us to eat at breakfast, still a couple hours away. Some were on the altar (whose doors had been closed) bathing and dressing the Deities in their outfit that they would wear for the whole day. I became a 2nd initiated brahmana (or priest who could perform this intimate service for Their Lordships (the murtis were called that) when I was 13 years old. It was cool to get to do that service. Some were busy being our teachers and setting an example by chanting japa with us.

Greeting of the Deities was the next ceremony. Altar doors opened. We sang the Govindam prayers and admired the way the Deities had been dressed in Their silk, hand-beaded, gold or silver threaded outfits, covered in jewelry and long flower garlands. I really didn't and still don't mind the Deities and Deity worship aspect of the religion. It really was beautiful.

On an almost moment to moment basis, I feel so torn. I am very defensive and protective of my childhood, it is the only one I have/had. It makes me different from others, but can also grant me a camaraderie with the others raised with me. I am even protective over the religion, as I experienced it growing up in Canada, Australia and United States. However, if current strict followers start preaching to me, I go the other way and decry the abuse and stringent lifestyle thrust upon me as a child; because I know and despise their judgment. I was indoctrinated in it. To them I am not living in the temple, and doing devotional service, because I am choosing to be a karmi, in Maya. They would say I've "blooped" which means fallen back into the ocean of material existence, or I am a fringy i.e. I like Krsna, but am not willing to live the austere life.

New devotees are most times zealots and I love to tell them if they come at me, what's up: that I was raised in the religion from a small child, I know the philosophy and all the scriptures, I could quote you any verse in Sanskrit and English from Bhagavad-Gita and other scriptures, I read and write Sanskrit. I was a priest or brahmin, second-initiated at age 13, etc., but that I was mistreated as a child, and in many ways even worse as an adult trying to live in the temple communities. So preach it somewhere else. In this scenario you can go either way. They could ask to know more because they've just joined and don't know the history of the Hare Krishna kids and our \$400 million lawsuit. Or they could say I'm making it up and I'm a demon trying to turn people away from Krishna, and being His devotee. And once again, when people lump my religion in with any of the other well-



known ones, I've become very militant. There is no comparison. There is no religion whose teachings can surpass the Vedic ones In explaining the nature of reality, material and spiritual.

This is as far as I want to go with this for this writing experience. I wrote all of this in an attempt to get to my favorite childhood memory. A favorite child memory is going to make me feel like I wouldn't mind being back there in that moment, or moments experiencing it. It is not going to cause me pain or PTSD symptoms.

The first memory that came to mind was a diorama display in the prasadam(offered food—the only food we could eat) dining hall in Dallas, Texas on Janmastami (Lord Krishna's birthday). This holy day involves fasting the entire day and the day is filled with actually pretty fun events and activities. Plays, dances, ceremonies, puppet shows, and continues all the way up til midnight(which is the time that Krsna appeared or was born to his parents living in prison). At midnight the altar doors open and the Deities(forms of Krsna and his consorts and expansions) are adorned in brand new pajama outfits. There is singing and dancing while puja is performed and very gourmet vegetarian food is offered. Then we all finally get to eat a non-grain feast. Usually the children would all be performing in plays and bhajans. But I wasn't in a play or anything this Janmastami at age 6 or 7.

In the 2nd large building of the ISKCON Dallas temple (which was a huge, old stone church) were our ashrams where all the school children lived on the main floor, boys on the left, girls on the right. Upstairs was a huge sanctuary (then used as a stage for plays and a huge hallway where we would mainly eat our meals. Our meals were served on pieces of wax paper (in lieu of plates) placed on the wood floor.

I don't remember being with anyone else when I came upon the dioramas display. It was magical to me. Each display(people in miniature) had a different pastime of Lord Krsna's, from His advent and through His astonishing and adventurous childhood. I believe that this is when I realized that all of the tapes we listened to of Krsna's pastimes were not recordings from 5000 years ago. I was not actually hearing His and His parents' and the demons' constantly trying to kill him from babyhood on, and His childhood friends' voices on the tapes. The dioramas which reproduced Krsna in tiny form along with the amazing plays on that huge stage with actors dressed up as Krsna and the people in His life opened my eyes to that.

I don't remember much emotion as a child but I do recall the wonder I felt at seeing the Janmastami dioramas. There is no one who can ruin this memory for me nor tell me it is not as I remembered it. It is mine to cherish for my own reasons.



Me in Dallas Gurukula Age 7

* * *



By Babygirl

When I think about my childhood memory
I think about the time my foster family and I
Went to this church called The Vineyard.
Pastor Mike was my favorite pastor when I went to church there.
I felt very safe and I always enjoyed him.
When my mom died, pastor Mike was there for us.
God is amazing.
I went to church the other day
And pastor Mike was there.
It was so awesome he remembered me,
And I felt at home and safe.
God has a way of reminding us that we are so loved

* * *



Finding an unexpected memory of childhood

By Brit

I had three schools in my formative years commencing at age 4. I was in Marymount Convent from 4-10, Maxey School from 10-11 and then finally Peterborough Grammar (County) School for Girls from age 11-17. All schools were in England, and each had memories that informed and guided me ethically, spiritually, and morally, from family, to career, and beyond.

In trying to find a picture of a favorite childhood weekend memory I performed a google search. I then wondered if I could find more memories in pictures of my childhood as I knew that both schools were demolished in the 1980's so I sought to search by location, years when the school was active, pictures of the towns, and then newspaper articles about the schools. I read newspaper articles- "chronicles" and then used the links provided to dig deeper and I unexpectedly and with happiness, found vast information about the School for Girls. I even was able to read obituaries and updates on my past headmistress, advisors, teachers, and unleashed information about what happened to them after the school closed.



Retrieved from facebook.com

In England during this era, an examination was needed to enter the School for Girls and rules were heavily implemented and yet it was a privilege to be a pupil (student) there. However, it did not always seem that way as I was not a great student until I reached the age of fifteen. I then had a driven sense of purpose, knowing my nursing career demanded more from me as a student. Entry to nursing school in the 70's was not for the faint-hearted and many were waitlisted or declined.



The school had a main building as above, a caretaker house on the grounds, and then on the cross streets the school had bought residential houses and made them into classrooms and specific houses were used as a privilege for Sixth Form (17-18 years of age) students who took less, but more advanced classes, to prepare for "O" and "A" level examinations' needed to enter higher education. I remember we had a Winter and Summer uniform, we had to wear specific colored underwear and a gym uniform, as well as specific colors for hose and shoes. Hair could not be colored (dyed), no boys ever allowed on the grounds, except students from two reputable local boy grammar schools were permitted for the yearly dance. I walked about a mile from my home to ride on a coach to school and returned in the late afternoon, carrying a leather satchel brimming with homework and study textbooks.

I had several favorite teachers, one in particular was a young female from New York, who taught English, and I always thought this was ironic, an accented American teaching young girls English! Now as a US citizen and resident since 1986, who knew I would be the one with the accent eventually (although mild). Ha Ha!

The school is where diversity was a given and my race in many classes was the minority and this trend followed me graciously into nursing school. I was enthusiastic to be included in common and numerous international and cultural festivals, cooking, traditions, and eventually weddings and graduations. "Diversity" never needed a "name" in our school as such was a "norm," all were celebrated individuals. Little did I know but such experiences gave me insight, strength, and grace in later years. An all-girls school with strict rules, also prepared me for my nursing dormitory experience, all girls on a floor, no boys after 9pm, a house mother who took your orders for milk and bread delivery, and admonished you with a raised eyebrow and a stern warning when you were out past 9pm and you had to ring the doorbell to be let in!

During my search I found pictures of the school, the streets I used to walk to the park where we played tennis, field hockey, ran track and field, and hurdled. I also was able to join an alumni chat where I posted and signed up for future communications. Who knew that a short duration of searches would yield so much rich information and resurface memories that have encouraged me to find more.

* * *



By Carly

One of my favorite childhood memories is going fishing with my dad. It was so peaceful and quiet I caught my first fish I think when I was maybe 10yrs old I have not been fishing in yrs a fishing license here in California is outrageous. If I remember correctly in my hometown in Missouri it only costed like \$16 at most.



* * *



Fair Maiden
By Dansant Invisible



Created: 54 years ago by a 14/15 year old self



By Daryl

My favorite childhood memory
Was when I was about 8 or so
My parents took me and my brother
Easter egg hunting.
And the reason this is my favorite childhood memory
Is because we were all together as a family.

* * *



Trolls: My Favorite Childhood Memory

By DLS 35

Trolls. "Baby witch dolls,"
I would utter when I was age 4
and upward.
At Grandma's house
I was taught
seamstress skills
in great length.
Felt, scissors,
a needle and thread.
Tools of the trade.
I would clothe my poor
naked
baby witch dolls
leading now to my skills
as a fiber artist.
Thank you Grandma.



* * *



Book Review: On *"Self-Care for Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents"* by Lindsay C. Gibson PsyD

By Dudley

Book Review. Stop what you are doing, run, don't walk, and grab this book TODAY!!!

Many of us can look back on our childhood and reflect, perhaps we blame our parents for our current life, or perhaps think it is such an awful thought it is difficult to even start to blame your own parents for your life. C'mon they would never have done anything that would negatively impact your life.

Or in my case, I thought I had a somewhat normal childhood, an average upbringing only to reach the age of 42 and realize my mother emotionally abused my own father and I, to retain her power and to ensure his pension. And she only wants me in her life, if I am single and devoted only to her. But do I blame her? NO. Nor should you blame your parents for your life.

If you do blame your parent(s) you really need this book. If you think your parents were perfect, if you think you're a perfect parent, YOU REALLY need this book. One of the best quotes from the book, "Good Therapy is not about blame, it is about the truth".

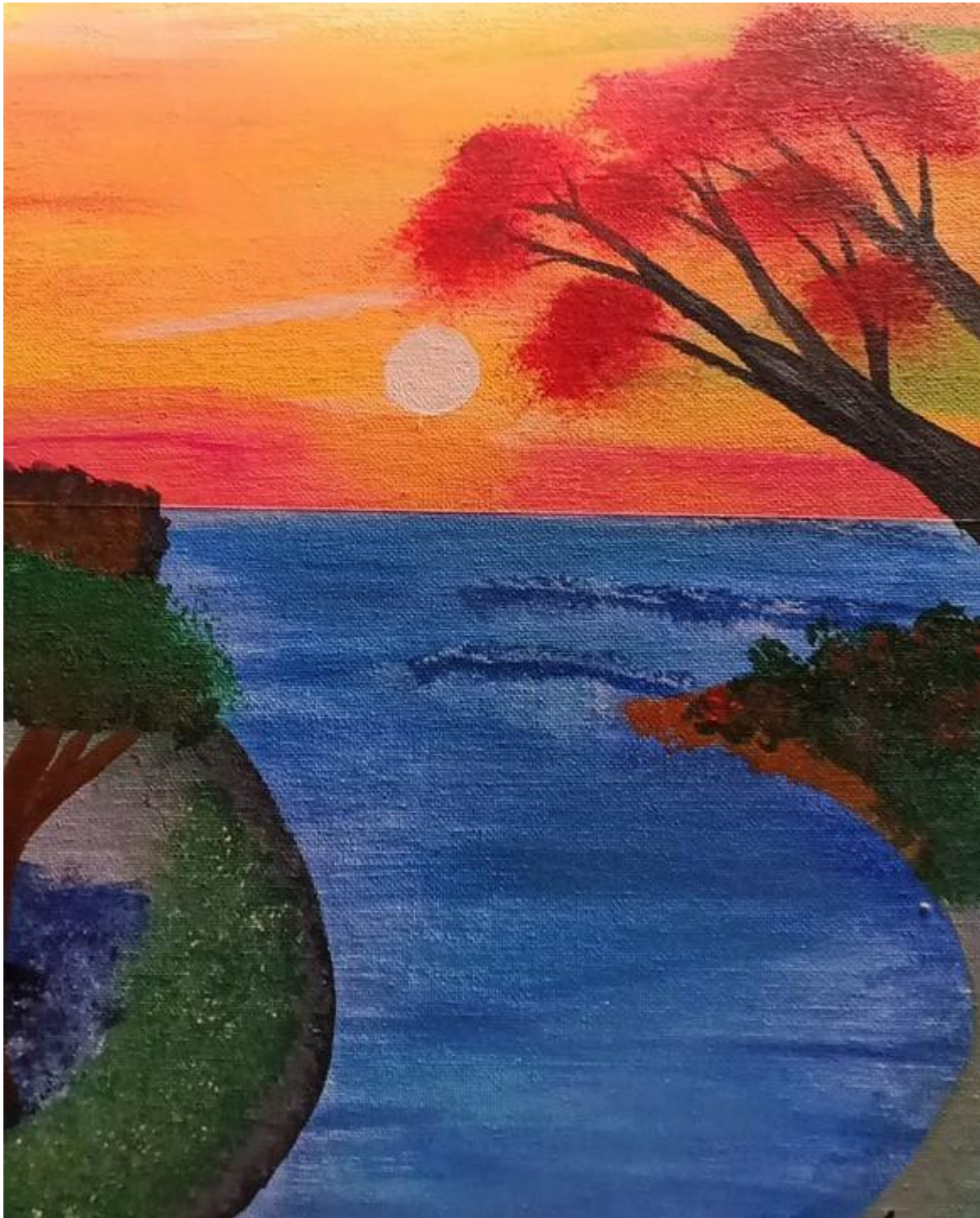
What value does blaming your parents provide you with? Pass the Buck? Make an excuse for your life? This book helps you change your prospective and turn the focus from blame to truth. Your truth. And gives you the skills to heal, and love yourself. It provides you with how to deal with every single type of person on the planet. The cold shoulder? The tenacious talker? (Wish I read this in 8th Grade). Perhaps you can identify with a type and learn how people can perceive you. This is a guide book every human in the world should read, even if you had perfect parents.

This is an easy read book, very short chapters, gets to the point and doesn't beat it into you forever. The final quote I will leave you with from the book:
"Your DNA is not a life sentence".

* * *



My beautiful bliss
By Dustin



* * *



By Erik

I was two I skied
It was great jumping racing
Great fun on the slopes

* * *



By Girl of the many arts

From when I can remember my grandma and I loved to bake together. One of my favorite desserts she made was homemade bread dough that we would squish into round pieces and then fry and cover with cinnamon and sugar. All of them would be gone in a day or two, they tasted amazing! I will always love those kinds of memories!

Dream of the sea



Inked



* * *



Fear

By Golden Sapphire

When fear takes
Control.
Trying not to cry
Trying to be brave.
Not sure how
To anymore.
Trying to confine
Inside myself
Instead of letting
Those who care
About me
Worry less
Bury everything down under
Put on a brave face
So fear doesn't show
In my eyes.
Trying not to cry
But can't stop.
Scared, fear when everything
Keeps showing me
That my nightmares
Will come true.
As I lay down under
Just want to show a real smile.
Putting on a brave face
So those who care about me
Don't have to worry about me...
So those who care about me
Won't lose me.

* * *



Grace's childhood

By Grace

Grace's favorite childhood memories
I am starting my story like this.
When I was a little girl
My mother had 8 daughters
I was the 8th one.
I don't know how my parents had patience with all of us.
Grace's favorite part of my life
Was Gymnastics.
It kept me busy
And I always wanted to learn and get better.
I also loved taking care of my parents.
I really enjoyed being the spoiled daughter.
But I earned it.
That's all for now.

Sincerely

* * *

**Freewrite**

By Greeneyed Mystery

As you go through life,
You never know what to expect.
As a kid, you do as you're taught
And when you don't have good role models
You tend to lack the knowledge you need
To make it as an adult.
Having to teach yourself
How to be a mother, wife, or even friend,
You fail often.
You also get back up and try again.
Because one thing you have always known
Is to never give up.
Growing up in an abusive house,
You kind of pick up that kind of head space.
When you're 13 and get sexually assaulted
And your father thinks you're lying
So he brushes you off.
You tend to cave in
And not trust anyone.
It makes you even more confused
When you're 15 and get sexually assaulted again
He acts like he cares and fights the guy.
I've always had my own back.
So it's hard to let anyone else have my back.
I let anyone get too close
And I panic.
I instantly go to my childhood
And remember I've never been able to trust anyone.
So how can I trust anyone now?
Over the years I've let a few people in,
And I have still gotten hurt.
The most important person in my life
Can't even get close to me
Without me freaking out and backing off.
At times I feel like people don't understand
The struggle of abuse
Even after you're out of it.
That it takes every ounce of you
To keep pushing forward.
It takes every fiber in your being
To trust, love, and enjoy life after abuse.
And when it comes from you're parents
It really messes with your head
And takes even longer
To love and trust again.
When you have trust issues
It's hard to accept help



And learn the lesson they try to teach you.
 In a way that would allow anyone
 So you struggle a lot.
 I am very thankful for the ones
 Who have broke through my walls
 And have showed me I can trust and love again.
 But I still keep them at a distance.
 I struggle with my mental health everyday
 Because I let it get so bad
 Because I am afraid to ask for help
 Afraid of being judged
 And afraid to let someone close enough to help.
 Today, I am taking control
 Today, I am fighting for my life.
 And as scary and hurtful this process has been,
 I've also learned to process better.
 I'm learning how to work thought it
 Instead of putting it
 In that little box for later.
 I'm nowhere near
 Where I need to be
 But I got a lot farther than where I was.
 Everyday is a fight,
 But everyday, it's worth it.
 One day, I hope I can allow myself to fully love
 And trust again.
 I want to be truly happy.
 I'm realizing I don't know
 Who I am.
 One day I will find her
 And I can only hope
 That she's amazing, big hearted
 Full of love and giving.

* * *

Favorite Childhood Memory

By Greeneyed Mystery

As I sit here and try to think back into my childhood
 To think of a favorite memory
 I realize each and every childhood memory
 Ended in a horrible memory.
 Abuse was and is a lot of my childhood memories.
 I do have a memory that I would consider a favorite
 And it was when I was about 11 or 12.
 We would go out to my dad's friend's house
 Out in the country
 And ride go carts and quads.
 Those were fun times.

* * *



Music

By Greeneyed Mystery

Music: what does mean for you?

For me, music is life.
 When I'm sad, I will listen to sad songs,
 Singing my heart out
 Belting through the house.
 Sometime I cry and release all those emotions.
 Like the dark cloud
 That was clouding my head
 Has gone away
 And I can think straight.
 The sun is shining.
 I love music.



Living with HS

By Greeneyed Mystery

Hydranitis Suppurtivia is a skin condition that mostly women and women of color get. HS causes boil like pimples in the areas that rub together, for example; Inner thighs, Arm Pits, Groin and buttocks areas. These boils get infected and cause extreme pain. When they do bust open they leave gapping holes that scar really bad.

The first time I ever had a HS pimple I was about 17. I chalked it up to be an in grown hair or a really pissed off pimple. It was extremely painful and at one point it got to the size of a half dollar. I remember I did everything I could to make it go away and it finally did.

Several years have gone by and I've gotten them more and more and they have now left nasty ugly scars in my groin and private areas. It has now taken what little confidence I had left. They make me feel gross and not sexy or attractive at all. I still don't know what they are and I had a break out so bad I ended up finally getting whatever these things were tested.

I got tested for everything you can think of, STDs, HIV, and every blood related disease like MRSA and all the different staff infections. When it came back that I had HS I was so relieved I didn't have a death sentence but I am still feeling gross and not attractive.

I've been on antibiotics for months now with little change, I've tried creams and liquid meds as well. I wish there was a cure for HS but unfortunately I have to live with this the rest of my life. Even if I was to control it and not have the breakouts, the scars would still be there reminding me that places of my body are ugly. I struggle fully loving myself because I live with HS.

* * *



Going to the Big Rocks

By Gus



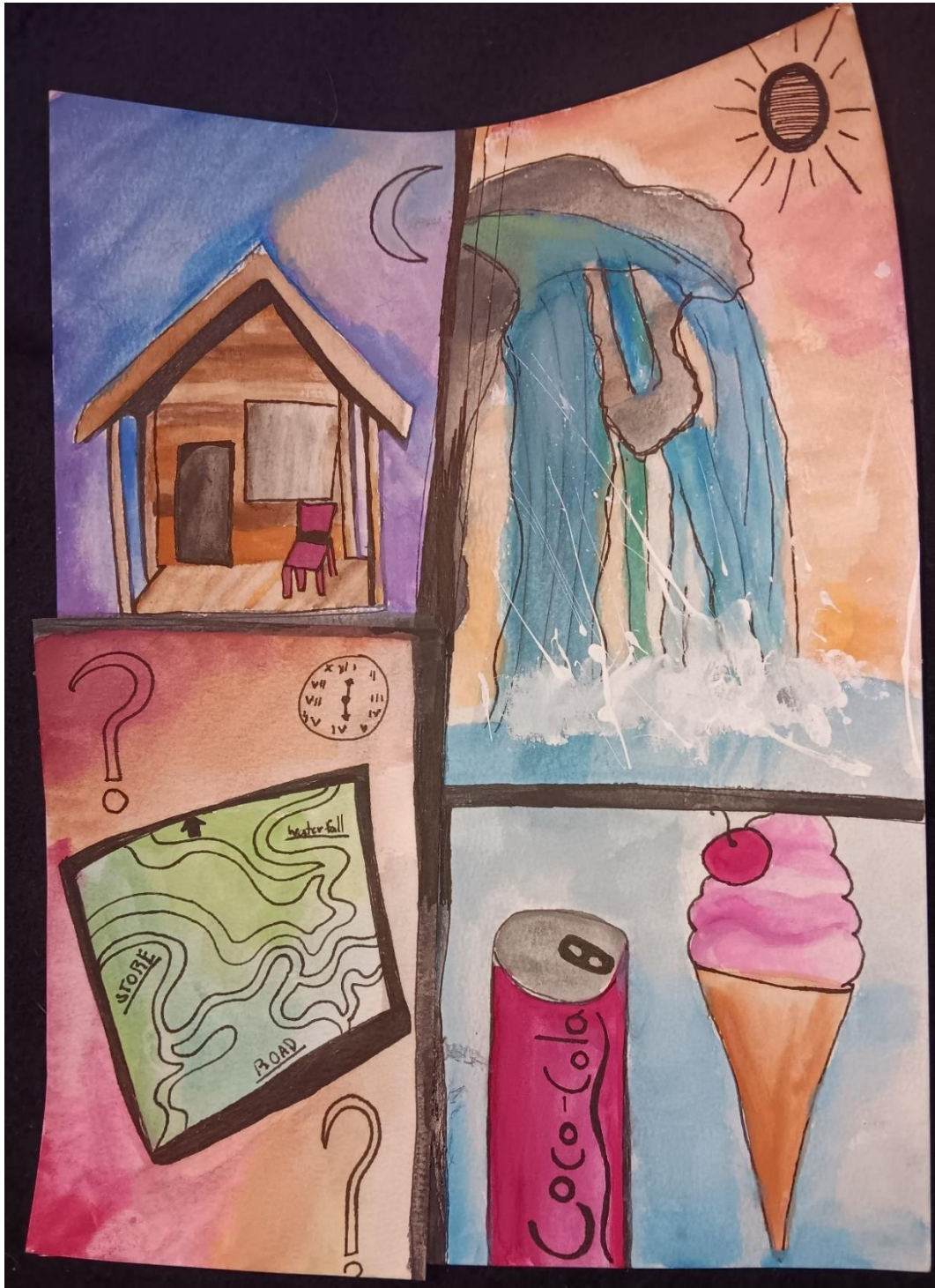
I liked to go out to the rocks in Janesville when I was little. I would go out to the big rocks with my Dad and hike a little bit! When it would start to get dusk, we would start to go back home. It was a long trail back home! We would go back and have some dinner and then go to bed for the night. That was a really fun trail to go with my Dad when I was little!

* * *



Childhood memory: Burney Falls

By Jax



Every year at the end of the school year, I would spend a weekend at Burney falls with 1 friend and my parents. I have so many fond memories from these trips. I remember all sorts of things. From the beautiful sights, to getting lost for hours trying to find the store. Those trips are definitely one of my favorite memories from early childhood.

* * *



By Kelly

I always wanted a dog as long as I can remember.
My parents had adopted a puppy from a Breeder on a farm.
They bred West Highland White Terriers.
It was a huge surprise for my sister and I
On Christmas morning when I was around six-years-old.
My dream came true.
It was the greatest memory I have.
I woke up Christmas morning and I found a red-ring rubber toy at first.
I believe that was an accident, but it did give me a clue.
I was filled with joy once she came wobbling into the living room.
They certainly did a great job keeping her quiet that whole night.
She spent the whole night in their bedroom!
I never once heard a peep from the puppy. Not a cry, bark or squeal.
She was a full bred little white Westy
Who walked in with a red, velvet Christmas bow.
Her mother's name was Snowball from the country farm in Ohio,
So we named her Puffy.
A couple of more years later, she had puppies. She had four.
The first one was born underneath my bed.
She had a hard time delivering them
So my dad had to rush her to the Vet.
I was allowed to go with him
(permission from my mom to miss Church that Sunday morning).
I was never allowed to miss Church,
As my mom thought it was a sin. She was a very strict Baptist.
The Vet kept her for a few days.
It was really pins and needles for us the whole time.
We almost lost Puffy during that ordeal at the Vet.
Only one puppy lived from the complications she had.
My grandparents took the puppy home to live with them.
They named him Snowy.
We kept all of the winter white holiday names in their family.
I thought that was neat.

* * *



Song about ADHD: "Messy"

By Lola Young

https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=5bzs3_UFzCw&si=qGvayhY_fWGsJd-U

This is a song about ADHD.
However, it also reminds me of my past relationships.
When my past relationships put me down
For whatever they felt that they needed to put me down
For whatever reason. 😞
But mostly, it talks about how I feel about myself in general.
Struggling to find balance
Within myself.

* * *



Men are from Mars, Women are from Saturn when we are Sick

By Maggie Mina Lee

I am a caregiver, I always have been. As a teenager I helped raise my siblings, and in my 30s I helped raised my sister's kids. I even made it my profession, I became an RN. I loved my job, although for me it wasn't a job; it was my purpose and true calling. I never worked a day in my life back then.

My husband is sick and has been for the last six months. The condition isn't chronic and can be treated. He needs to see a specialist, and we finally have the consult. We are just waiting for the paperwork. There is one small issue. There's only one specialist of the type we need. ONE!

I come from a rather large big city, where if you went to the ER and were ordered to see a specialist, you would most likely see one within 2 weeks at the latest. But after living here for a while, I've gotten used to how the medical system works here in our area and why. It used to frustrate me to no end, but now I understand. I understand why good doctors and practitioners stay for only so long. I digress.

Back to my husband, he's older than I am, by about 15 years. But that doesn't matter, it could be 2. I believe all men regress back to little boys when they get sick, but there are exceptions. For instance, when my father gets sick, he likes to be left alone, sleeps a lot, and takes whatever cold medicine he can that works and helps him sleep. He's very stoic. I admire that.

My dear husband hates snivelers, he says it constantly. Yet he fails to realize how much he whines and complains every hour. To be fair, he's not used to being sick. He had a few short stints in the hospital, one major health incident with no lasting effects. He has no chronic illnesses and takes very few medications. He's been on antibiotics for 6 months, just antibiotics. They don't make him vomit or cause any side effects. He's lucky, but he doesn't see it that way. We've been to an ER in Redding about 4 times. The clinic countless times, and I can't thank them enough! We have close friends that think he's either milking his illness, or I'm not doing enough, or it's the doctors up here. Are you serious? He has one of the best doctors up here, and if you are sent to a specialist, then it's in the specialist's hands. I had to explain it carefully as to not ruin a 50 year friendship. My dear husband has noticed my patience with him has been wearing a bit thin lately. And he finally realized him being sick might be having an affect on my mental health. Really? Oh, it took you three months to realize this. When did you wake up, from your self-centered, whining ways? I'm Bipolar type 1. I'm currently trying to avoid having a nervous breakdown. I had a meltdown this Friday. If I have to hear, "I don't feel good, I don't feel good" twice in 10 minutes, I think my hair will spontaneously burst into flames. I am NOT an uncaring, cold person. We live in a 600 Sq foot apartment with 2 cats, and an orange kitten. There is very little space and privacy, forgive me. I love him very much. But who the Hell knows when he'll see this specialist. He won't listen to me about simple measures to ease his suffering, or when I remind him of what his doctor said in July about restarting a medication that could help him.

He's a bit of a messy person, I knew that. But since being sick, he's taken it up a few notches. That's saying a lot, I'm used to Garbage jega. Does anyone out there have kids who play this? Kids or partners stack garbage on top of the garbage can as high as they can until it: a- falls over, or b- someone mentions it and cleans it up. I came up with a work around. I just put a larger black garbage bag on the floor of the kitchen and use that so I don't go insane or start a fight. It works. He also just leaves empty food containers, dirty plates, cups, whatever on the stove for me to wash. Oh, we had a come to Jesus meeting over that one this week. He said in the weakest voice could muster, "I'm sorry I'm sick." I told him, "You do this when you are well just Don't Make Extra Messes For Me to



Clean Up." I also explained to my dear husband that his illness isn't chronic. But that it's temporary and curable. And he really needed to stop complaining so much. My father also has a condition that curable, but chronic. Only it's going to kill him because he can't tolerate the medication to cure it. So he, my dear husband, needs to consider himself blessed.

My brother is the youngest in our family. He is awful when he is sick. But to be fair, he was always babied. That's my fault, to make up for our mother's rejection of him. But what did I know? I was a kid myself. I know how much of a great disservice it was now! When he was young, I always had to hold the bucket while he vomited. I gave him his medicine. He was very whiny. This continued into adulthood. He is just horrid. I even told him anyone could deal with him when he was sick, he should marry them. He was 7. He always calls me when he gets sick, not our mom. I try to comfort him over the phone. I'm not a monster. He's still my brother and I love him very much.

Women

I come from a family of very strong women. And I have also cared for and met very strong women over the years of my middle aged years. My mother is one of the strongest women I know and I learned and inherited my strength from her. I also told her so, at one of her most vulnerable and darkest moments of her life. I think it gave her even more strength to continue and get through the difficult times that were to come: a very contentious, nasty divorce, and fighting the demons of alcoholism. She recently became sober 4 years before. She had a wonderful sponsor, and very supportive family and friends. She had also lost more children in infancy than anyone I had ever met or known. She suffered in silence, where that was concerned. She said that she never saw my father ever grieve or shed a tear, even at the funerals. She lost 5 children. Five! She felt this very deeply as any mother/ person would. Only many decades later did she learn of my father's pain, grief, and tears. He shared them with his mother and cried like a baby in HER LAP. I learned of this from his oldest sister. By then the damage was done, and couldn't be undone. It was too late, and would have made things even worse. I was a triplet, she lost my brother and sister. So my birthday was always bittersweet. She only spoke of this at church, during a testimony of how God gave her strength and how thankful she was for me. I always knew about the deaths of my brother and sister very a very, very early age. Which is why I always felt I had to do something very important with my life. Because I had to live the lives of 2 other people, my life had to have meaning and I couldn't waste it. My grandmother always told me I was put here for a special purpose. I found it, I took care of people, made it my profession, and saved lives along the way and maybe a few souls. But again I digress.

My mother knew she had a bad marriage. So she worked hard, and all the time. There wasn't a time when she didn't have at least 2 jobs. We were so proud of her as kids. Once she had 4 jobs for a few months, we bragged and bragged about her at school. She was our super hero! No one's father in school worked that much, and we went to Private Christian School. We get our hard East Coast work ethic from her. But she's also a First-Generation American Citizen. She comes from an Immigrant family, which worked hard to become American citizens and get their green cards. When she's sick, she suffers in silence. I make sure she gets her medicine and keep her away from antibiotics for colds. She's old school, in the way that she keeps her medical history away from her children, even from the nurse in the family. It was her parent's way, and now it is her way. She once told me, that if she had cancer, she wouldn't tell her children. It hurt me but I believe her. My mother has always been strong, never let anything get in her way, and that's what she instilled in her children and grandchildren. She also taught them to work hard and you can accomplish so much in life. You don't necessarily need a college degree to do it. If someone tells you "No", don't let that stop you. Do it and show them how wrong they were about you.



My grandmother Mina her mother died when she was 5. So, she didn't get a chance to go to school. She grew up illiterate. She could sign her name and count money. She was very good with money, in fact. Later in life, she had an excellent stock portfolio that netted her half million dollars before the market crash in the early 2000s. She was a wonderful cook, supportive wife and caring mother of 3 girls. Her youngest daughter was diagnosed with paranoid Schizophrenia at the age of 17 or 18 years old. She never blamed God and kept her faith and sense of humor. I know it was very difficult for her and my grandpa, especially considering there was a bit of a language barrier. They both spoke and understood English but it wasn't their native tongue. My Aunt spent a long time in the State Mental hospital when she was first diagnosed. It was very hard on all of them. She was so bright, smart, and could have gone on to college before Schizophrenia ravaged her brain. But her mind was gone now, and parts of her were gone now. My grandma also had to deal with infidelity in her marriage. Her husband was "punishing" her for not bearing him any sons. It's very important in our culture for there to be at least a male her to carry on the family name. Now for this branch of the family there won't be. She left my grandfather once when my mother was 2.5 years old and my other Aunt was a baby, and took a bus back to her family in Texas. I consider that to be very brave for someone in her position at that time, as she couldn't drive either. She was very dependent on my grandfather. But she had a "Take No Shit" Attitude her whole life. She told me that after she left, it would be up to my grandfather to make amends before she would go back. My grandfather didn't tell me this story or about this time in his life, even though we were very close. She did a few years before she died, when she was still lucid. She also told me the names of 11 women my grandfather had been recently involved with, which I committed to memory. Also, at that time, I noticed 2 black eyes and a missing tooth. She said she "fell." I had been in healthcare for over 8 years by then and had seen my share of all matters of falls. The missing tooth was the giveaway. I confronted my grandmother in private and said it wasn't caused by a fall, and we both knew it. I could call my mother or my Aunt and have my grandpa removed, or she could stay with my mom or her other daughter. Or I could move there with her and care for both her and my other Aunt, and work where they lived. Whatever it took to keep her safe. She said she wanted to stay. So, I decided to speak to my grandfather and not tell her children anything yet, like she asked. I spoke to my grandfather and told him I knew the truth. I understood his frustration and caregiver burnout. But abuse is completely unacceptable and would NOT BE TOLERATED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. He apologized to his wife and me. He promised he would never do it again. I arranged for home health care to give him a break, and just help. He accepted the help and explained everything to both of them, so they would find this acceptable and a good thing. It worked out. Their children didn't find out until after months after their father's death when I told them. They hated him enough for cheating on their mother for all those years. I explained it was her choice to stay and what she wanted. After she died, I gave my grandpa a biology lesson and explained that boys come from the males not the females. He became very pale and then had to go lie down for a while. He spent the rest of his life asking his wife and God for forgiveness for the way he treated his wife all those years. As for my grandmother, her last word before she died was "Ray" (my grandfather's first name). They were married for 63 years. She is by far one of the strongest, long-suffering women I will have ever known. But she always made the best of her life. She bought her own home. She was very happy, full of joy, wise, and loved her family beyond measure. I look to her as an example when things start to go wrong in my marriage or life. I light a candle for her all the time. Sometimes I see her in my dreams and when I do, I know things will be ok.

In conclusion, this how I think how men and women are so profoundly different when it comes to being sick and handling hard times. They are on 2 completely different planets or planes of existence.

* * *



By Marilyn

A fond childhood memory for me
Would be summers visiting with my Grandma and Grandpa.
It was always great fun.
My Grandparents always lived and worked on a farm for a rancher.
I would hang out in the kitchen with Grandma all day
Cooking and cleaning and waiting for Grandpa to come home from work.
I was always excited to see what he had left over in his lunch bucket.
There was always a little nibble of some kind of goodies
That he had saved.
I'm sure was just for me to find.
This is one of my fondest childhood memories that I wanted to share 😊
PS- My grandma lived to be 99 years old



* * *



By Max

My favorite childhood memory
Is spending a lot of my time
At my surrogate grandparents' house.
We would go on walks in nature
And take his dog to
the river and play games.

* * *



The Breath of God

By My Wild Songs

Tip my favorite childhood memory over
 And I'm mud puddle hunting for worms
 Red rubber booting through rain swollen gutters
 Racing Mexican Jumping beans down grandpa's back stairs
 Losing. Dangling from my backyard's peach tree branches
 Grabbing and gobbling handfuls of ripe fruit
 Sucking sticky nectar from wild periwinkle
 Weaving garlands through my curly hair
 Pirouetting, prancing, parading
 For dog and doll audiences
 Sneaking into abandoned graveyards
 Daring—defying ghosts to snatch us
 Raking red, orange, yellow leaves into humongous piles
 Diving head first into them
 Cherry picking on wobbly ladders
 Reaching for heaven
 Swallowing the fruit, pits and all
 Playing hide and seek in the pitch dark
 Dodging swarms of mosquitoes

Perched on the edge of the porch
 Catching raindrops with stolen kitchen pots
 Baptizing the thirsty barren ground
 Wrestling into every stitch of summer clothes
 To play strip poker. Losing.
 Twirling in the backyard naked until Mom caught me

Pedaling my stubby little legs
 Up Seminary Hill, racing
 Against all the neighborhood kids
 Tom and Kathy, Mike and Sue, losing
 To my baby brother Larry
 Finally all reaching the top
 Flinging my arms into the air
 Lifting my feet from both pedals
 Flying down the hill, screaming my wild songs
 Skinned knee crashing at the bottom
 Scrambling up to do it all over again
 Loving every single second
 Inhaling the Breath of God

* * *



By Sharon

I can't say all memories are good or bad. Some can be weird strange and sometimes very impressionable on you when you're young.

I remember this one time when my grandparents lived in Utah. It was winter. I remember playing in the snow with my younger sister and uncle. The part that was horrific for me was on the way home in the plane, I was sitting by the window near the engine. It caught on fire. As a child a fire is huge, no matter how big or small. Obviously the plane returned and landed safely, but it never left my mind. It wasn't till I was older I told my mom that I remembered that incident. She laughed and said "I can't believe you remember that." I was 8 maybe.

There were many incidents like that with my mom. She never dreamed I'd remember. She got into a fender bender once we were in a very small Miata car, and the neighbor girl was sitting in the front seat. I was in the back, which wasn't a seat, but just a small bench across the back. The neighbor girl hit her head on the windshield and I slammed my legs into the back of the seats. When the authorities came, my mom looked at us and said "You're both fine." We both knew what that meant: keep our mouth shut. Years later, I brought it up and she said she didn't renew her license and was worried about getting into hot water. Literally I laughed when I was older, but my mother was: if you're not dead or dying, you're fine.

I love my mom and miss her. There's so much I never got to ask. I thought I had more time, but when time became short, those questions weren't important anymore. Now they are just family stuff that only she would know. So now I just wonder. She did the best she could for a widow in the mid 60's. She never remarried until my sister turned 18. I grew up alone a lot of the time, or taking care of my sister. I have no regrets because that is something she would say you don't have time for.

I never dreamt about my mom except this one time before she passed away. It was so vivid. I was a small child and we were standing in the kitchen. She pulled out a big cake on a glass dish. I could barely see above the table and I said "We're not supposed to eat that." She touched her lips and whispered "Shh, don't tell anyone." She passed away a day later.

I know she loved me and told me she was sorry. I was not sure why. Likely because she felt she might have done better and she didn't want to fight anymore. She had cancer but I never felt she gave up. I don't know if I could do what she did. She was brave and strong and she loved us. My sister and me.

We loved her. She is truly missed.

Love you mom.

* * *

**Hat Creek**

By SKS

Whenever I think about
Great times in my childhood,
I remember going to
Hat Creek every year with my family.
We had our own spot
That we picked out
Where we loved to stay every time we went.
My dad loved to fish with my brother
And my sister and I love to ride our bikes
Around the campground.
My mother would always bake
A hillbilly cake for us.
We would sit around the fire
And sing songs.
I remember roasting marshmallows
And having fun times there.
I think whenever I want to be happy
This is what I think of,
The Happy Times vacation.
I am working on thinking about
Happy times and positive thoughts
In my life.
I know the past is the past
And I have to move on from there.
Remember that we always have tomorrow.
I tried to remember
That I'm a child of my higher power
And that He will get me through
Anything.
It helps to have true friends
And true people that love you.
The best advice I can give
Is to be cautious on who you let
Into your life.
But I thank God
For the family I was blessed with
And I want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.



By VDUBSLT

Don't remember much of my childhood.
I do, however, remember the time
My Dad came up to visit us in South Lake Tahoe
With one of his sidekicks or a girlfriend.
One or the other.
He thought it would be nice to take us out to dinner.
So off we go to Gardnerville, NV
To dine at The Pink House with my younger brother, best friend
And our German Shepard, Baron.
He was a very well trained, well mannered dog.
At the time it was a popular, well known steak house.
Dimly lit, king tables with high back chairs.
Of course, Baron won't be staying in the truck, h
He will be dining with us.
My Dad leads him in, with us in tow, and sits him at the head of the table.
This giant dog is just sitting in his high back chair at the table
Like he belongs there.
It was priceless.
When the waitress comes to greet us,
My Dad tells her Baron wants the biggest steak they've got.
After many giggles and lots of stares...
Obviously, Baron had to enjoy his steak in the truck.
Just a very normal day in life
With my Dad.

* * *



Join us at...



shastasovereign.com