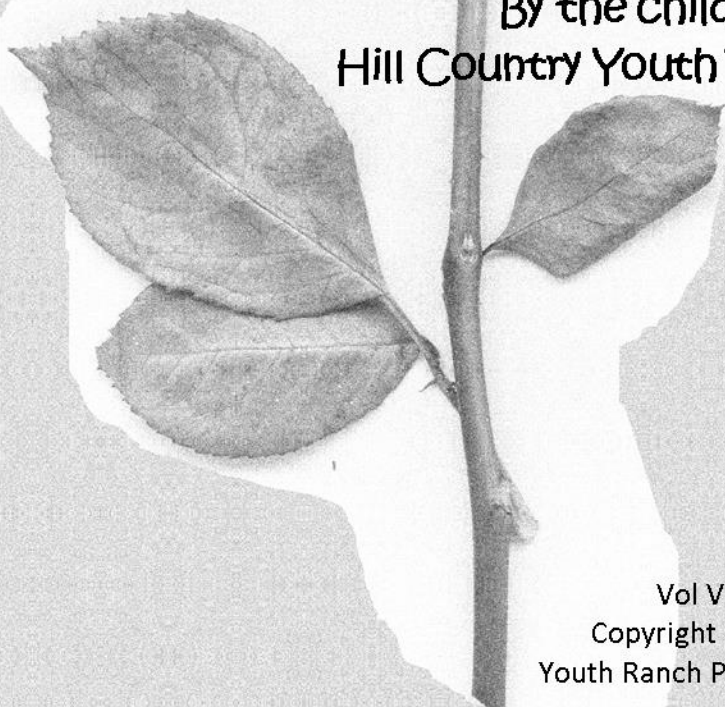


# MY HEART LIKE A FLOWER

A Collection of poems  
By the children of  
Hill Country Youth Ranch



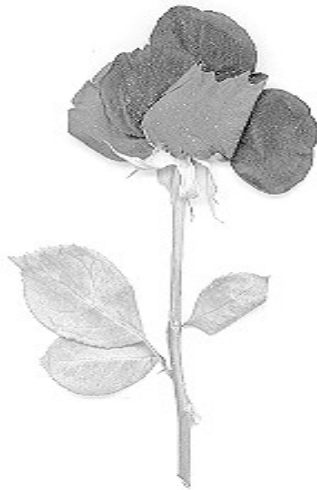
Vol V  
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Youth Ranch Publishing



### HEALING AND ENDURANCE

The days are long and somewhat slow  
A time of healing and endurance  
A time to learn of my Father's love  
His unconditional acceptance, grace and truth  
Along the path that He would have me go.

William Bradshaw



## Within each child

lies a miracle waiting to emerge...  
Because of histories of deprivation and abuse,  
many of our children have never had the opportunity  
to receive these miracles.

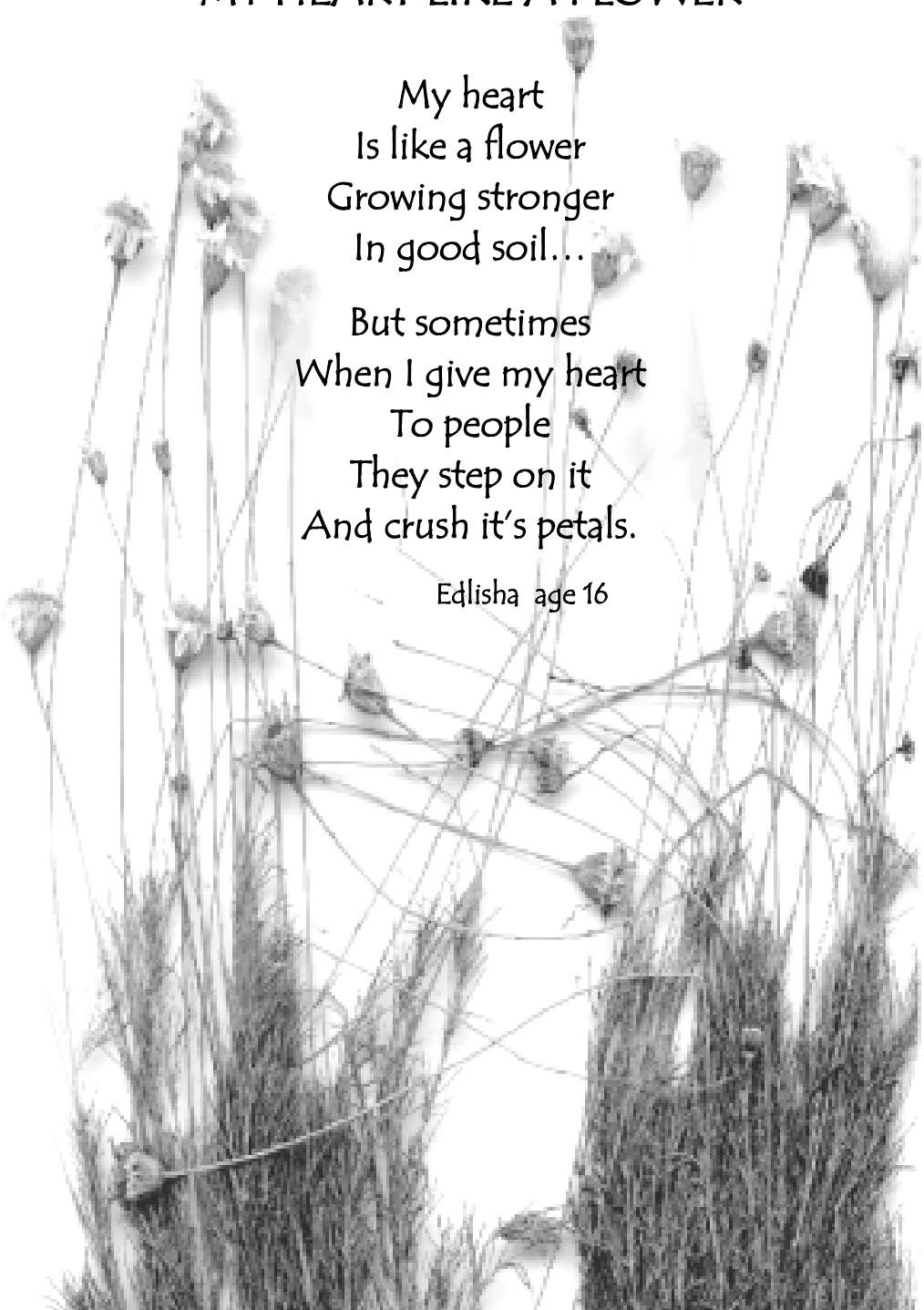
So, when each child comes to us  
it is our prayer that we will be able to help that child  
find expression, discover gifts and talents...  
and slowly bloom into the person  
that God meant him or her to be.

The works in *My Heart Like a Flower*  
have been collected at HCYR over several years,  
and pressed between these pages  
like flowers from the hearts of children,  
fragile in winter, renewed in springtime.  
We hope you will enjoy our bouquet...

Carol Priour  
HCYR Expressive Arts Director  
Editor, *My Heart Like a Flower*



## MY HEART LIKE A FLOWER




My heart  
Is like a flower  
Growing stronger  
In good soil...

But sometimes  
When I give my heart  
To people  
They step on it  
And crush it's petals.

Edlisha age 16



## YOU SHOWED ME HOW



You showed me how to care  
You showed me how to love  
But most important of all  
You showed me you were there.

Dear God, I wish  
I had just looked a little harder  
A little earlier.

Linda age 15

Take a moment  
And learn to hear  
The Song of Love that's drawing near. . .

Look at the sky-  
Did you know it was there?  
Look at the trees everywhere.

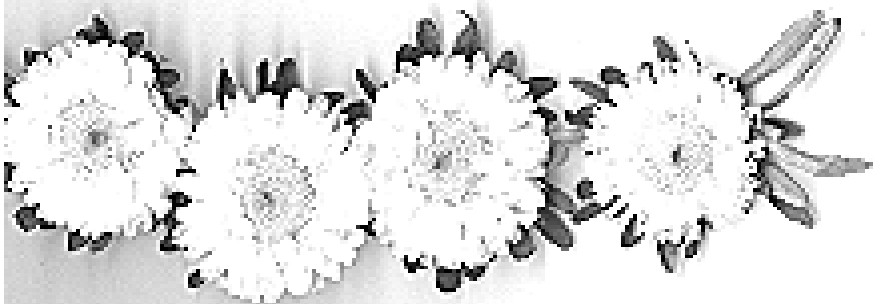
Look at God's love  
And the strength He provides,  
Look at this world in which we abide.

A moment of looking  
Can take you a ways,

And could save your soul  
For the rest of your days.

*From A Moment of Looking by Leroy age 14*

MY HEART  
LIKE  
A FLOWER





## IF I COULD CATCH A SUNSET

If I could catch a sunset  
Right before it goes  
I'd put it in my pocket  
So nobody would know.  
And when you're feeling blue  
I know exactly what to do  
I'd take the sunset out  
And share it with you.

Jonah age 10



*JOY*

*Experience the joy  
The brilliance of the colors  
Neverending colors reaching into eternity  
In a world that's more than  
Shades of despair  
Shades of darkness  
More than shades of death.*

*Catherine age 16*

## MY HEART LIKE A FLOWER IN WINTER

### GOLDEN EAGLE

I'd like to be an eagle  
A golden one...  
Then I'd be  
Free...

I'd fly over snowy hills  
To catch a fish  
For my babies.

Birds  
Take care of their babies.

Michael age 12

## ABUSE

The heavens opened  
and poured today.  
They drenched the earth below.  
The screams of the abused dying,  
And humanity too busy to know.

William Bradshaw,  
HCYR therapist

Cathy; she's a mama now...and Angela, too...  
They show me pictures of their children and smile,  
Laughing at the struggles they've been through.  
Everyone used to say,  
"With Angela's mind she'll surely be a doctor."  
"I have no regrets", she says, "my baby came first".  
Cathy agrees, putting her picture book back in her purse.  
...She smiles as she thinks of *her* little boy,  
She hopes the sitter is good...

Ten years ago,  
Teenage Cathy was *my* little boy's favorite babysitter...  
Even then, she had so much love to give.  
"Look at these two beautiful young women", I say to myself,  
Their faces shining with a mother's love....  
"Brighter than diamonds."

If I had known at four what I know today....  
That there'd be no jewels like Liz's...  
Not much time left for play...  
I wonder . . .  
Would I still have wished in my little girl's heart to be a teacher?...  
I have to say, "Your jewels are lovely, Liz...  
But, given a choice, even at 44,  
*I'd take mine any day*".

Carol Priour



## JEWELS

I remember...when I was 4  
...Liz on the cover of Life magazine...the jewels she wore...  
And I imagined myself in diamonds...  
Sapphires,...rubies....gold...  
I'd be a princess someday...  
Beautiful like Liz...  
I was absolutely *sure*, before I'd turn 24.

Jennifer called today...  
She has learned 5 languages  
When I met her she would hardly speak at all.  
"Now *there's* a jewel!", I thought...  
When I was 34... she would hold my little baby like porcelain.  
Early childhood abuse had taken its toll, though...  
Left her feeling worthless at 13, thinking no one cared.  
I always told her how special she was;  
I never knew if she would hear.  
Still, I had never seen a stronger will to learn.  
Now, from her home by the beach  
I hear a young woman's voice over the telephone  
Speaking softly of the healing.

And a call just a few months ago, from Catherine...  
Hers has been a hard life...  
Brother in trouble, husband had left...  
Once she thought all she ever wanted was just to be his wife.  
I remember when what she wanted was to be safe...to be a child.  
Still Catherine found courage  
To remember that God *must* have a plan for her life...  
I reminded her that she had believed this  
Even when she'd been a scared little girl.  
"You're so precious, I said...worth *much* more than gold."  
And through her tears, she tried to understand...again.

## LORD, ARE YOU THERE?

Lord, are you *really there*?  
*Please* answer-I *need* to know.  
And why did You take away my father  
If you loved me so?

Why didn't You give me a family  
Like others that I see?  
And why did You give me a mother  
Who hurt me and hurt me and hurt me?

When I was molested *again and again*  
I wondered where *You* were...  
And when my mother was beating me  
I was *bleeding*, Lord...why didn't You *stop* her?

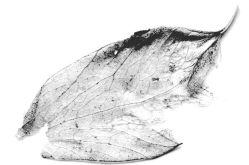
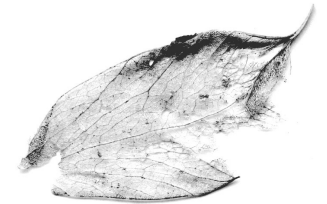
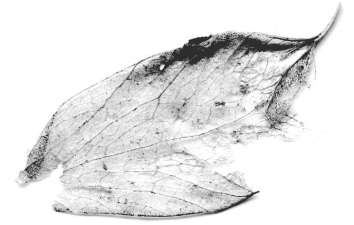
Is it *Your will*  
That I'm always sad and crying...  
Can I blame *You*  
For my father dying?

Should I stop asking, Lord  
For my dreams to come true?  
Should I just stop  
Believing in You?

I've asked for so much that You didn't bring...  
Does that mean You aren't there?  
Does it mean  
You don't care?

I tried to end my life many times,  
But not even *that* was a success...  
Could it have been *You* who stopped me?...  
Is all this sorrow just a test?

David age 16







## I'm So Confused

I'm so confused  
And I don't know why.  
Everything goes  
In and out of my head...  
Like running away...  
*BUT WHY?*

I still can't see why  
Everything has to be  
So hard to understand.

Love. Hatred. Everything  
There is so much  
That just doesn't make sense.

Maria age 16



## IN THE QUIET

In the quiet...In the quiet  
I ascend to Your dwelling place  
Where fears are dispelled  
And You hold me  
By the power of Your grace  
And problems that look like mountains  
Quietly melt at Your feet  
You hold and embrace me  
And I, in You find peace.

I discover that You really love me  
And sent Your Son to earth  
To set me free from hurt and fears  
And anchors to the earth  
In your presence I am unshackled  
As in you, I find my worth.

William Bradshaw

## AN END TO RUNNING

I can only recall  
only a few times of happiness  
when I was home.  
It wasn't enough.  
I started to roam...

I ran and ran...for days...and days...  
Every once in awhile, I would stop and pray.  
I would get to where I thought I wanted to be,  
But it wasn't what I wanted,  
There was..... only..... me.

I stayed here and there..  
And here and there...

I wanted to keep on running...  
But to WHO?...  
To WHERE?

I finally came to the Ranch  
Which I love so much...  
I now have love, friends and family,  
A loving touch.

Chris age 16



## I REMEMBER

I remember thinking  
"Mama's been drinking  
...I hope she  
won't see  
me".

I remember hiding  
behind the door  
wishing she  
wouldn't hit me  
anymore.

Holding my breath  
Trying to be quiet  
When she was in the room...  
"Maybe she'll fall asleep...  
Maybe...soon".

Veronica age 14



## SCARS

In my home  
I got hit  
Every day  
For every little thing...

I got hit  
With everything you can think of...  
Whatever she could reach;  
I have scars.

I have scars...  
Most of them are in my heart.

Veronica age 14

## THE HILL

Everytime you think  
Things are getting better...

Just when  
You start climbing...  
One rock STOPS you  
And you S

L

/

P and fall.

But I'm learning to remember...

THAT'S LIFE...

LET'S TRY IT AGAIN.

James age 16



## FOLLOW YOUR DREAM

Follow your dream  
Pursue it with haste.  
Life is too precious  
To waste.

Be faithful, be loyal  
And all your life through  
The dream that you follow  
Will keep coming true.

Lillian age 14



## LIFE'S ROAD

Your road is there Before  
you find it:

And it will  
Be there  
Until it is found.

Leroy age 14



## KEEP YOUR HEAD UP

Keep your head up.  
Be strong.  
Don't let fear  
Come near.

Don't be afraid to say goodbye  
Even if you have a tear, it's ok.

Remember your life  
Is like a butterfly,  
Beautiful and bright  
In the sky.

Iris age 15



MY FAMILY'S EYES  
In my Mother's eyes  
I see death.  
In my father's eyes  
I see hate.  
In my sister's eyes  
I see love.  
In my brother's eyes  
I see happiness.  
In my eyes  
I see  
Joyfulness.



## WHY?

Why should I behave?  
My mom is dead.  
My father left me.  
All the people I have left  
Are my brothers  
And my sister...  
Are they worth living for?  
God please help me  
To understand life.

Adriana age 15



Note: Adriana's mother was a victim of domestic violence. She was beaten to death. Many women die this way every day, right here in America, in their own homes. Often they leave behind confused and heartbroken children.

## BUTTERFLY MOTHER

I still remember her.

Her name was Nancy

And she liked to listen to music.

She loved horses

And swimming.

I still remember her.

Her name was Nancy

And she was very very beautiful.

She liked to buy me things.

I still remember her.

As I go from place to place,

She stays with me-

In my heart.

I remember her smile.

She was like a nice beautiful butterfly mother.

And she flew away.



Anita age 14

## WE LOVE

God loves

the world with  
people and animals  
plants  
and trees.

**NO DRUGS.**

I like

green,  
the hills  
lakes  
and streams.

**NO POLLUTION.**

**NO KILLING.**

**NO LYING.**

We love

angels,  
freedom,  
the stars,  
and the sun and the moon.



Ron age 12

## ANGEL

When I look back on all the times  
I was hit and raped as a little girl,  
I know, even then,  
An angel was always there...  
Or I would have never had the strength  
To keep on going.

So here I am now...  
Letting God have my life.

There is a reason for everything;  
Sometimes you have to look  
Just a little harder.

God is helping me see  
The love that has always been there.

Nicole age 17

## DOMINO EFFECT

It was like a domino effect . . .  
Dad hit mom,  
Mom hit me,  
And I hit myself.  
I'm glad the table  
Is finally stable.

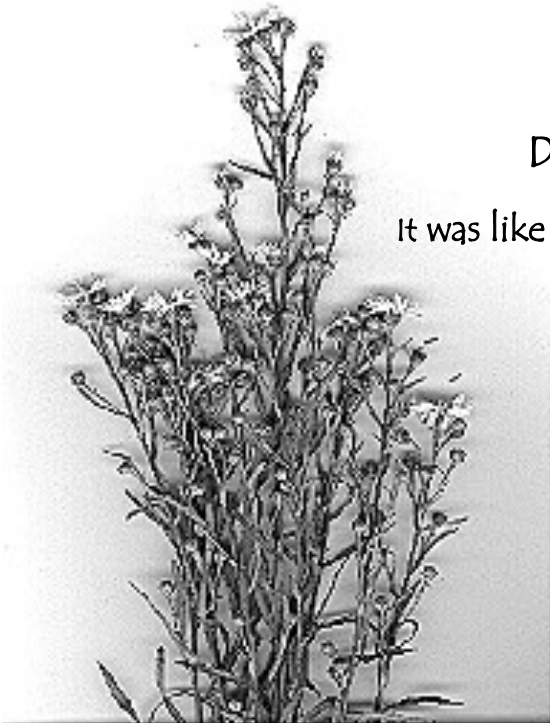
Kristen age 13

## IN MY HEART

In my heart  
Mama talks to me  
Says she loves me  
Says she misses me  
And that she is protecting me.

In my heart  
She is a pretty young lady...  
Says she'd like to see me right now  
Says she doesn't want me  
To worry anymore.

In her heart  
I see myself  
As a little princess.



## WHILE YOU WERE GONE (a message to Mama)

A year without you,  
The abuse went on and on.  
A year without you,  
I was half gone.

Lost in his world  
Of drugs and alcohol.  
I should not have been there  
Not at all.

I took my life in my own hands  
Because of my dad.  
He always beat me...  
He made me feel so bad.

I prayed to God to please give me wings;  
I wanted to fly,  
But since I never got them  
The only way out was to die.

Well, I'm still here...  
Some of the hurt is gone.  
I'm feeling better,  
I see that life goes on.

Mariah age 15



## GOD'S GIFT FOR CHRISTMAS

When I think of Christmas,  
I think of family,  
And, although there's always a little sadness  
About the ones I'll miss,  
(Mama left, and Daddy died)...  
Christmas still brings me so much joy...  
BECAUSE I HAVE FAMILY HERE...  
Here at Hill Country Youth Ranch...

My family here  
Cares for me,  
Is there for me when I need understanding...

My family here  
Forgives me  
When I make mistakes...  
They just try their best to understand.

My family here forgives me...  
Just like God...

God;  
Who gave us Christmas  
When he gave us his Son.

God;  
Who gave me the joy of Christmas  
And my loving Youth Ranch family.

Veronica, age 14

## SOMETHING'S MISSING THIS THANKSGIVING

Another Thanksgiving is here  
I look around and see  
Faces of people;  
People who really care about me.

### SOMETHING'S MISSING, THOUGH...

The food smells wonderful;  
Just like Thanksgivings before—  
Turkey...Pies...Candied yams...  
And more!

### SOMETHING'S MISSING, THOUGH...

The hillsides are beautiful in fall;  
Purple, gold, red, and redder;  
My art teacher paints good,  
But God's work is better!

### SOMETHING'S MISSING, THOUGH...

But there's somethin' that's *different* this year...  
Thing's just aren't the same.  
I don't feel like *hiding*, anymore  
When I hear my name.

This Thanksgiving I'm not blaming myself,  
For *every little thing* that goes wrong ...  
Thinking everything's *all my fault*...  
I'm even starting to believe  
That I *am* somebody special  
With a *job* to do in this world,  
Just like You *told* me, God...  
I've even stopped wishing  
I could just *disappear*...  
"Cause this...this is a *Thanksgiving without hitting*;  
And Thank You, God...  
What's missing is the *fear*.

Jodie age 16



## GRADUATION NIGHT

I wish I could forget, but I don't think I ever will...

It was elementary school graduation night  
The girls in pretty dresses...  
I was proud in my suit...  
The principal was calling out names...one by one...  
Names...more names...  
Getting closer to my name...

The fear was growing in my heart...

After every name I heard  
There was a roar of proud applause....

I was so afraid  
To hear my own name...  
But it was time now...  
And just as I had feared...Afterwards...

There was only....

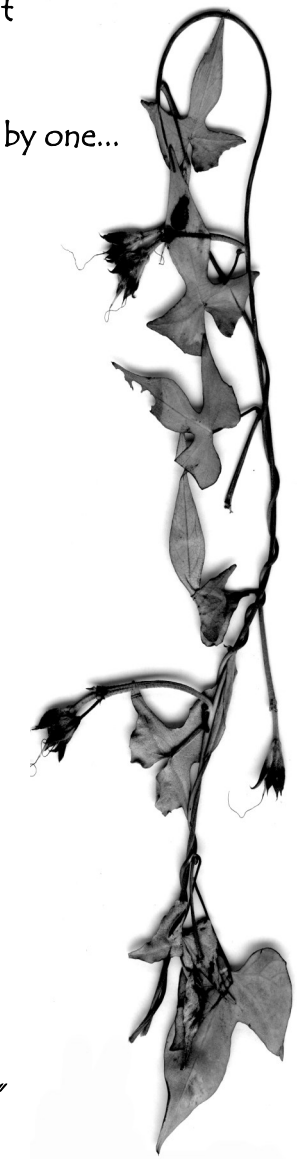
S-I-L-E-N-C-E...

There was no one there  
To clap for me...  
No one to be proud of me.

And I asked myself...  
"*WHAT DID YOU EXPECT, ANYHOW?*"  
Father had died...  
And Mother...she just didn't care.

SILENCE.

David age 15





## IT WAS HER

It was her who couldn't get me back  
It was her who did drugs.  
It was her who couldn't stop.  
It was her whose lies  
hurt me inside.

It was her who *sometimes* brought happiness.  
It was her who  
I loved so much.  
It was her that died.  
She was my mom.

It is *me* who wants  
a better life  
for my children.

And I'm wondering...  
What will I tell them about her?...



## MY MOM GONE TO HEAVEN

When I was feeling down  
She was never around.

Sometimes I cry about the past  
My dream that didn't last.

She died in jail of some disease like cancer.  
I wish I had been there-  
I would have said a prayer...  
Asking God to *please help my mother.*

I remember her lucky number-it was seven...  
But now she is gone to heaven.

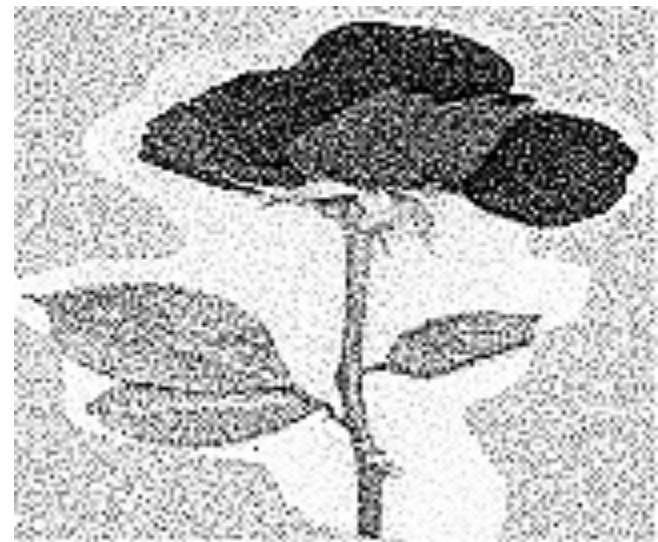


I don't want to be a cactus without a rose,  
Or an arrow that an angry army throws.  
If I ride that horse, I'll have to pay the cost...  
Ride too deep in the darkness, and you get lost.  
I know the time is now, but I just don't know how...  
The only hope for me to be the man I'm meant to be  
Is to cut that rope, and walk away.  
Let that dark horse go...set him free...  
Let 'im ride on without a rider...without me.

## FINAL CHORUS

*No, I don't have to ride the horse that calls me  
I need to find the man  
That I am meant to be.  
And though it digs the dirt out by my gate  
I know it's not too late  
To decide  
That hate is not the horse that I will ride.*

I know that hate is not the horse that I will ride.



*a song by Carol Priour, inspired by Dustin, age 16, whose father killed his mother in a possessive rage . . . Dustin was only 12 at the time he witnessed the murder. The tragedies of domestic violence have devastating impact on generation after generation.*

### *HORSE CALLED HATE*

Someday they'll dig the dirt out in the prison yard  
When my daddy says good-bye to all his earthly bars  
But as for me there'll be no good-bye tears  
'Cause my heart's been telling him good-bye for years.  
I can't forget that day when the sheriff took him away  
Mama, bruised and worn, took my hand and tried to run  
Then he took away the sun  
When Daddy... "Don't do it, Daddy!"  
The day my daddy took down his gun.

#### *CHORUS*

*But I don't have to be the things he taught me  
And I don't have to ride  
The horse he left behind...  
Though it digs the dirt out by my gate  
I know it's not too late  
To decide  
That hate is not the horse that I will ride.*

When we buried Mama I tried to understand  
I kept thinking there might be something I could've done  
Guess there's not much a boy of twelve can do.  
Now the years have passed I don't know where they've gone  
I stole some cigarettes, and I even held a gun.  
Don't know why that dark horse looks so fine...  
"Cause when you ride you get thrown every time.  
I've got one foot in the stirrup,  
One foot on the ground...I gotta get down.

### PLEASE HELP US

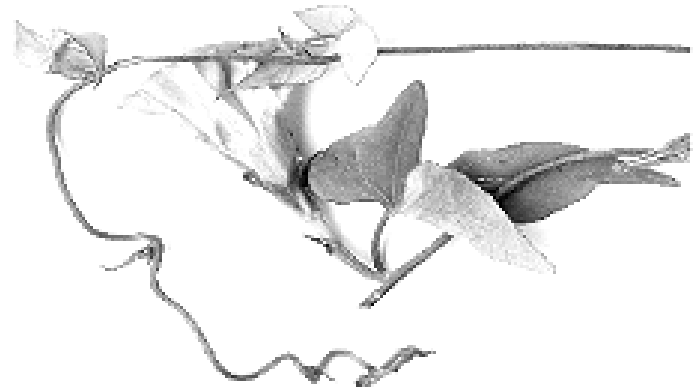
Facing my mom after all she's done is hard...  
I don't know if I can.

Finding my mom is hard...  
Behind the drugs, behind the pain, behind bars...  
I don't know if I can.

I wish so hard that she could find her way out...  
Out of the drugs and anger...out of jail...  
I don't know if she can.

Oh Heavenly Father, please help us,  
I know You can.

Amanda age 14



## JUST LIKE HER

A song about my Mama by Daisy, age 13, (with Carol Priour)

She tells them he's just like her Prince  
That she dreamed of years ago  
When he said he wanted her...  
She could not tell him "no".

I heard them say, "She's just like her mother"  
"See the sorrow in their eyes".  
She just smiles and says "it's nothing"  
She's grown so good—so good at lies.

Chorus

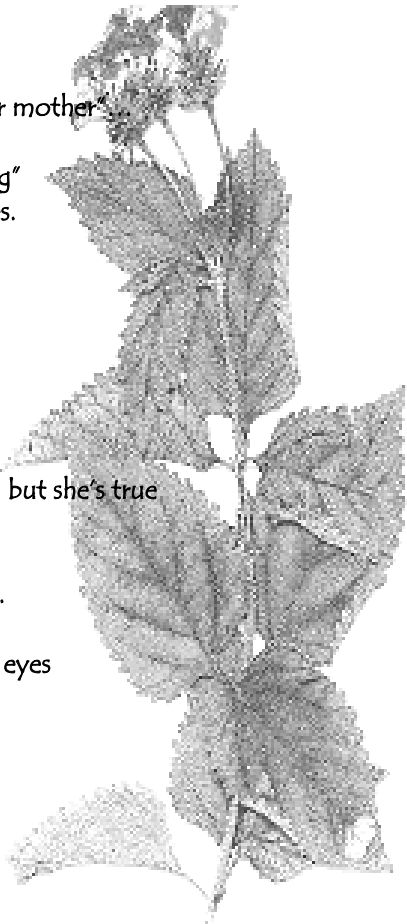
It's just like her to forget the fist  
Like her to hear his words instead  
Like her heart to forget her head  
That's just her way, it's just like her.

She's scared; she's bruised and tired, but she's true  
She knows his fury is a fire  
Still she'll always take him back  
That's just like her, he knows it too.

Sister has her hair. Me, I've got her eyes  
There's some things I'll never shake  
But if a monster comes for me  
I pray to God I'll be awake.

Chorus

Just like her, I love the spring  
Like her I love the sun  
I love her, too, but I don't want to be  
Someone who'll never see  
Dear God, don't let me be  
Just like her...



## NEW SHOES

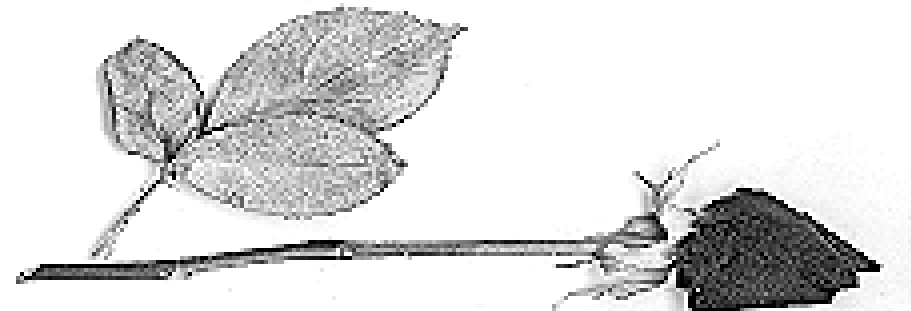
My old shoes were white  
Before my cousin gave them to my sister  
Who gave them to me..

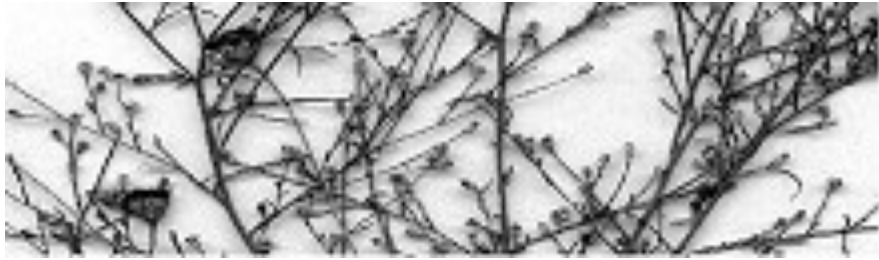
My old shoes were dirty.

They had holes in the soles  
And everybody knew that I was different.  
It felt like they could see inside me  
Through the holes in my shoes.

My new shoes are white  
With clean white laces  
The soles are kinda brown  
And they make me a little taller.

Denese age 11





## Someone To Talk To

Afraid  
Don't know who to tell  
Hurting inside  
How can I help myself?  
What can I do?

No one to love  
No one to talk to  
No one who cares  
But I do  
I do.

I have someone to talk to  
Someone to love  
Someone I don't have to be afraid of...  
It is the One above.

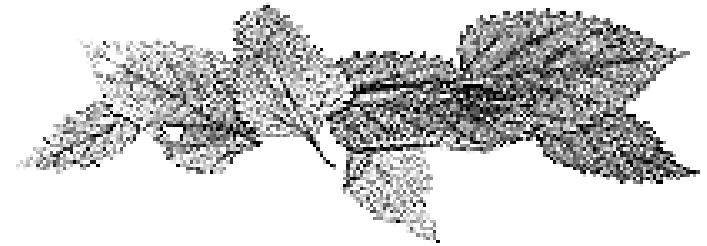
Amanda age 13



## FLY AWAY

It was all the drugs and alcohol  
That took my Mama away.  
It's been months since she's been gone,  
And I still don't know how to leave her behind.

I wish I could take her way up in the sky  
And leave the bad things in her life below.  
We could fly so high...  
Away from all her lies.



## TOYS

My mom is just a child  
Trapped in a child's mind.  
And my sister and me...  
We're the broken toys  
She left behind.

Daisy age 13

## MAMA

*I still love her...  
With all my heart.  
I wish we had never been torn  
Apart.*

*She left me behind  
Without even a sign.*

*When she left  
I felt it deep in my heart...a BURN*

*But I guess we never know  
When it will be our turn.*

*Isaac age 13*

Note: Isaac's mother was killed in an auto accident.



## MOTHER

*I wish I could hold you.  
I wish I could  
Tell you my name.  
But you seem so far away  
I can't reach you.*

*As I throw the thought  
Of ever knowing you,  
My dear mother  
Into the wind...*

*It is taken away  
With the drifting currents  
Of my emotions.*



Dear Gary,

Thank you for all your help. I will miss the Ranch and I will miss you. I am grateful to you for giving me a chance and not giving up on me. This ranch has helped me in ways that I sometimes didn't show, but are there. I feel that I have become a better person because of the challenges in my life that you and the Ranch have helped me through. I came to this ranch as a very troubled child and I had only my problems with me. Now I am leaving an adult ready to face the challenges of life. I have never been to a better place and there is no other place I would rather leave from to face life. I know that I can make it.

Sincerely,  
Scott Age 18



Note: The letter is to Gary Priour, HCYR founder and Executive Director.

## SHE IS MY AUDIENCE

Mama has been gone a long long time...

She is still my audience  
When I sing  
She listens to me  
Doing my best for her  
On a stage in my heart.

Sometimes  
I pretend that she  
Is dancing beside me  
Whispering softly  
To remember to be good

Because she  
Will always be  
My audience.

Anita age 14



## NOT READY

I was *not ready* to hear  
What I heard today...  
Another teenage mother  
Has a baby on the way.

So another little baby  
Will be born into this world  
To another mother not ready  
To be more than just a girl...

So when her baby cries  
She won't care...  
She'll be thinking of the parties,  
How she'll wear her hair...

When the baby lies alone,  
Crying in his bed...  
His mother will be thinking  
Of her own dreams, instead.

The child can't reach her,  
'Cause his mother is lost...  
She'll forget all about him;  
And not even consider the cost.

This mother not ready  
To be responsible for another...  
How do I know her so well?...  
She's just like my own mother.

David age 16

MOTHER...FATHER...ME

MOTHER...left when I was three months old.  
FATHER...hit me...and used my body for himself.  
I...am learning how to get on with my life...  
WITHOUT MY PARENTS.

Without parents who care  
There are many things you don't learn to do-  
Things that some people would call simple-  
Like taking a shower every day,  
And keeping yourself neat.

There are still times when I get angry  
'Cause I don't know some things,  
And I start to feel different...  
And ashamed...  
Not like others...not normal.

But now there are people who care about me-  
They tell me  
That if I need help  
Just ask...  
And they will help me.

Crystal age 16



Love  
condemns an act louder  
than hatred ever could.

William Bradshaw




### *THE LION AND THE LAMB*


*I let the lion within  
run wild  
While my heart, the lamb,  
is so mild...  
This shall be their meeting place  
The return of the Savior,  
And His saving grace.*

*Leroy age 15*

## I Think it's Finally Springtime




So much pain did I once feel...  
It seemed as though I'd never heal.  
Oh, Dear Lord, I wanted to die...  
There was only darkness in the sky...  
It seemed like all I did was cry.



No one seemed to hear  
I was hurting inside; they didn't even care.  
Darkness kept coming, year after year...  
I hated life, I wanted *out* of it...  
Wanted to quit.



Many times I felt like I'd lost my only friend...  
No joy behind me, none ahead-  
I'd rather be dead.

Then one day I began to see LIFE like a light ahead of me...  
Dreams to fulfill, hopes to come true...  
I see a new path, the darkness is gone...  
And those who are hurt by their lives...  
(I remember how it feels to be trapped in your pain)  
They can talk to me-I will hear them cry.




I think it's finally springtime-  
There'll be a new life for me, I know  
Thank You, God, I have started to grow.

Nicole age 17



## I USED TO DREAM

(For Frances)



I used to dream  
She'd come back for me...  
A white limousine, an apology.  
"I have a mama that loves me too" ...  
(I'd tell my friends)...  
"Just like you do".

I'd dream she'd say  
She'd come to take me away.  
Then she would wipe away my tears  
And I'd forget all those lonely years...  
But dreams like that,  
They never last.

Now all I want  
From her is a prayer.  
I'm hoping that she prays for me  
And wonders what's become of me  
Some night  
Somewhere  
When she's combing her hair.

Just for a moment  
If she looks inside  
She'll find me waiting there for her  
Very quiet...still wishing I will  
Hear her sweet prayer  
And know she cares.

Carol Priour





## HERE AT HCYR

As the light breaks through the darkness,  
As we see God's glory shine  
Through the leaves and the branches,  
We feel His love  
Coming down upon us.

David age 15

Here in the Hill Country,  
it's beautiful, even in winter.

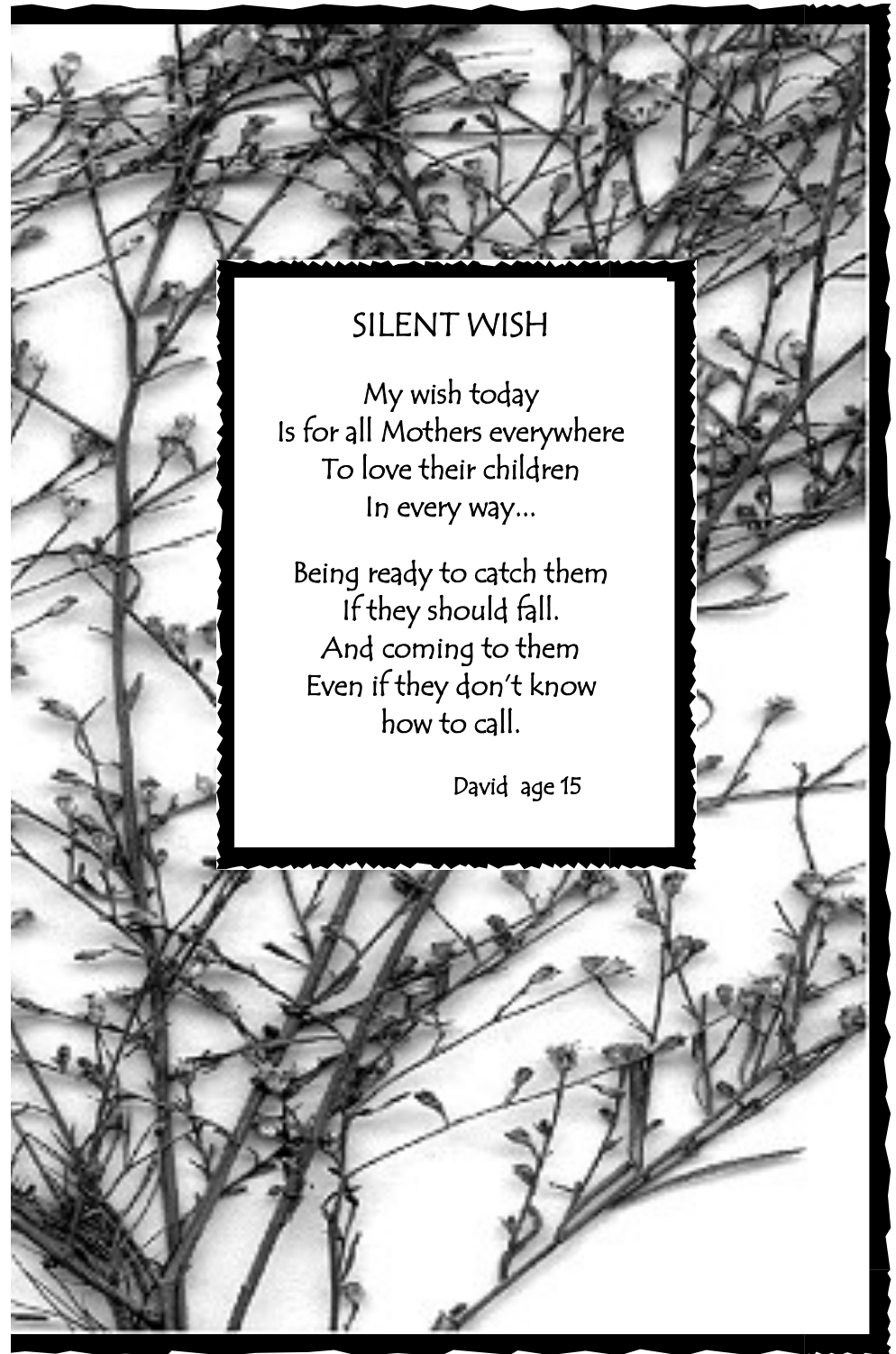
In a scene like this  
it's easy to leave the troubles of that world out there  
and be transported  
with the flow of the leaf downstream . . .  
Or the shadows of windy waves on the limestone floor.

In such a setting  
it's almost impossible for me to imagine  
the terrifying trauma of the battered child . . .  
alone . . .

lost in a world of sickness  
for which the cure is not so simple. . .  
I often ask myself the question, "Why would I get in-  
volved in such a task?" . . . The French philosopher Albert  
Camus best answers my question . . .

*We cannot prevent this world from being  
a world in which children are tortured, but we can  
reduce the numbers of tortured children. And if  
we will not do this, who will? Camus*

These are the words of Hill Country Youth Ranch Executive Director and  
Founder, Gary Priour in December of 1976, at age 27. Gary stood on the  
banks of the Guadalupe River, and made his declaration to start building a  
home for children. With the loving efforts and prayers of many many  
friends who care about children and their futures, it has happened, and the  
valley is filled with the sounds of children . . . growing and healing . . .

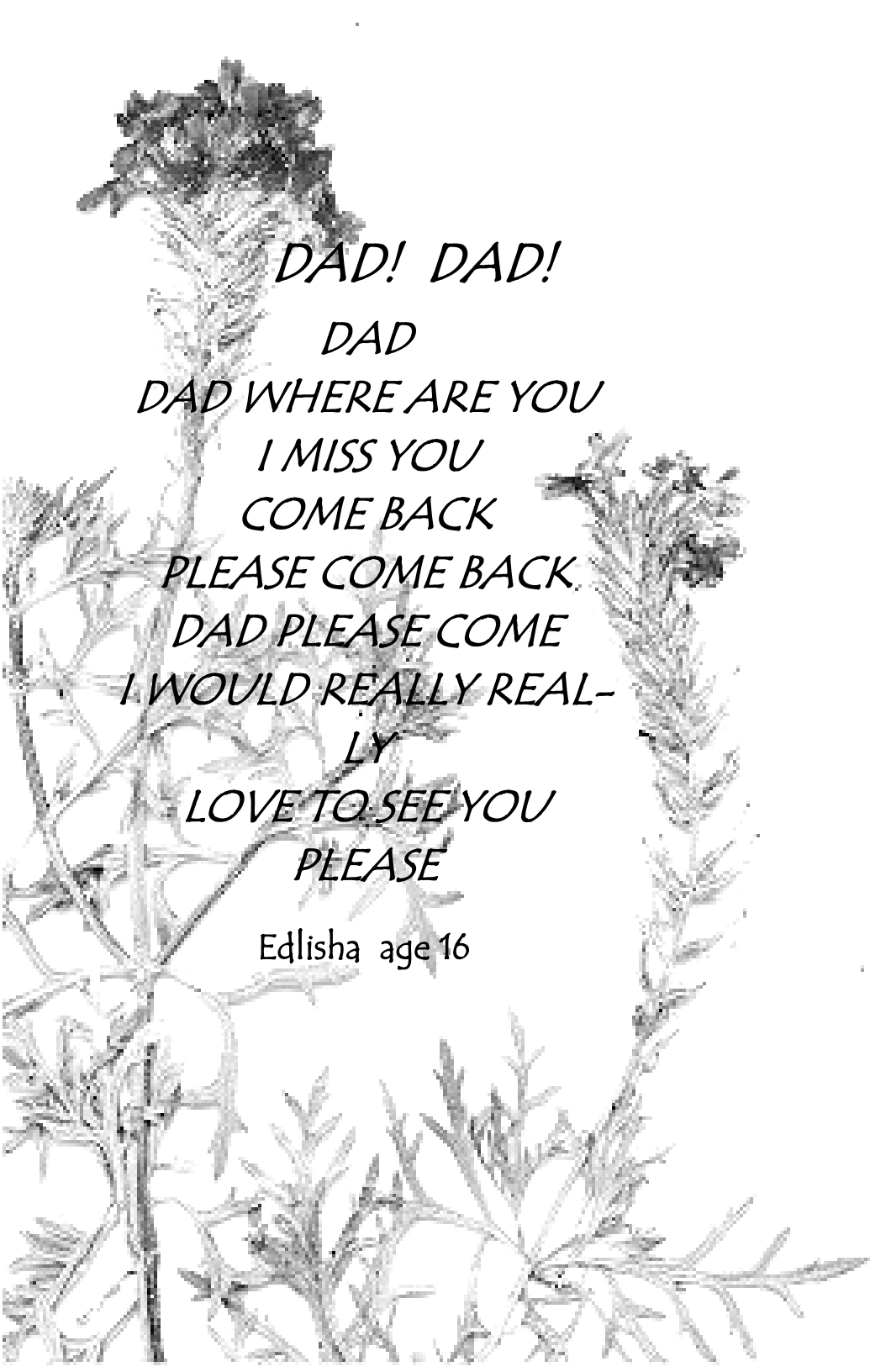


### SILENT WISH

My wish today  
Is for all Mothers everywhere  
To love their children  
In every way...

Being ready to catch them  
If they should fall.  
And coming to them  
Even if they don't know  
how to call.

David age 15



*DAD! DAD!*

*DAD*

*DAD WHERE ARE YOU*

*I MISS YOU*

*COME BACK*

*PLEASE COME BACK.*

*DAD PLEASE COME*

*I WOULD REALLY REAL-*

*LY*

*LOVE TO SEE YOU*

*PLEASE*

*Edlisha age 16*



*MY HEART  
LIKE  
A FLOWER  
IN  
SPRINGTIME*



## HE FEELS IT TOO

*The fear.  
The pain.*

*We all feel  
Like it hurts us more...  
Than anyone else.*

*But is this the truth?  
Could there be someone  
Who feels what we feel?  
Hurts when we hurt?*

*The Fear  
The Pain...*

*JESUS hurts when we do.*

*Linda, age 13*



## HOW CAN I HELP MY LITTLE GIRL?

How can I help you, my little girl?  
I look at you,  
Your life going by...  
The light gone from your eyes...  
So far out there in the wrong direction...  
And I know it won't help to cry.

When I left you  
Alone with your mother  
I guess it seemed I didn't care  
What would happen to you there.  
I knew she did drugs,  
But I never thought  
She would give them to you!  
I know that I have failed you,  
I just don't know what to do.  
God knows, I want to help you.

How can I help you, my little girl?  
Is there any way I can find you  
In this crazy world?

I remember thinking-  
"I'll take you with me!"  
We'll make a new home  
Where everything will be OK.  
But I was too late.  
You seemed so filled with hate!  
When I made you leave the friends  
Of your old life behind...  
I know that seemed unkind.  
But I still couldn't reach you;  
Not even the hospital could.  
I feared no one ever would.  
Your heart is beating,  
But you just aren't here.  
You can't even care.

Dear God,  
I made a big mistake, leaving her behind  
And I know I haven't done my part.  
But I've always heard that when we pray,  
You will listen, so *please* hear me today...  
And please, God, help my little girl...  
Her childhood is gone forever,  
But could You help us find her heart?

Nancy age 15

(for my father whom I have forgiven for leaving me behind)



## WAYNE

*I never understood why my mother  
Ever married him  
In the first place!*

*He was cruel.  
He was heartless...  
He must not have known  
That I am a very light sleeper.*

*My mom was screaming,  
Pleading for help.  
I ran to her...  
I saw the blood,  
Got the phone and jumped into her lap!*

*I dialed 911  
Wayne went berserk-  
He grabbed the phone  
Slammed it on the floor,  
And broke it.*

*"Go to bed, Kristen!  
This is between your mother and me!"  
I screamed, "Like hell it is!"  
He grabbed my mother by her hair  
And banged her head against the wall...*

*All I have to say now is  
Wayne is where he belongs...  
In jail.*

*Kristen age 13*

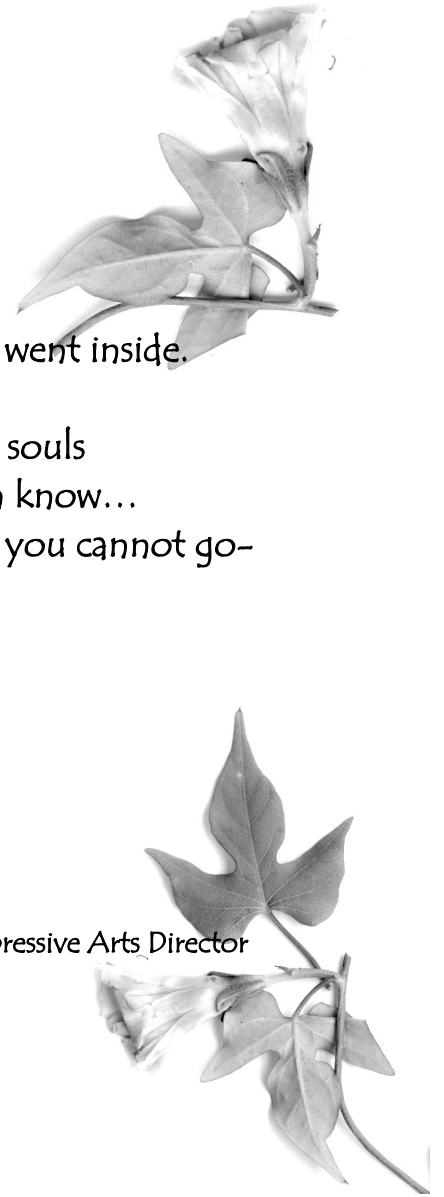
## SURRENDER

There were lions waiting  
Around every corner  
We could hear their breath  
Like fire  
In our hearts.  
There was no place to hide  
So we bowed our heads, and went inside.

Inside our hearts, within our souls  
To a place that only God can know...  
Where, unless He leads you, you cannot go-  
Cold at first  
But pure like first snow.  
Since we were not yet free  
We could not see...

Blind children  
Reaching to touch His face.

Carol Priour, Expressive Arts Director





## A TEEN'S PRAYER

Please Lord,  
Give me the strength  
To go through life.

Lord, I ask that You also  
Relieve my fears...  
Fears that have been placed there  
By others.

Give us Lord,  
Your guidance and protection  
As we face troubled times.

And watch over us, Lord  
As we grow up  
To be part of Your Kingdom,  
And then finally,  
Your angels.

Chris age 17



## TOO DRUNK TO SEE

You were always drunk  
Too drunk to see,  
That your children were getting older  
And *you* were never there.

Where *were* you  
When Wayne learned how to cook?  
*Where were you* when I was in trouble?

*I'll* tell you where you were-  
You were *passed out on the couch!*

I knew it wasn't you that hit me.  
*It was the alcohol.*  
I knew it wasn't you that hurt me,  
I still love you after all.

What kind of a *father* were you?  
Letting Wayne watch grownup things.  
What kind of a father were you?  
You let your daughter grow unloved.

What were you *thinking*  
When you were a teenager...  
Drinking your first drink?

Mariah age 15

## BLINDED BY ALCOHOL

You missed my first words,  
My first steps,  
My first haircut...  
What else did you miss?

You were drunk  
the day I got baptized.  
You missed my *whole childhood*.  
Some say I've grown into  
a fine young lady...  
You're missing that, too.

You were never there for me-  
When I needed you most...  
You were at the bar getting drunk,  
Or beating me up.

Through my eyes  
If only you could see  
What a monster  
The alcohol makes you.

The horrible things you used to say  
Oh, how they're hurting me.  
I began to believe them,  
And now I can't see.

You were drunk all my life-  
I never got to know the real you.

*BUT IF YOU EVER MEET YOU,  
TELL HIM I SAID, "I LOVE YOU, DADDY."*

Mariah age 15

## HAPPY WITH ME

I was just a boy  
Trying hard to be loved...  
Trying hard to be a man.  
*Maybe if I do everything for her  
Then maybe she will be happy...*  
Happy with me.

I took care of Dad when he was sick  
So Mom wouldn't have to.  
I was eleven .  
*She still wasn't happy.*  
...Never was  
Happy with me.

When the State came to take me to a new home  
It was ok with her.  
I wondered if *then* she'd be  
Happy.

I'm happy with me now, but sometimes  
On her birthday I think of her  
And wonder who washes the dishes and takes out the trash  
And takes the beatings and all the yelling...  
And forgives her again and again  
Even though she never asks.

David age 16



## THE TRUTH

I thought my mother would always  
Be there for me  
I loved her so much that I couldn't see...

## THE TRUTH

The truth was that she didn't want me  
That she never loved me  
She just let me...be.

Chris age 17

## WHERE

I have looked and looked for her everywhere...  
Why wasn't she there when I needed her?  
Where was she?

I grew up without her  
Now look where I am...  
Looking into the blue sky and thinking  
Where...where...where is my mother...

And will she ever come back again...  
And if she never comes,  
Where will she be...

Just tell me *WHERE...*  
Please.  
Where will she be.

Where?

Maria age 16



## YOU HURT ME

*You hurt me*  
Oh can't you see  
How you hurt me?  
*I can't believe you hurt me.*  
Why in the world  
Would you  
Hurt me?  
Why do you always  
*Hurt me?*

When you get drunk  
You hurt me.  
When you hit me  
It hurts.

You shouldn't  
Hurt me.  
I am a child.  
You shouldn't hurt me.

*Please Daddy quit drinking*  
*And it won't hurt anymore!*

*Mariah age 15*

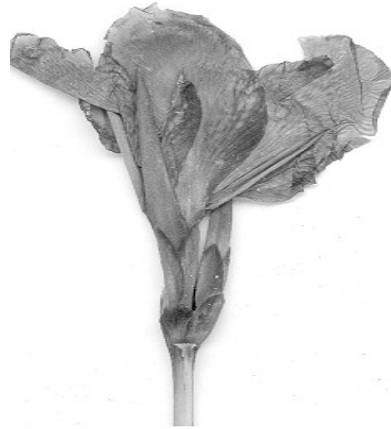


## MY FATHER'S FLAG

Even though my father was old when he died...  
And I had known it was coming  
Because he had been very very sick for a long time...  
I still miss him.  
And I cried and cried  
Because it was so plain to see  
That he was the only one  
Who ever really loved me.

I don't think my mother loved us...  
We never understood why.  
And after he died  
There was no one there to stop her,  
So she beat me  
Until there were no more tears to cry.  
And I hate to say,  
But it was a blessing that day  
When the state came to take me away.

It was me who took care of my father while he was sick...  
There was never time for play...  
And when they took him in the ambulance that day  
I kept telling them...  
*Maybe there's something more I could do to save him...*  
*It's my job to take care of him!*  
I felt so alone because I knew  
He wasn't coming back...it was really true.  
And nobody would ever love me like he did...  
Nobody.



## A BIRD

*I want to be a bird  
Cause birds can fly up in the sky  
Where they don't have to worry.*

*They don't have to worry 'bout nuthin'-  
And if they have babies  
They just  
Take care of them...*

*A bird would never give her baby away  
Like my mama did.*

*I wonder if  
You could fly  
High enough  
To see*

*God...*

*Veronica age 14*





## THE BOX

It's like I have a little box  
Inside me...

When something goes wrong  
I save it-  
Put it in the box...  
Everything that goes wrong  
Goes into the box.  
I save it...  
Save it... save it.

Then something goes wrong  
And I try to save it  
But there's no room anymore...  
But I stuff it in anyhow-  
Then I lock the box...lock it.

### BUT IT POPS OPEN ANYHOW

POPS OPEN  
EVERYTHING GOES OUT  
EVERYWHERE  
IN PIECES  
INTO THE AIR  
ON EVERYTHING

Then I feel better again.

But not really.

Veronica age 14

When they laid him in the ground  
And the salutes began to sound-  
Every shot fired in his honor  
Went straight through my heart...  
I still feel the scars.  
And when they handed me the flag-  
The flag that covered the box  
That held my dearest friend...  
My tears soaked all its stars.

When I held that flag  
I remembered how he'd say  
"You'll make me proud of you some day",  
But it was *me* who filled with pride  
Thinking of the courage he'd had in the war-  
All the suffering he saw, and kept on going...  
Kept up the fight for what he thought was right...  
Feeling alone, wondering if he'd ever get back home...  
But marching on through the darkest night...

That night when I put my Father's flag in my drawer,  
I knew he was in heaven with his Father...  
And he would be happy to see that the flag is mine now  
Because the flag brings me strength and courage, somehow...  
And when my life becomes a battle,  
And I face the hardest parts;  
When I don't feel like fighting...don't even know how...  
Don't know where to start...  
I look at my Father's flag and remember...his heart.

David age 15

## GRANDPA'S HANDS

Grandpa's hands  
were big and strong...  
They punished me  
When I did something wrong.  
Grandpa was big and tall...  
And a few times,  
Because of him,  
I kissed a wall.

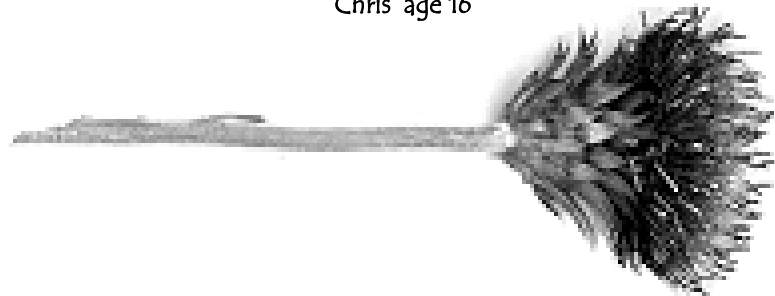
He was so close, and dear to me...  
*HIS LOVE WAS SO BLINDING  
THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE...*

He told me that what it did was okay...  
What his hands were doing was okay.  
Then he went on and on  
Day after day.

I loved him so much  
I didn't want to tell...  
If I did, he said  
I would go to hell.

On the day he died,  
I just cried.....and cried.....and cried.  
I reached for his hand, but it wasn't there...  
I felt so lonely I didn't know what to do...  
Because he was still  
The greatest man I ever knew.

Chris age 16



## I'M TRAPPED

I'M TRAPPED  
AND NOBODY KNOWS IT  
BUT ME...  
CAN SOMEBODY HELP ME?

I'M TRAPPED IN CHAINS  
AND NOBODY HAS THE KEY  
NOBODY  
CAN REACH IT.

CAN SOMEBODY REACH OUT  
AND GET THE KEY?  
I HAVE ALL THESE PROBLEMS IN HERE-  
I WANT TO GET AWAY FROM THEM!

PLEASE SOMEONE REACH OUT . . .  
JUST GRAB THE KEY!!!

Veronica, age 14



AN  
EMOTIONAL DISEASE

In time  
In my mind  
I climb  
'till I find  
who's to blame?  
It's not my shame,  
it's my brain.

I cannot talk.  
I can't see what's ahead.  
I cannot walk.  
My feet are lead.  
My days aren't bright,  
as they should be.  
I plunge toward night.  
I cannot see.

So many changes  
leave me confused.  
My friends are strangers.  
My life has been bruised.  
Oh God please help me.  
Oh help me please!  
Only You have a cure for  
My emotional disease.

Angel age 16

*SOMETIMES*

*Sometimes  
I say things  
I don't really mean...  
Like  
"I hate you!"  
Or  
"I don't need you"*

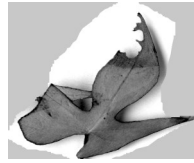
*But what I'm really thinking is...*

*I DON'T DESERVE  
TO BE LOVED.*

*Isaac age 14*



Mr. D.,  
You might not remember me  
*BUT I SURE REMEMBER YOU.*  
You take over every thought I have  
And every dream when I sleep.  
It's like this-  
*YOU RAPED A LITTLE GIRL!*



A girl who had never in a million years  
Done anything to deserve such treatment.  
*I WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL!*  
I didn't deserve it... *I DIDN'T!*  
You hurt me in so many ways that you'll never know.  
You'll never *FEEL THE FEAR* that torments me  
*EVERY TIME I TURN OUT THE LIGHTS.*  
You'll never know what it's like  
To look at Jesus' face and never *SEE* it.  
*ALL I SEE IS YOU!*

You will not leave me alone.  
Do you realize what you did?  
*You practically DESTROYED MY LIFE!*  
If there wasn't a God,  
I certainly wouldn't have lived  
Through what you did to me.  
Sometimes I can't sleep . . . I can't eat.  
I hope I make it through *ONE HOUR*  
Without remembering  
The awful things you did to me.  
I don't want your apologies,  
I want you to leave me alone.  
*JUST GO AWAY!*



There's no way I can forgive you,  
But maybe someday I can forget.



*PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE!*

Catherine age 16

## CRYING

*Everyone cries.*

*Sometimes it is good to cry.*

*I CRY ALOT.*

*Sometimes I cry for a day,  
And that is probably good  
Because the crying  
Takes away all the ANGER  
That I feel inside.*

*I could make a river with my tears.*

*I look in the water  
And the river lets me see myself..  
Lets me look at  
All the feelings I hold inside.*

Veronica age 15

## ALONE IN THE DARK

Alone in the dark  
Nowhere to go  
Trapped in the middle  
No way out  
No one can help.  
All on my own.

Can someone help me?  
Can someone help me?

No one cares.

## DOES ANYONE CARE?

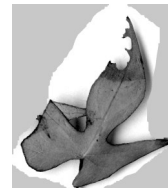
Will anyone come?

God is the only one who came.

Amanda age 13

## NIGHT TORMENT

I'M SITTING ALONE IN MY ROOM  
TRYING TO GO TO SLEEP  
FOR THE LAST HOUR AND A HALF  
I NEED TO SLEEP  
BUT I JUST CAN'T.



IT'S LIKE  
MY BODY KNOWS  
WHAT'S COMING  
THE SECOND I CLOSE MY EYES  
SO IT JUST WON'T LET ME  
SLEEP.

MY BODY KNOWS  
IT DOESN'T WANT TO FEEL HIS HANDS  
ALL OVER IT  
IT DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR  
HIS WHISPERS.

SO NIGHT AFTER NIGHT  
THE FIGHT GOES ON...

MY BODY FIGHTS WITH MY MIND  
MY MIND WANTS ME TO DEAL WITH THIS  
GET PAST IT AND START LIVING  
BUT MY BODY JUST DOESN'T WANT  
TO LIVE THROUGH IT ALL  
AGAIN.

CATHERINE AGE 16



## AFRAID OF FOREVER

Afraid of my fears  
Afraid of not being brave  
Afraid of not being strong  
Afraid of shedding my tears.  
Powerless.

*And the fear goes on forever.*

Fear that feels like thunder  
Loud  
Powerful  
Explodes inside my heart.

*And the thunder goes on forever.*

When I hear the thunder  
I know a storm is coming  
I know the storm  
Is inside of me.

*And the storm goes on forever.*

*Amanda age 13*

## HELEN

Helen,  
You were a painting not finished  
One that we wanted so much to see.  
You paid for the colors  
With the pain in your life...  
And as you dreamed of how  
Your canvass would look  
You must have prayed for God to help you  
And take away most of the black,  
Some of the blue.

We watched you grow  
As you painted your life  
Choosing colors with care...  
Colors of forgiveness  
Love, learning and kindness...  
And sometimes there  
Were colors of tears.  
But you reminded us that God  
Can soften black and blue.

You're with Him, now...  
Maybe helping Him paint  
The lives of others.  
If you can,  
(And I'll bet that you do)  
You'll soften the blacks  
And brighten the blues.

*from an anonymous friend*

Note: After graduating from the Ranch program, Helen, an incest survivor, completed college, and was working on a Masters Degree in psychology from Texas A&M when we received word that she had been killed in a tragic auto-mobile accident. We miss her letters and visits home.



### EVERY DAY

Every day  
A child cries for help  
While others are on their way.


Every day  
A child is abused  
While others are free without fear..

Every day  
A child is hurt  
While others say, why is the world this way?

WHY IS THE WORLD THIS WAY?

Crystal age 16

### FEAR



I have this fear...  
Fear of being on my own...  
Will I make it all by myself?

...the fear of growing up...  
living alone.

When it's time  
will someone be there  
to take the fear away?

Everybody says  
that you  
will always have fear.

Is it true?

Maria age 16

### SOMETIMES I GET SCARED

Sometimes I get scared-  
Scared I might have to leave here  
For being bad.

Like always...

Leaving...

Being bad...

Leaving...leaving...leaving.

Veronica age 15



## UP DOWN IN OUT

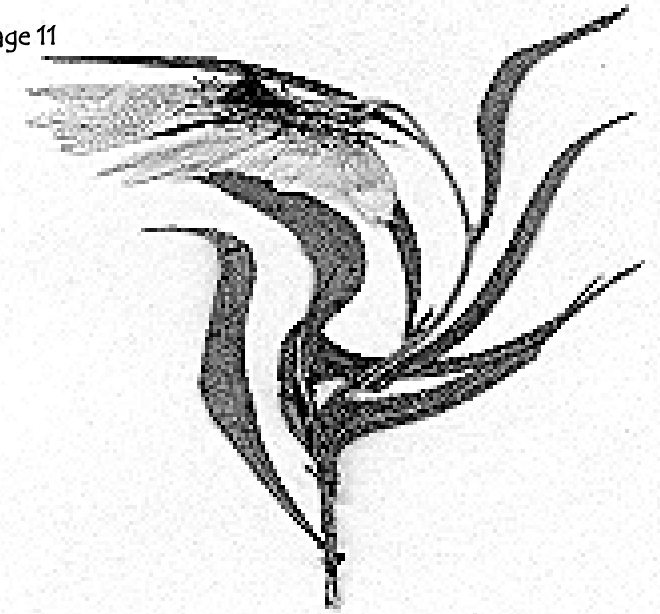
Up down in out  
my mind is playing tricks on me  
thinking I can set me free  
a footstep away from fate  
death visits quickly  
I hasten my pace  
my ears hear no voice of love  
as I step into the mud  
into the darkness deep and still  
feeling sadness with a thrill  
my heart is feeling hard and cold  
remembering things untold  
and as I start to slip ever down  
my mind starts turning round and round  
grab my hand and help me stand  
my house is built upon the sand  
there is only one now  
that can catch me before I hit the ground  
what a traitor is my heart  
full of deceit ever dark  
out to destroy the only me  
to push me into slavery  
I ask the one up above  
to bring me through with greatest love  
down up out in

LeRoy age 15



I have always wished  
that other people could be me for awhile  
just to know what it's like.  
I often think about how good my life would be  
If I was someone else,  
but I must know  
that everyone else has a monster in them, too...  
If it's loose, it's tearing them up...  
But if it's locked up, it's worse...  
because it's waiting  
for the right moment  
to break loose.

Beauty age 11



## THE MONSTER

My life has never been as I wanted it to be.  
I don't know why, but I keep making the same mistakes  
that I have made so many times before.  
I just keep messing up.

I know a lot of people think I have a good life...  
but if only they knew  
of the monster that is tearing me up inside...  
Every rude remark and thing that hurts me  
gives it one more claw or tooth  
to tear me up with.

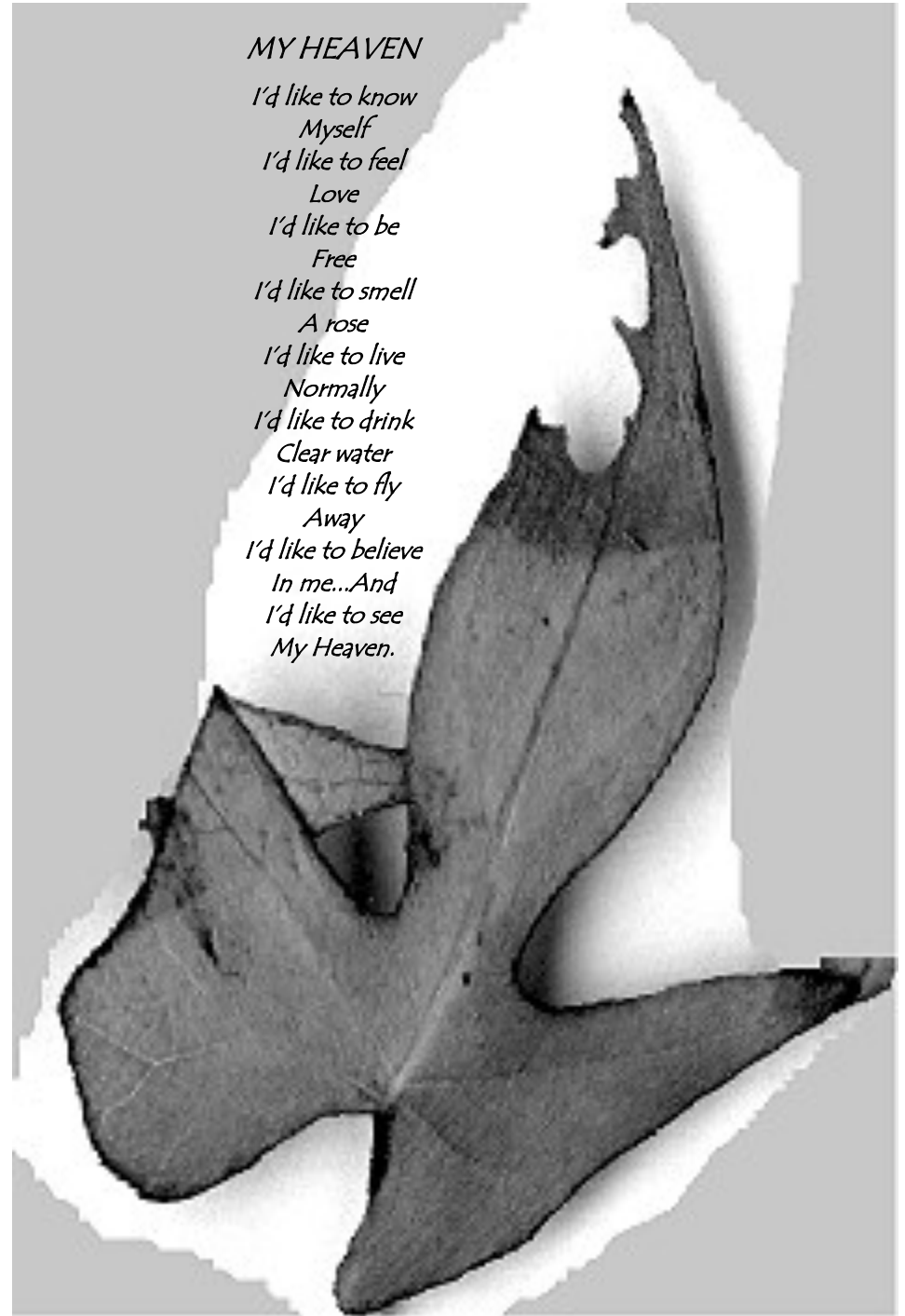
After it's finished with me,  
the Monster will go to someone else.

My heart is being destroyed and my soul is dying  
before my eyes.  
I wish I had some way to kill this monster hurting me,  
and hurting you, too.  
I wish my life was perfect and that I never had any worries.  
But whenever someone asks me my wish,  
I always say something else.

I know I don't fit in and that nobody sees the real me..  
They see someone else.  
I don't want to face the truth, but I know I have to.  
It's hard, because I wish my life was a fairytale  
then I'd still have a happy ending.

## MY HEAVEN

*I'd like to know  
Myself  
I'd like to feel  
Love  
I'd like to be  
Free  
I'd like to smell  
A rose  
I'd like to live  
Normally  
I'd like to drink  
Clear water  
I'd like to fly  
Away  
I'd like to believe  
In me...And  
I'd like to see  
My Heaven.*





## FORGIVE ME

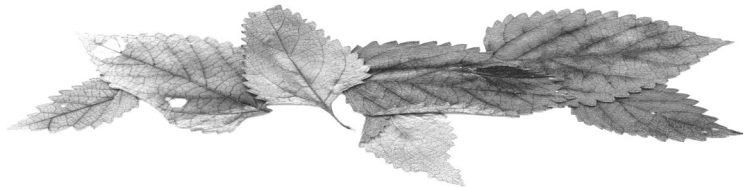
Sometimes  
When I'm hurting  
And feel like running away-  
I just tell myself to STOP.  
And it's very hard  
Because if I listen to myself, and don't run  
Then I have to face myself  
And all the problems I have.

I wish I could do that all the time.  
I really wish I would never ever run away.

But sometimes  
When I hurt very bad inside  
And feel like running away  
I don't even tell myself to stop...  
I just go without thinking.

I have to ask God to forgive me.  
Because I know  
He wants me to grow  
Instead of always running.

Veronica age 14



## I WISH

*I wish  
I knew how  
To be kind  
To people who care about me.  
I don't know why  
But if I start to get close to someone  
Then I start to get mean to them...  
I know they'll just leave  
Like everyone else has...  
And that makes me mad...  
I want to learn  
How to express these feelings...  
I wish I could tell them how much it hurts  
To miss someone when they go away.*

*Isaac age 14*

