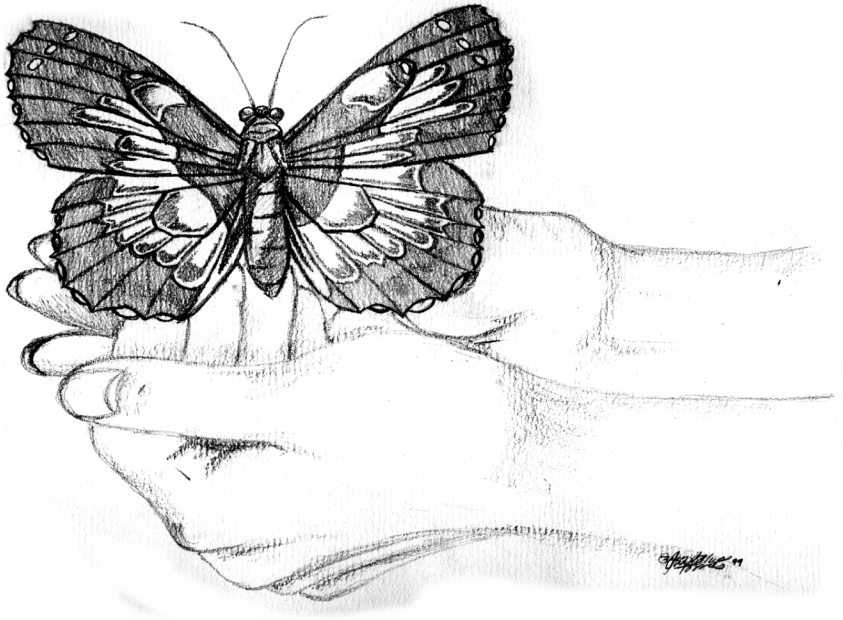
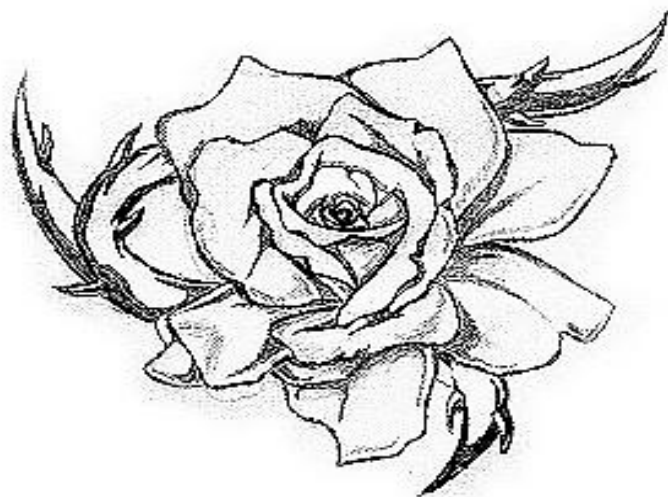


Life After "The Snake"




Poetry by Michael, age 12

Illustrated by Juan, age 18 and Cheryl, age 16



Life After "The Snake"



This book is dedicated to my dear grandmother, Belva Williams, who really has been "my other mother". I have said and done a lot of things I wish I hadn't . . . Still she just forgives me and keeps on loving me. No matter what. Thank you, Grandma, you're awesome!

Michael



I Have to Remind Myself

**I have to remind myself
That good is more powerful than evil.**

**When I'm lying in my bed at night
Thinking of my dad in prison
And my mama dead from drugs
My brothers living in another home . . .**

**I have to remind myself
That good is more powerful than evil.**

**Even though sometimes
I cry myself to sleep
And have to remind myself again and again and again . . .
I don't know why I know it, but I do . . . it's really true-
Good is more powerful than evil.**

Preface

When Michael was 10 he lost his mother to an overdose of heroin. She had been battling this addiction a very long time. Michael's first collection of poems, "The Snake", written just after the death of his mother, describes the devastation visited upon the family of a drug abuser:

The Snake

Heroin
Is a snake .
It will bite you
And hurt you
And hurt the ones that love you
And take away all the things you love.

The snake will poison your body and mind,
Then it will kill you and not even care.

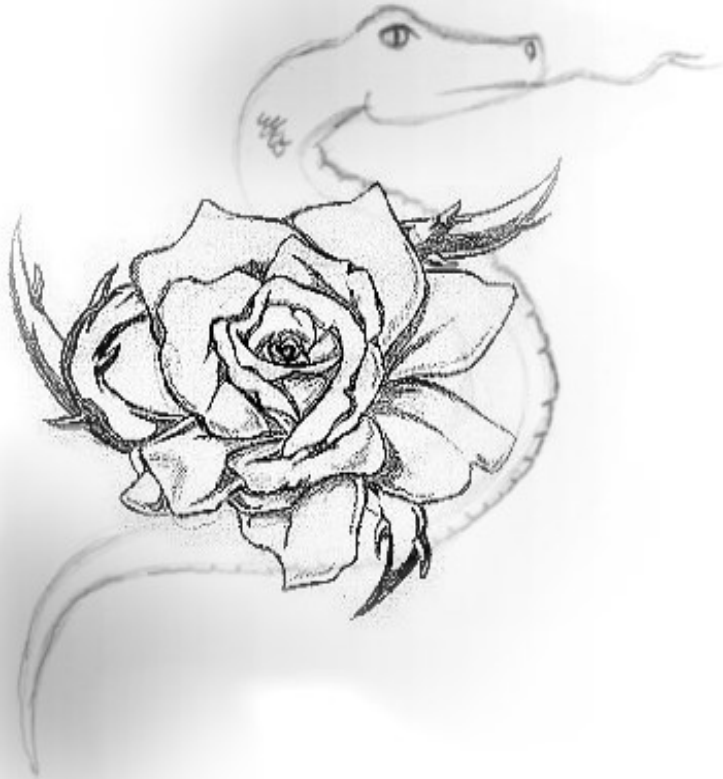
My mother found the snake
When she was twelve.
Thinking it was friendly
She took it home with her.
She kept it and cared for it for twenty years
Then the snake killed her.

From "The Snake", by Michael (C) 1998

Two years later, "Life After the Snake" is a deeper look into the heart of a preadolescent boy, orphaned by drugs. We join Michael as he courageously searches for anchors; as he searches for the truth. Perhaps Michael's most urgent search is for himself; for the boy he didn't get to be, and for the man he someday hopes to be.

Carol Priour

Director of Expressive Arts
Hill Country Youth Ranch





Sometimes
when I cry myself to sleep
I can see . . .
the snake .
He's laughing at me.



Grandmother's Love

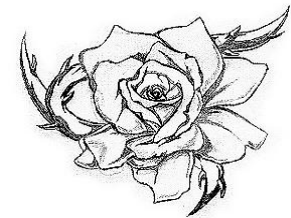
My broken life . . .
My broken heart is
Like a broken picture
That once looked so beautiful.

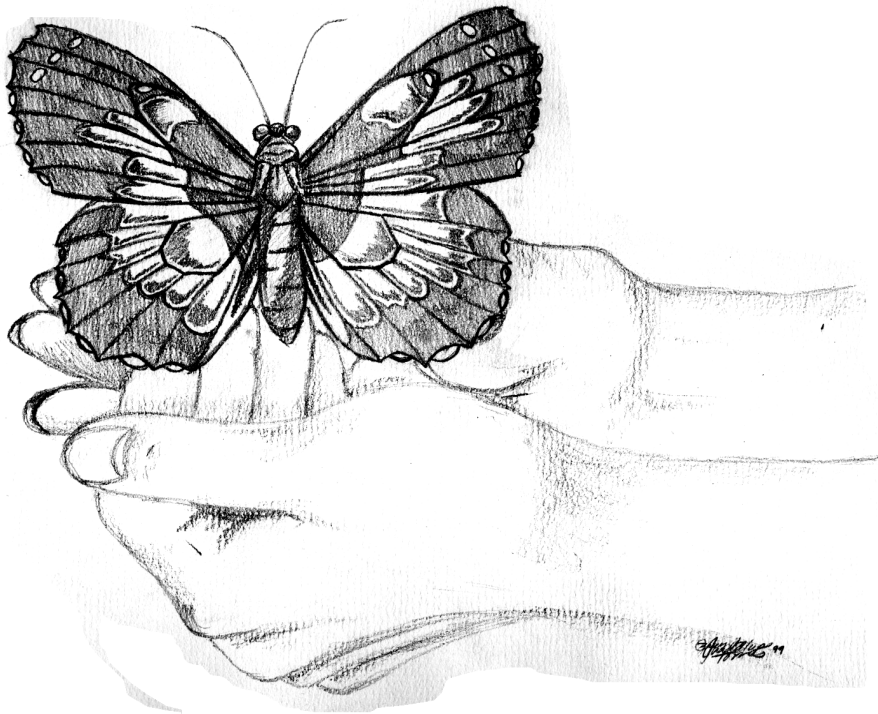
Now it hurts so much to think about
But I know
I have to put my life back together.

I can't go back in time and warn her
That the heroin would kill her
And break everything apart.

I have to put my life back together.

My grandmother's love
Is the glue I will need
To start.





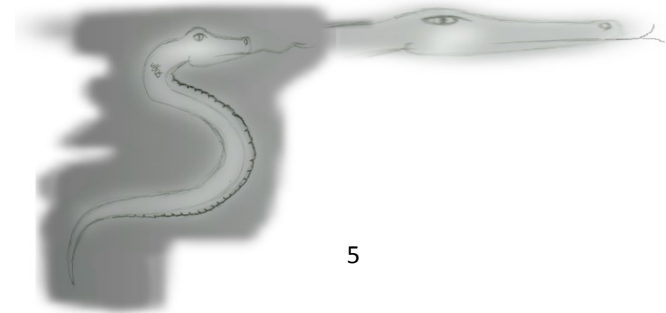
Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

Why do bad things happen to good people?

*I know that my brothers and I
Sometimes do things
We shouldn't do . . .
Sometimes we get in trouble.
But we're really good kids.
So why did we lose all the things we loved?
Why did we lose our home?
And why did we lose our mom and dad?
Why did we lose Christmas together and family trips?
And why did we have to lose each other?*

Why?

*Maybe because they decided to do drugs
And forgot that they would have to pay the price.
The price was too high.
The price was our family.*





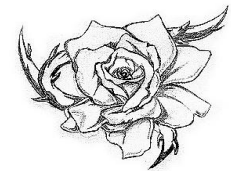
Grandma, It Was Not Your Fault.

*Grandma, it was not your fault.
She chose to take drugs.
I've accepted it, maybe you can too.
There was nothing we could do.*

*Grandma, it was not your fault.
She chose to take drugs
Then the drugs took over.
And took her away.*

*Grandma, it was not your fault.
When the drugs took over
There was no love left inside for us.
Just for the heroin.*

*She's gone now
She knows we love her still.
Grandma, she would want you to know
It wasn't your fault.*



Grandma, Please

Grandma please . . .
Please tell me about Mama.

There is so much
I never got to know.

Was she once a good little girl?
What color was her favorite?
What made her start doing drugs?
Was she pretty?

I always thought she was pretty.

Grandma, please. . .
Please tell me about Mama.

Did she love me?
Did she love my brothers?
Did she love herself?
Did she ever love at all?
Grandma please . . .
Please tell me she did.

TWO FACES

It just seemed like a regular day . . .
Except that I was feeling really sad and lonely . . .
And I thought
A hug from Mama would take it all away . . .
Make everything ok.

I went to look for her
And there she was
With a needle in her arm
And a look on her face
That didn't even look like my mama
The mother I thought I knew . . .
The one who loved me.



This was not the face
Of the mother
Who read me stories
And told me to wear my coat when it was cold
And to eat my vegetables so I could grow up and be strong.
No, this was not *her* face .

I GUESS SHE HAD TWO FACES.

(Maybe everybody does.)
Everybody has two faces

Lost Soul

It started out to be a wonderful night.
Mama was telling us happy stories.
She wanted to be with us
More than anything.
She was so happy . . .
Telling stories. Laughing.



*Then from nowhere
Like a bolt of lightning
She flipped!
Cursing!
Talking to things that weren't there!*

It didn't seem like her.
I didn't know it was the drugs.
I wanted a hug.
I wanted to talk to her.
I wanted to hear another story.
I wanted her to come back.

When she died,
I felt like a lost soul.
I guess the real lost soul was Mama.

I didn't want her to go.
I want her to come back.

Mom and Dad

My Dad was never around . . .
Or when he was
He didn't have time for us.

I didn't know
He was out selling drugs
Until the day the police came .
They banged him against the wall
And took him away.

My mom didn't have time, either
At first I didn't understand why . . .
I thought it was me.

Feeling lonely one day,
I went looking for her, hoping for a hug.
She had a needle in her arm.
She saw things that weren't there.
She didn't see me.

He's in prison.
She's in heaven.
I still love them both.

