



## INFORMATION about the SYNOPSIS of Part I Book Series

### *“Treasures Out of Darkness” (The Healing of Valerie Jo)*

3Rose.com: <http://3rose.com:80/members/synopsis/aboutsvn.htm>

Valerie Jo has gleaned the waste products of her life and offered them to be recycled into something useful for the sake of humanity. For the benefit of women everywhere that are locked inside them-selves crying out to be set free, she wants them to know that they're not alone. The message she would like to bring to them is this: "no matter where you have been, no matter what you have done, *today* can become YOUR once in a lifetime."

### **About Valerie Jo**

The Author is the story... Why would you want to read an autobiography written by Valerie Jo? She's a fighter, and a survivor; she's you, and hundreds like you who have been through HELL and back to tell the story. An over-comer, mother of five, a wife five times over, a woman stricken by physical, mental, sexual, intellectual, and religious abuse. An author whose words pierce deep into your soul with an undeniable truth... the truth being that our society is filled with neglectful parents, liars, rapists, abusers, predators, who prey on the vulnerability of the

naive, the innocent, and the unsophisticated. Valerie Jo has lived and identified with it all, and then mirrored it back in her life's story for us to see clearly what she has experienced so that we are able to understand ourselves, and one another. It's all in her story through the eyes of a damaged child and/or a grown-up individual with a child-like personality stuck inside somewhere in their character; stuck in a never-ending quest for someone to nurture them, to love them, someone to set them free. Valerie calls them (us) "*The Walking Wounded*". Consider for a moment what happens to these children, who with the war wounds of childhood, become decision-making adults.

Valerie Jo, in her original manuscript of Part I *Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)*, shares the extraordinarily painful repercussions of acting out the programmed responses that her childhood, in the abyss of abuse, produced. Illiterate until 12 years ago, Valerie exemplifies the magnanimous progress that healing can produce. Allow this work in Valerie to bring you to a place of complete restoration.

## **About the Book Series:**

This Synopsis of Part I *Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)* has been created from a far more expansive group of writings from the pen of Valerie Jo, whose life story may serve as a foundation for many books and a movie(s) in the future. Even though this synopsis merely scratches the surface of what is really to be learned from the author's experiences, it has had a profound effect on all who have read it, as they found themselves clamoring for more. Millions of people are searching for healing answers, truth, and the knowledge to survive, while their lives are crumbling around them. Part I *Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)*, the book series, is Valerie Jo's honest attempt to reach readers by reliving the painful secrets hidden within her heart and mind, those secrets that our shame-based society would use to cast her aside. Over and over she would experience the betrayal of people she loved and trusted. This caused her to build destructive barriers in relationships, and never really understanding why. This recount of events is far different than any other personal account most have seen. Included is color photos of nearly every key character, multiple documents proving the validity of her story including: newspaper articles of murders and deaths; along with authentic birth and death certificates. The amazing fact, is that all of this is only an overview. The synopsis, alone, is something you can't put down, while the manuscript is packed with detailed accounts of every encounter; volume after volume taking the reader through an amazing tapestry of life, greater than any soap opera you've ever seen. The original manuscript comprises more than 6,000 pages of story line, bringing Valerie Jo's life to date. In order to put that into perspective, it could provide her readers several volumes a month, on her 3 Rose web-site, for an ongoing adventurous reading. You won't believe how it ends! Don't miss out on an experience of your lifetime.

*"Healing" is such a subjective word, what does that mean to you?* The ability to interact in marriage, friendship, or family relationships without fear? The fear of rejection and betrayal has the power to isolate you from the joy of life. Don't let that fear destroy you. Part I ***Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)*** will open those wounds that have been allowed to fester in your life, and allow you the precious healing you so desperately, endlessly seek.

## **Reactions to Valerie Jo's Part I SYNOPSIS** ***Treasure Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie):***

***My name is Billie.*** I am 58 years old, married and have three sons. I hold a Business Degree from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. My husband and I are owners of a health food store in Lubbock.

I found this synopsis of Valerie Jo's ***Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)*** so moving and intriguing that I couldn't quit reading it once I started. Although I didn't relate to the character of Valerie Jo, I did relate to a truth drawn from her early life experience that ***"Without a standard of truth in your heart, distinguishing the difference between reality and a fantasy is nearly impossible."*** A profound truth which opened a key to why some people, and especially this younger generation, can do wrong things and not really believe it's wrong! ***"Deception leaves a false impression every time... producing false security"***, Valerie says. There is something in this truthful, real life, moving story of Valerie Jo's for everyone to grab hold of and use to bring understanding, insights, and truths into their lives.

### ***Monica Writes***

I journeyed through the synopsis of Part I ***Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)***, such a compelling story, causing an incredible uprising of emotion, filled with detail that was easy to understand. I was unable to put the volume down, and read it in one night. The next day I needed more; I needed to see that even when things go horribly wrong that there was still hope. After reading parts of her Part II ***Beauty for Ashes (The Healing of Valerie Continues)***, as the tears streamed down my face I realized that I could identify with Valerie Jo more than I ever wanted to admit; coming to a place in understanding that I needed to know the whole story, not just a synopsis, but all of the volumes of manuscript; that indelible need to know the whole truth. Why were so many people allowed to hurt her? Is there really any justice? The age old question... why do bad things happen to good people? I haven't read the Part III ***Restoration of All Things (Conclusion)*** manuscript yet, but I eagerly await receiving it! What's absolutely mind boggling, is that being a wife, mother of four, nurse, and leading a seemingly uneventful life compared to Valerie, the draw to her experiences has taught me so much about myself. This

book will speak to all those who are hurting, but also to those who have hurt. Clearly, my actions towards others that don't make decisions that are right will always be tempered with mercy, knowing that our past often determines our actions. I just had to let you know how her story made me realize that no matter whom you are, where you come from, what you've endured... you have worth, and have the ability to take your tragedy, and let God use it to help someone else. That is my goal for now and evermore. Thank You, Valerie!

***I'm Jill***, a college student, mother of twins, and last but not least... the great pretender. Trying to forget all the painful memories in my past that causes so much of the problems of my present. Reading Valerie Jo's synopsis of the beginning of her life story brought those horrifying memories of my past flooding back. I struggled; did I really want to read anymore? The question was, could I take it? Making it through ***Treasures Out of Darkness (The Healing of Valerie)*** drew out more emotion than I had allowed myself to experience in a very long time. Hopefully, this is the beginning of some kind of cleansing to those festering wounds that I still suffer from. I'm not sure how this will affect me in the end, but truth is the one inescapable factor in all of our lives. There is no running from your life, and I guess there is no running from mine. I hope to find someone who will love me and accept me for who I am, and who I once was. I can see through Valerie Jo's life that I too can have treasures out of darkness... if I'm willing.

## **Remarks About Valerie Jo's Writings:**

### **Dallas Morning News**

The owner of Dallas Morning News spoke of Valerie Jo's story as, too unusual to fit in anywhere, and added, "It would be too difficult a concept to be accepted by the secular or Christian media." She stated, if presented to the Christian publisher, it would be thrown out because of some of the language and explicit, graphic material. If presented to the secular media, the "God-stuff" would be too offensive, and yet, Valerie Jo's writings are so profoundly pure and needing exposure to the public. It would take someone with guts to present real life from this perspective.

### **Book Store Owner**

The owner for a popular Christian Book and Variety Store told Valerie Jo, ***"It is unlikely I will be able to place your Book Series in my store once it's published because of the vivid description of circumstances that happened to you."*** He continued to say that, many self-help books being written today either talk down to the reader with a "Goodie-Two-Shoes" approach, or the author addresses their reader, shooting their message way above their heads. Some books, including self-help books, are so intellectual that they appeal only to the highly educated, leaving those less knowledgeable in the dust. He said that he saw a great need for someone that will get

down into the sewer water, where the real life issues are, and lovingly pull the person up to what is true reality

## **Hollywood**

Valerie Jo has been there too. Some in Hollywood have commented that they just don't know what to do with Valerie Jo's story. They remarked, "***You can't combine Satan and God, demons and angels, it won't sell.***" However, this is one of the major and most unique aspects of her narrative. She believes that it's time the truth be exposed as to what everyone has ignorantly contended with in this life: about why life is so hard, and whose fault is it anyway?

<http://3rose.com/members/synopsis/bioinfo.html>

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IS PROTECTED BY THE FOLLOWING COPYRIGHTS**

**“TREASURES OUT OF DARKNESS”**

*(The Healing of Valerie)*

**Manuscript Part I**

© TXu 569-225 9/21/93

**“BEAUTY FOR ASHES”**

*(The Healing of Valerie Continues)*

**Manuscript Part II**

© TXu 607-944 11/15/93

**“RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS”**

*(Conclusion)*

**Manuscript Part III**

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**“TREASURES OUT OF DARKNESS”**

*(The Healing of Valerie)*

**SYNOPSIS PART I**

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**“BEAUTY FOR ASHES”**

*(The Healing of Valerie Continues)*

**SYNOPSIS PART II**

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**“RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS”**

*(Conclusion)*

**(NO SYNOPSIS TO PART III)**

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# FOREWORD

This synopsis is written in the third person. Excerpts have been extracted from Valerie's original manuscript. Within the story-line Valerie is telling her story purely the way she experienced it. The information regarding people, places and incidences described within her writings are phrased precisely the way they affected and influenced her life, as she saw it. She did not compromise her opinions on thoughts, words, or experiences.

This text has not been prepared to fit into nor patronize any particular stereotype in any sense of the word. The reasons for relating detailed information as she has, through the participations and observations of her life, was for the purpose of exposing root issues about her experiences.

Valerie's intention has been all along that none of her story brings harm to anyone unnecessarily. Her hope is that others' lives would be changed for the better because of her openness, honesty, transparency and determination in revealing the truth about her life. From the episodes of her healing venture Valerie also leaves a legacy to all of those who were a part of her life through out her life. The opinionated quality of this legacy is depended on their perception.

## A Word from Valerie Jo to you:



I thought about you all while I was writing, all while I was healing, and sometimes I could almost see the face of your broken heart crying out for freedom, just like mine. Often, it seemed when I felt I couldn't finish all of this: "Processing the past to find and identify the facts of what happened" and as a result... that nagging question, "WHY?" there you were in my mind with a hope for me that perhaps someday my healing answers would become yours. I battled and struggled with myself and the true reality that I knew, that I had to complete something for once in my life. Thoughts of you would whisper softly to my soul, that if I couldn't do this for me, I could do it for you. So many times YOU were the only thing that kept me pressing on. Reliving it all once again was what caused me to face the monsters that had held me back from the image of the real me. It was lonely and scary facing it head on. Some issues were unbearable, until again I imagined you being there, and I wasn't alone any more.

At times it would feel as if I were talking directly to you, as if you were my best friend and I could tell you anything. You would understand at such depths that we didn't really have to exchange words, we just knew; we understood the hopes, the pain, the dreams, the sorrows, and that someday, someday things would be different, something would change and there would be a brand-new life full of fresh, new beginnings on the other side, somewhere.

I want you to know that I am on the other side now, and I'm reaching out to take your hand. If I could do this, you can. I'm right here with you knowing that everything is going to be okay. So come on, follow me... it's true, there is an abundant life full of all we have dreamed of, and it's just on the other side of the pain. Trust me, let me take you through this healing journey with me; through the nightmares of the past... straight into the Promised Land.

**Know that I love you,**





**PART I**  
**"TREASURES OUT OF DARKNESS"**  
**(The Healing of Valerie)**

**SYNOPSIS**

**THE INTRODUCTION**

The battle we fight in this life as human beings for truth, freedom and fulfillment of purpose is exemplified in Valerie Jo's story. She has used herself as a representative example and a voice on behalf of those whose voices cannot or will not be heard. It is because of what she has discovered about herself, that she is now inspired to believe everyone has potential for the best life has to offer them, and that this dynamic lies inside of each and every one of us. Valerie believes that all that is necessary to achieve the ultimate in everything pertaining to truth, liberty, fulfillment and freedom, is for an individual to connect with what unleashes them from what is hindering their development and progress towards fulfill their full potential. "There is a way to become the best you, you can be; who you really are and what you were actually meant to accomplish during your short journey on this earth," Valerie says. This incredible source is revealed within and throughout the contents of Valerie's life story. This remarkable story is her life's journey; this is her quest and this is what this incredible story tells all about... ***"EXPOSING THE DARKNESS AND REVEALING THE LIGHT!"***

There is mystery, adventure, and suspense in every action-packed year of Valerie Jo's life. Just as the Dark Powers deceptively move in once again for their finale; just before their climactic final blow... a burst of Light breaks forth and transports her into a thrilling new dimension. The reader is exhilarated by this fresh breath of hope revealed at her rescue. The phenomenon of her transformation takes place in and through Valerie's story... chapter by chapter. By getting deep into her story line and living out these adventures with her, the reader is soon inspired and made hopeful toward the possibilities of their personal longings for freedom and fulfillment becoming reality. How many are born and die never knowing why they were created? Valerie's desire is that multitudes will grasp this opportunity for discovering their true self with all of its multifaceted potential.

The tangled threads of deception from the dark side are in need of ultimate exposure so that truth might be revealed and released. Digging deep takes time and hard work, and this is some of the reasons why people are not experiencing fulfillment in life; this is one crucial reason

for the lengthy processing of Valerie's past experiences. This expedition takes her to the root of the problem issues for... *the ultimate exposure!*

It is very unlikely that there has been a story told on the secular television or movie screen, nor within the multitude of books written on the subject of human behavior, that so accurately portrays and interprets life within such a realistic perspective; its better than the best soap opera, and the story is true. This story is not about religion, a theory, philosophy, politics or a doctrine. It will offend those with Pharisaical mindsets and sift and shake others who might be brave enough to consider delving into their dark side to face and unearth the true facts of their own life, and to expose the monsters lurking within.

Some have said that Valerie's story is too raw, "Too much to the point." Others have commented that "It's just too unbelievable." Projecting ahead of the resistance and criticism to her candid transparency, Valerie went to great lengths to provide original documentation which emphatically establishes her stories' authenticity.

There is a sadistic twist around every corner in Valerie Jo's story. The spiritual forces of darkness converge upon her relentlessly in an attempt to abort her healing delivery, and keep her from discovering her inherent potential. From the very early beginnings of her life, unbeknownst to her, she is the victim of evil conspiracies and strategies which are skillfully and meticulously designed and orchestrated to accomplish their goal.... her ultimate destruction! Valerie's story is saturated with such hideous activity as incest, rape, institutionalization, adultery, murder, organized crime, drugs, alcohol, death, multiple losses, jealousy and compromise, just to name a few. The systematic schemes of "The Destroyer" eventually break down every fiber of her being which leaves her with the moral decay of her own existence. As a result the hideous deposits its residue leaving her merely existing at sub-human level... *a walking zombie.*

Finally realizing the handicapped state that had crippled Valerie Jo all of her life from functioning as a normal human being, she begins her diligent search to find the real answers for her total healing, freedom and purpose in life. Through a lengthy process of organizing and taking an inventory of the ruins of her past, she discovers the precise key that unlocks every one of her prison doors.

Valerie takes her reader through life's most unpleasant experiences, discovering there the better advantage that has been hidden all along among the darkness and ashes of the past. Some of the most astonishing facts became evident to her there; "Nothing broken was worth repairing." The preference is to opt for brand new. It becomes just a matter of time before hidden treasures of potential are revealed and released; potentials that had laid undiscovered deep within Valerie Jo. An inherent quick-wittedness, strong determination and an unwavering faith and

perseverance is found to assist her in breaking through the final barriers. Walls made up of the hardest rock once holding her prisoner soon give way as she bursts right on through to the other side... *to the center of a heart that's free!*

Discovering that she has an incredible purpose for her life, Valerie refuses to settle any longer for mediocre, but presses determinedly towards what she calls, "the sensational!" She learns to see the negative as the positive, the positive as a stepping stone for the greater and the most impossible as an opportunity to be transformed into perfection. "Colors are not created out of white," Valerie says. "All of the beautiful colors in existence must begin with black. Show me a nothing and I will show you the exceptional. There is no such thing as a person that is a nothing, nor is there a person who is un-rehabilitate-able."

In this long processed journey of reading Valerie Jo's life story, she and her reader travel together over the roughest of roads... pitfalls, booby traps and all. This expedition takes them over the highest and most treacherous mountains and through the deepest, longest and loneliest valleys. Through floods and desert lands, storms and the purging flames of fire that purify and cleanse; chasing down their freedom; following their dreams, and reaching for what is real and what is powerful enough to last for eternity.

In this story the reader sorrowfully witnesses Valerie Jo going from pure innocence to a heart of stone. The ruins of her life happen through a process, not an event, as does her healing regeneration. If the reader has anything hidden within their own life, it is sure to be exposed while reading Valerie's story. Valerie's refreshing encouragement to her reader helps them realize the many things she has discovered about life. "A person's sense of self-worth is not based upon someone else's opinion of you.

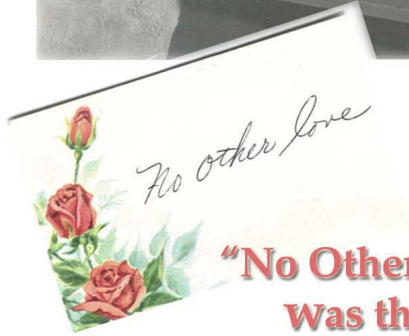
A polar contrast between light and dark, good and evil, bound and free, twisted and straight is within every chapter of Valerie Jo's life story, and the truth is revealed only to those who follow it through to its glorious conclusion. Only they will have the privilege of being a witness to the ultimate victory she experiences today. Only the individual reading this story with their heart, and not with their natural mind will be able to grasp the magnitude of the work that has been done that makes Valerie Jo who she is today. Only those with the heart of a child will enjoy participating and rejoicing in her glorious victory and reward.

This Part I *Synopsis* is compiled from the writings of Valerie Jo's Part I *Manuscript*, "***Treasures Out of Darkness***" (The Healing of Valerie). Part I begins with her birth and concludes at age thirty-one. Only a small portion of each chapter has been extracted from the

contents of the manuscript text for the making of this *Synopsis*. An attempt has been made within this condensed narrative to secure a quality portion of the beginnings of the life of Valerie Jo, however the undertaking of trying to capture even a glimpse of the depths of the revealing of her heart was impossible. A synopsis barely gives this story justice as it skips along from one scenario to the next. Only the reading of the manuscript (spoken in Valerie's own words) bares the sheer transparency exhibited and evidenced therein.

**From death to life... From darkness to light... From hell to Heaven.... May I present to you a *Synopsis* from the manuscript of:**

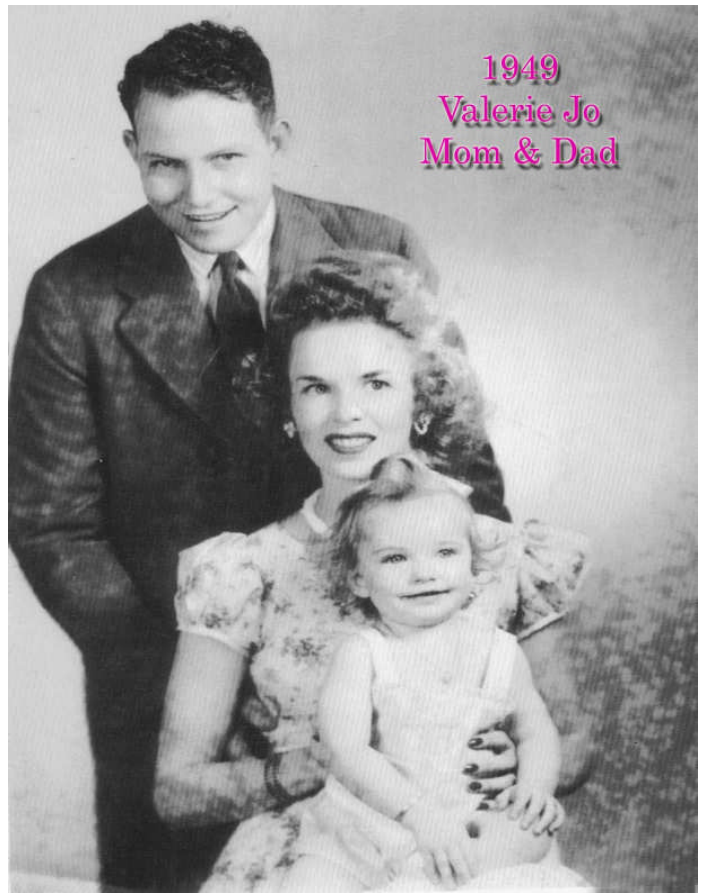
***“Treasures Out of Darkness.”* (The Healing of Valerie)**



**"No Other Love Have I"  
was their song.**

**This card came with  
a dozen red roses ~**

**Navy 1944**



**1949  
Valerie Jo  
Mom & Dad**



1950  
Valerie Jo (3)  
in the country  
Des Moines



1950  
Valerie Jo at Betty & Bob's house  
3 years old



1950



1950

Gram  
1944



1950 Valerie Jo (3)



1954  
Cantovella's room  
Valerie Jo (6)





Valerie Jo 3



*Valerie Jo  
and  
Mom*

*1950*

1950 Mom & Me (3) at a farm



1951 Mom & Valerie Jo (3)



1950 (3)



1950  
Valerie Jo - 3 years old  
Dex Mulner  
Baron's House



1950 July  
Valerie Jo - 3 years old  
Dex Mulner  
Baron's House



## “TREASURES OUT OF DARKNESS” (The Healing of Valerie)

### SYNOPSIS



Valerie Jo Skiles was born February 2, 1947 in Des Moines, Iowa, to William Edward and Dorothy Irene Skiles. Her life story is best told by flashbacks in time. Her recall of good and bad as a child is associated with feeling good or being hurt. Chapter by chapter Valerie is able to recall and write down her experiences from the time she was an infant, through her young childhood and then on through her early school years. She is able to vividly describe her thoughts as she suffered many indignities.

The frightening recollections of her father's sexual abuse of her as a baby is vividly described in Chapter Two as a dream. There are further memories, as she grew older, of other sexual abuse, starting with her father and grandfather. The amount of mental suffering and physical pain Valerie suffered from various sexual encounters is described in chapter after chapter.

Her mother worked for the Rock Island Railroad. There, the little time Valerie spent with her mother was very special to her. But as she grew up, she was left more and more with strangers who became her caretakers. When she was four years old her mother's brother and his wife took her in to live with them in their small two bedroom house with their two sons, Bobby and Billy. This was another life-style change for her. Their home was somewhat of a shack, and they seemed to eat the same thing every day, and yet it was the only time for Valerie that she felt secure. Bob and Betty gave her a sense of belonging, safety, and love. Her Uncle Bob would drive home after work in his old uniform delivery truck, jump out of the driver's seat and yell, "Where's my baby girl?"

That longing to belong to a loving family was realized for a short time in her Uncle Bob and Aunt Betty. They laughed and sang a lot, and they drank cokes in different colored metal glasses and ate popcorn every Saturday night as they watched "I Love Lucy" on a TV they had sacrificed for months to buy. A ride to the A & W Root Beer drive-in for a five-cent root beer was a real treat. That was real family fun...just like she saw on TV.....

Aunt Betty would brush Valerie's long, blond hair and braid it so pretty. Valerie would watch her dress every morning in the same old house dress with the big, square pockets on each



side. She'd comb her dark, thick, long, wavy hair and pull it back with a silver clip Uncle Bob had gotten her for Christmas.



Aunt Betty  
&  
Uncle Bob  
and their house  
I always loved ~



There were purple lilac bushes all along the house outside the add-on bedroom that Valerie shared with Bobby and Billy. On a hot summer night she could smell the lilacs in full bloom. They became her favorite flower. They'd play all day in the endless yard; mostly baseball since Uncle Bob was a baseball nut. They'd have Concord grape fights and jump off the chicken coop into the rhubarb. They'd sit for hours under the green apple trees eating apples and be too full for the usual beef patty, boiled potatoes and peas dinner. Valerie's peas would always be

found when the cool autumn nights began. When Aunt Betty wasn't looking, she brushed them off her plate into the heater grates on the floor under the chair where she sat at the table.....

Each morning before school, while eating the regular breakfast of peanut butter toast and hot cocoa or sometimes Wheaties (Breakfast of Champions), Aunt Betty would dry her hands on a dish towel, and with a crooked smile on her face, walk over to the refrigerator, only to pull out that big, brown bottle of cod liver oil.

There wasn't a night that Valerie didn't think about her mother, even though right here she was happier than she had ever been in her entire life. Valerie worried about her mother, because she thought that if she would have been a better child she would still be with her. Yet, all in all, Uncle Bob's and Aunt Betty's house gave her the best home life she had ever had. Every Saturday night, Valerie would sit by the old, black telephone in the dining room to wait for her mother to call. Sometimes she would fall asleep curled up on the floor. When her mother did call it was hard to choke back the tears and be brave. She didn't want her to get angry. "I love you Mommy, with all my heart and liver and gizzard."

Valerie began kindergarten at age five while living with Uncle Bob and Aunt Betty. She had only one fairly close school friend, but she moved away. It was lonely playing by herself all the time. Valerie was very self-conscious, and without her front baby teeth she didn't feel comfortable smiling without holding her hand over her mouth. Feeling different from all the other children were the norm for her. She began to have learning disabilities and was put in remedial classes. School was an embarrassing and humiliating experience.

When she was between five and seven years old her mother began to have Valerie come over to see her more often. Her mother was a teletype operator in the Rock Island Railroad office in Des Moines. She was beautiful, popular, and had control of every situation around her. Valerie would walk with her mom down the street, and men would whistle and yell wildly as they walked past the bars. Valerie could have danced to her mother's high heels "click, click, click" on the sidewalk, as she thought to herself, "Someday I will be just like my mommy." Her mom would hold her head up high and would barely turn to smile as the men went wild over her. Sometimes she'd take her into the bar. It would really impress Valerie and make her feel important. When there wasn't a man in bed with her mother, she would get to sleep with her. That was such a treat.

Valerie's mother married her boyfriend Bob and they all moved into a house on Thirty-Sixth Street in Des Moines. At eleven years old she found herself with her mom, her new daddy, and a new baby half-sister in a house too small for the growing family. She'd listen to "Theme From A Summer Place" on her radio outside, on hot summer nights... just to get away from the fighting inside.

They decided to move to a three-bedroom house. Valerie's mom had encouraged her to smoke and drink with her; and the dirty jokes she told her all the time, that she didn't understand, made her feel as if she needed to act more grown up. Her negative conversations with Valerie about her's and Bob's sex life were matters that were confusing for an eleven-year-old. She would constantly compare Valerie's training bra breast-size to her 44-D and criticize her childish hair styles.....

In Valerie's constant search for approval and acceptance she spent much of the summer before the sixth grade looking at all the teen magazines trying to figure out how she could change this ugly duckling into a beauty queen, like the girls in the magazines she saw. A full bottle of "Light and Bright" peroxide just happened to be available in the cupboard. She had watched her mom many times touching up her dark roots, so she went for it and dumped the whole bottle on her hair. To her surprise, her mom liked it. By the sixth grade she was dressing to please the boys at the new school, using all the tricks mom taught: to pad her bras; several pairs of shorts make the hips look bigger. In other words... she looked real sexy.

The boys whistled and went wild over her. Valerie was the envy of all the girls at the school as she was using her mom's make-up and dress-up ideas to look her sexiest. Valerie Jo was the talk of the school, but she didn't want her mom to know that she was sneaking her best sweaters to wear to school every day.....

To really excite the boys, she began to wear four sets of shorts at the same time. If a little worked good, a lot more should work better. She put a bobby sock in each of her bra cups to make her breasts look like her moms. Strutting down the school hallways to impress the boys gave her the attention she could look forward to each day. She even attracted the most popular, best-looking guy in the entire school. His name was Rick; her first boyfriend ever. For some reason the alarm at Valerie's house didn't go off one morning; she'd overslept! In her mad dash to get to school her bobby-sock-padding became dislodged and unbalanced. The bell had rung and the halls were full of students when she ran into the school. A group of girls were hysterically laughing and pointing at her. Everyone saw that her bobby socks were imbalanced under her mother's skin-tight sweater and all of her pretending was showing.

Someone carried her limp body to the principal's office, and the kids branded her a fake. Worse yet, her mother was called to come get her. In the car on the way home, furiously her mother yelled, "You've embarrassed me beyond belief, Valerie. I'm so ashamed of you! You're nothing but trouble; wait till I get you home." As they got to the door she gritted her teeth in rage, and Valerie covered her head with her arms to protect herself from the blows, as she had done so many times before... Now she had lost all of her friends, including her new boyfriend, Rick. Valerie didn't go to school the next day. She was so disgraced, and the bruises from her mother's beating couldn't be covered up with makeup like before.

During the summer, if she could, she would get permission to go with a girlfriend to baby-sit. They'd stay on the phone for hours talking to boys. Valerie sometimes got to spend the night and they stayed out until real late. On this pretense, she ended up at the roller-skating rink. Here, she met a real handsome Mexican boy, Richard, who kept staring at her and smiling. Richard became her first relationship with a boy that had any real, meaningful, gratifying impact.....

As the summer passed, she saw Richard in any way she could. She was too easy and chased him like a starving puppy; this kept driving him away. Valerie's mother and Bob heard a phone conversation about her sneaking out at night to see Richard. She had been stuffing her pillows and blankets to make them look like her body was in bed. They threatened her to be institutionalized if she saw him again, but she continued to call no matter what the cost to her.....

Valerie learned real early in her life to watch a person's body language. Because she had next to no verbal communication from anyone growing up, she would watch the expressions on their faces; their eyes, every movement, as though it were a sixth sense that had evolved from a lack of some of the other senses being developed. When you've been told over and over as a child, "You're stupid, ugly, unwanted, *nothing but trouble*," you not only feel you're that way, but actually act out the part without realizing it. A seed of fear and rejection was at the core of her life... and growing fast! Lack of confidence, loneliness, and self-hatred were bearing fruit already, because she believed the lies.....

She was actually being committed to an institution for teenage girls who couldn't be controlled in a normal society setting. There was no phone, and the rooms were plain with no pictures on the walls or anything. She was soon to discover one of the girls, Carolyn, was the boss of the others, and when she said, "Jump," you'd better say, "How high?" More intimidation and fear. The year and one-half Valerie spent at Casady Hall was the pits! Every week it seemed to be one detention after another for various reasons that weren't her fault.

One day after school, Richard, in his buddy's 1949 Ford, passed by wanting to see Valerie again. The girls helped her scheme a plan to spend the night with him. There was an eight-foot drop from the end of the last sheet to the ground outside Valerie's window, but when she put her weight on the rope, the knot slipped and she dropped two stories to the cement floor below. She hobbled to a phone booth, they talked for hours, reminiscing the times they'd spent together. Finally, Richard said, "I love you." "He loves Me?" She'd never been told that before by anyone but her mom when she was little, and hadn't heard it since.

It was 3:00 a.m. when they hung up. The only thing she could do was wait outside the rest of the night, then have one of the girls distract Mrs. Wilson while she sneaked in after the front door opened for breakfast. Her leg was twice its size and hurting bad! As she painfully ran around the building and up the stairs, Miss Boyd stepped out in front of her, frowned, and said angrily, "Didn't you know you'd get caught?" She was locked in again and immediately began looking for ways to escape. Recovering from the unjust punishment, she did not know that Marilyn and Janet squealed on her and would again as she shared her plan to escape. When she and Brenda made the break to a restaurant as planned, two men in suits walked over and handcuffed them. "They're runaways from Casady Hall...."

Here Valerie was, only twelve years old, and she had been robbed of whatever dignity she had left, it seemed. Brenda and she were strip-searched, finger-printed, and both of them put together into a small jail cell. The room had cement floors and six small cots with just a filthy,

smelly, thin mattress on each one! The walls were cement, too, with initials scratched and carved into the concrete. Roaches scrambled across the dirty floor that night, and Brenda and Valerie huddled together on the same cot crying in the silence of the night. At this point, her mind flashed back to better times with Uncle Bob and Aunt Betty.

The next morning they were awakened real early by a policewoman. Why so early? Only to receive a package of twelve, cold, frosting-covered, hard cinnamon rolls? They devoured them! Valerie was insulted by the exposed toilet that came out of the wall right next to the entrance of the cell they were in. No privacy made her feel humiliated, as officers, male and female, walked through the halls. She must have been affected with that embarrassment more than she realized. After this experience she had recurring dreams of sitting on the toilet in a small room, suddenly lifting her head to find herself on the toilet naked, in the middle of a busy intersection, with no way to cover herself. She'd always had to have total privacy when using the restroom, never allowing anyone in the room, as she would hold it in if there was no lock on the door to protect her. (The damage from this is seen later on in Valerie's story.)

Three days and nights they stayed in jail; rolls for breakfast and heavily-peppered northern beans for lunch..... no shower, no comb or brush, toothbrush, or communication, until, finally, a policewoman came to get them. She figured it would be back to Casady. Was she wrong! They drove for miles in a marked police car, far away from town. Handcuffed again, not a word was spoken to them all the way to wherever they were going.

She remembered it was out in the country because they passed miles and miles of corn fields. It must have been the end of July because the corn was about waist-high. Watching out the window of the back seat in a little girl's fantasy world, she gazed upon how perfectly straight each row of corn was...so perfectly perfect. At least something was in order. The sky was a beautiful blue with those big, huge, white, fluffy clouds everywhere. They looked like ice cream or cotton candy way up there in the sky. She thought to herself, "If I had a real, long spoon, I could scoop myself a delicious taste." Those childish thoughts entertained her mind during the long drive. They shielded her unconsciously from the unknown; from whatever was ahead of her.

Finally they made a turn into a long driveway. A huge sign said, "Mitchelville Girls Institution." It was a fairly new brick building, not at all like Casady, with dozens of barred windows all along the front and sides. The entrance door was even barred, and a loud buzzer went off as they entered. A tall, Gestapo-looking woman met them at the second entrance door. Brenda and she were un-cuffed. While the policeman signed some papers or something, she and Valerie were whisked away down a long hall with doors all along each side. Each door had a tiny window at the top with thick glass and chicken wire in between. It was very quiet; the slightest

noise echoed all the way down the long hallway, as if they were in a tunnel.

They entered a large shower facility that had cement walls dividing each stall; no doors on them. The woman was silent up until now and didn't as much as crack a smile. The girls were so scared. "Take your clothes off," she barked. Brenda and Valerie hurriedly stripped-down as she turned on two showers; she poured this awful-smelling solution all over them, that stung their scalp and skin. Brenda asked, "What is that stuff?" "Disinfectant; something to kill the bugs." "What bugs?" "Shut-up and stand still!" was her reply. As they dried off the woman pushed their clothes aside and handed them both what they were to wear: a homely-looking house dress; a pair of plain, white socks; brown, thick-soled shoes; a comb; ten bobby pins; and a tooth brush.

This was like a nightmare! Brenda and she were separated from each other and this place must be hell! That was what was behind all those doors down the hallway: tiny rooms about 8' x 10' with one, small window higher than she was tall. There was a small, single, neatly-made bed; a little desk with a magazine on it; a chair, sink, and toilet in there. That's all!

This Amazon, starch-faced, cold, and insensitive guard lady told Valerie, as she walked her into that tiny room, "Listen up and listen up good; we have 24-hour detention, 48-hour detention, and so on. Every time you break a rule, the hours of your detention will increase. You're not allowed to sit or lay on the bed for any reason except when lights are turned out at night. You may sit at the desk; on the chair only! No sitting or lying on the floor for any reason... or you're in bad trouble."

"When its breakfast, lunch or dinner time, a buzzer will sound to let you know your door will be unlocked in five minutes. You will remain in your room until the guard opens your door. Then, you're to quietly line up behind the girl in front of you in the hall, who has the next room; there is to be no talking of any kind, for any reason or you'll get detention. You're not allowed to talk during your meals, or at any time, for any reason, except crafts day. You won't be going to crafts for awhile because... we're giving you right from the beginning... 24 hours detention. It will give you a chance to think about what you've been doing to get here." Then she turned around, walked out the door and locked it! Not with a padlock this time, but with a loud "clank," like it was electronic or something.

Valerie started to throw herself on the bed but remembered her warning. Instead, she burst into tears at the tiny desk in the corner of the room with her head resting on her arms, sobbing and crying for hours it seemed, until she fell asleep. After staying at Mitchelville Girls Institution for what seemed like months, she was released back to Casady Hall.... There was a

new house mother there now: Pat, who was much younger and more energetic than the older one.... Valerie had hardened even harder after that last experience of her young life. Her countenance had drastically changed now. Her eyes were cold and the softness was nearly gone.... at thirteen.

A camping trip was in the making about twenty or thirty miles outside of Des Moines. The girls all helped to pack up the car and they all set out for a weekend at the lake. When they arrived, Nancy and Valerie decided to sneak out the window while Pat slept.... there were guys all over the place.

"Valerie," Nancy whispered as they climbed over the window sill. "With your looks, we could pick up all kinds of boys." Huh? What did she mean by that? Before long they were in a pickup truck with some boys that were drinking. Skip, the one who paired off with Valerie, paraded her around with his arm flopped over her shoulder. He semi-staggered to other groups of teenagers sitting around drinking, in order to show them what he had found walking down the road by herself. It was much later when they were alone together, that the unbelievable happened. He ripped off her blouse and threw her backwards onto the sand. She heard ringing in her ears.....

Was Valerie's rebelliousness finally nipped in the bud by her experience that night of the camping trip? The sad fact was all over her face. She and Nancy had slipped out of the camp during the night and met these older boys who got them drunk and raped them. It had a sobering effect. Everyone thought Valerie's change in her character and attitude was due to being at Mitchelville, but that was only a small part of it now. That place was just a portion of what had led to her broken spirit.

She was sent back to live with Bob and her mom on probation for very good behavior. Nothing had changed there for the better, that was for sure, and her mom and Bob seemed to resent her all the more for coming home. The past year and one-half had seemed like forever; nothing but a very long, bad dream. Actually, looking back, nothing was really accomplished by sending her off, as far as Bob's and her mom's life was concerned. They were as unhappy as always, and when it came to throwing the expense of it all up to her constantly, they would put that extra twist on the cutting remarks: "*You're nothing but trouble.* Things were so much better for all of us when you were gone." Debbie was a doll. She'd grown! She must have been five or so by now and so excited about her big sister being back home. She lived in her own kind of hell there with them.....

Summer school was a good excuse for getting away from home, but even that had problems that other kids didn't seem to have to deal with. Valerie still couldn't grasp how to read

and she still sang her ABC's. She faked it in many ways and no one ever suspected; they just thought that she was lazy. She hated math, but was very interested in history, science, and health. If only she could read. Her illiteracy was an embarrassment. She hid her secrets well and learned to compensate through other means. Richard came to the school to see her one day, until her mom found out...

The beginning of the school year, the eighth grade, and Valerie's mom announced that she wouldn't be going to school that first day. She had made arrangements with her real dad, Bill, to move her to Texas to live with him, her grandmother, Mae, and Pa. "My real, real dad?" She didn't remember ever seeing him before, but a month hadn't gone by that she didn't wonder if he ever thought of her.

Valerie's arrival at the Lubbock, Texas, airport had her guessing. What did her dad look like? Maybe he was that tall, big man in the cowboy boots and hat. The man suddenly came at her with his arms open wide, picked her up off the ground, and swung her around calling her, "Baby." For a minute there, Valerie thought that he thought that she was someone else until he mentioned her name, only a few ever called her... "Valerie Jo." Then she knew it was real. She was actually swinging around in the arms of her very own daddy! After emotions calmed down a bit, he whisked her over to the anxiously awaiting group at the gate. "Valerie Jo, you don't remember these people, but this is your grandma, my momma, Mae, and my daddy, Pa; my sister, Virginia; and your two cousins, Beverly and Donny." Each one hugged her warmly. They were overcome with emotion at her arrival... That was a new feeling!

Valerie wasn't enrolled in school right away because she didn't have any half-way decent clothes to wear. Mae was pretty picky about how everyone looked and what impression they would make on other people, so she took Valerie to Dunlap's Department Store where she worked and bought her the most beautiful clothes she had ever seen! Valerie didn't know it but Mae had charged them and had to work nights sewing at home to pay off the bill. In fact, it would take her several years afterwards to pay them all off. Valerie wasn't used to this sacrificial treatment... at all!

After Mae was content with Valerie's new wardrobe it was time to enroll her in the ninth grade at O.L. Slaton Junior High.

It was a crisp September morning when Pa dropped Valerie off in front of her new school. She just didn't know how to act, feeling so awkward and different from the rest of the girls. She was dressed a lot different from them, too, with her nylon-stockings, black flats, and all. The boys made her feel welcome; the new girl at school was a RAGE! Little did she know the rumor of her presence was such a big deal. It wasn't like before when she had brought the attention all on herself. Now she fearfully avoided that same attention like a plague! Even with



that, the girls still hated her, and it seemed that the only friendly faces she saw were the silly grins of the guys, as they huddled, whispered and raised their eyebrows when she walked down the hall by herself.

She couldn't wait for school to end that day. Much to her relief there was Pa after school in his car, puffing on his cigarette, parked in the same spot where he had dropped her off that morning. Pa drove off s-o s-l-o-w, and it was so embarrassing... Everybody at school had to be watching..... It was about 4:30 when Pa knocked on Valerie's door to go with him to pick up Mae at work. Forty-five minutes later they were a whopping four miles away in the downtown section of Lubbock. Then there was the fifteen-minute wait for Mae to come out. How boring! Finally here she came. Her feet were swollen over her shoes and her legs twice their size from sitting at the sewing machine all day.

The third day at school was to change Valerie's life... Pa dropped her off at the front of the school, same spot as usual. It was a cool, fall day, but warm enough to go without a coat. She had on a pretty, tan, pleated skirt with a matching long sleeved sweater, nylons, and black flats. The school's front door was still locked, and the students were standing outside waiting to be let in. As Valerie approached the top of the steps, she noticed this handsome, solid-muscled, dark-haired, brown-eyed boy standing there by himself... staring at her. This was *so embarrassing!* His shirt tail was out and he looked "so cool." He said, "Hi, you must be the new girl. I've heard a lot about you the last couple of days... My name is Harlan, what's yours?" "I'm Valerie Skiles," she replied timidly, looking down at her shoes.....

Harlan talked awhile with the usual questions, "Where are you from? Where do you live?" Then he said these words she'd never heard before and would never forget as long as she lived! "You sure are beautiful!" Valerie was shocked and really embarrassed at his forwardness, but she loved it. She had just met him, and yet, he was so open and friendly like no one she had ever known before. Not cocky or arrogant like other boys. Did he really mean all these things he said to her? He'd taken such an interest, like she was his princess... or something? He made her feel special, and he seemed so honored to be seen with her. If she had known he was the most popular football star in the school she probably would have side-stepped out of his life like a discarded shoe.

Harlan would only see the best in Valerie as the days and weeks passed. He was beginning to bring her out of herself by encouraging her to express her emotions, and by telling her constantly she was smart, wonderful, and beautiful. He told her all of these charming words she'd never heard before, and treated her like the lady she never dreamed she could become, and besides that, he also called her... "Baby."

The only time she heard much from her dad lately was in the middle of the night, and the night before was particularly loud. She thought she had heard Mae crying as she whispered louder than usual, "Bill, you've got to stop this every night coming home like this; I can't take it anymore!"

The next day after school, instead of Pa there to pick Valerie up, it was her dad waiting there in Pa's parking spot. "Hi, Sugar," he said. "Get in; I want to take you to meet some of my friends." He was drunk. Real drunk! She got in his car and before she knew it, they were in the lower part of Lubbock where the drunks and prostitutes lived. It was dirty and smelly, and she didn't want to be there. They went to this run-down house where he introduced her to a small group of black men. He flung his arm around her in a drunken stupor.

Suddenly, the daddy she'd hoped he was took on a different appearance. "This is my baby girl, Valerie Jo," he slurred. "She's come here to live with her daddy... isn't she pretty?" He pinched at her face raising his eye-brows. She wanted to throw his heavy, fat arm off of her shoulder and demand to be taken home, away from this awful place, but she couldn't. He invited two of the men to come with them. One sat next to her in the front seat, next to the window; the other one in the back. They both wreaked, were unshaven and filthy-mouthed, and the one next to Valerie kept touching her leg as he looked her up and down resting his eyes on her breasts. Valerie's dad put his hand on her other leg, looked over at the man next to her and smiled.

"The Strip," as it was called, was one liquor store after another, located just outside of Lubbock. Valerie's dad pulled up at the first store, and a man came out to take his order: whiskey, wine and cigarettes. He peeled off twenty-dollar bills from the huge wad of cash that was in his pocket. She had never seen so much money in her whole life and couldn't help but wonder, if he was so rich, why didn't he help poor, old Mae out with the bills so she wouldn't have to work so hard?

He drove awhile, turned down a country road, and then stopped on the side of the road to drink his whiskey. They all told dirty jokes about women. It was nearly dark when he decided to leave, so drunk he could barely drive. As Valerie got out of the car his friend slapped her on the butt and said, "Sure wish I had a daughter like you. We could have some fun, you and me." Valerie Jo looked at her dad's face to see if there was any sign of his protecting or defending her. He just chuckled out of the side of his mouth. His expression looked as if she didn't dare say anything to anyone about what she'd experienced that day.

Her dad drank constantly and had for years. His drinking problem was so bad he had been committed to Big Spring Hospital several times by Pa and Mae in an attempt to get help for him. Mae wanted him committed again but Pa wouldn't let her. He felt somehow responsible for his

drinking, as if he must have failed him somewhere along the way during his growing up years. Her dad had been married nine times (at this point) to various women, since divorcing her mother when Valerie was three. He would "con" his way into the heart of any rich, lonely woman with his charm and debonair personality, drink up and gamble away all her money, then leave her penniless and destitute. Pa compassionately patted Valerie on the back as she cried in disappointment over this man she had just learned to call..."her daddy."

One weekend Valerie came home from the house of a girl friend she'd met at school. Mae was crying, and her dad was ranting and raving. He called Mae a bitch as he walked towards the door. Pa tried to stop him..."Bill, please stay here and sleep it off. You're too drunk to be driving," Pa pleaded. "Get away from me, old man," her dad yelled as he slapped Pa to the floor. Valerie couldn't take any more of this as she jumped on her dad's back. "I hate you, I hate you!" she screamed..."Leave Pa alone!" Bill stood up straight with her still on his back, roared with anger, then whipping her around, grabbed her hair, and like a rag doll threw her down. Mae was screaming as Valerie ran out the door for help.

Pa and Valerie were real close from the very start and continued to grow closer, especially after this last incident. She needed him and all the love he could give her. Maybe Pa could be that positive male influence. It was what she had so longed to experience in her life.

Valerie's grades were poor and getting worse. She loved art, though, and was the most artistically, creative student in the class. Being able to do something well was so important to her, but lack of concentration and an inability to remember made everything she did so difficult, especially when there was little or no confidence in herself.

Late in January after school let out for the day, Valerie walked outside... but Pa wasn't there. He was always there waiting in his usual spot! Where was he today? She couldn't remember Mae or Pa telling her any different so she started to walk home. Because her sense of direction was not too good she got lost and arrived home late.

Pa's car wasn't there so she went to her room to change her clothes. She was about half undressed, when suddenly, her dad burst in without knocking. He was dead drunk! "Where in the hell have you been?" he raged.

"I walked home from school because..." he interrupted her by slapping her across the face."It doesn't take that long to walk from school. You're lying!" he roared. "No, I'm not. I..." He interrupted again. "Your mom filled us in with some of the shit you pull; you're not going to mess us around like you did her," he yelled in her face with his whiskey breath.

Then he pushed her backwards onto the bed. She fought to defend herself and kicked him where it hurts. "You little bitch; you're just like your mother! I'll give you what you've had coming," he yelled as he undid his belt, to whip her... she thought. No! Instead he unzipped his

pants and pulled them down past his thighs. When she saw what he had in mind, she screamed! In his drunken stupor he laid down on top of her; she struggled frantically to get away, finally wiggling out from under his huge, 400-pound body. His dead weight felt as if he were crushing her. Fortunately, she was much more agile than he was and was able to wiggle out from beneath him. Scooting across the bed, she freed herself, but he managed to grab her arm and as he did she bit him hard! His flesh snapped as her teeth sunk in, like biting into a crisp apple. Writhing in pain, he grabbed her long hair with his other hand and jerked her loose from his arm.

She ran screaming down the hall and out the front door she went, just as Pa was coming home. Sobbing, with a mouthful of blood, she ran to Pa to tell him about what had happened and what her dad had tried to do to her, but sadly she soon realized that Pa was more afraid of her dad than she was. Valerie couldn't stop sobbing and crying as she heard her dad making one excuse after the other to Pa, blaming her for it all. Pa argued a little, then finally cowered down... and dad left, glaring at her as he passed by holding a towel over his bleeding arm.

This kind of lifestyle seemed to follow Valerie everywhere she went. It was one part of her life she could never let Harlan know about. He thought that she was so special. Ha, what a joke! She was hampered by this hideous stigma. How could she ever be anything else but what she was, and how could anyone truly love her this way? This mark of disgrace waged war against her soul, keeping her imprisoned to this dark side of life. To Mae, Pa, and Harlan, Valerie was this prim and proper little angel, too good to be true. To her past and those who knew of it she was nothing, nothing but trouble!

Valerie didn't go with Pa that evening to pick Mae up from work. Instead she stayed home, ran the bathtub full of water as hot as she could stand it, and scrubbed, scrubbed, scrubbed trying so hard to wash that filthy feeling away.

Valerie was somewhat envious of Ginger and Janice's boyfriends' cars and the fun times they all seemed to have on dates. Valerie had wished so many times that Harlan could drive and had a car; then they could go out too, especially since they were now going steady. How badly Valerie wanted to be like the other kids at school. Mae had allowed her more freedom than she had ever known before but she didn't comprehend how to properly respect the privilege. She didn't understand that kind of trust either. How could she? Nobody had ever trusted her like this in the past. Sometimes Ginger and her boy friend, Teddy, would pick her up on a Saturday night and they'd ride around cruising a popular teenage hang-out called the "Hi-D-Ho."

Barbara and Valerie were in Barbara's front yard when this cool, groovy, far-out, "candy apple blue," 1956 Ford, with chrome Lake pipes running alongside roared up into the driveway. "Wow, who is that?" Valerie asked enthusiastically. "Oh, it's just my brother, Jimmy, that's all. He goes to Monterey High School and thinks he's 'God's gift' to women." Jimmy ended up asking Valerie for a date several days later. The thrill of a real date and being seen by all her school

mates in such a “groovy car” tempted her to betray Harlan and their special friendship. What could it hurt to go riding around the “Hi-D-Ho” with this popular, high school boy, anyway? That’s all they were going to do; just like the other kids did on Saturday night. When it came to making rational decisions, Valerie thought like a small child, not weighing the consequences for her actions, but yielding only to what she wanted. Harlan was everything that she needed but this new-found freedom beckoned her. The fun she was missing out on whispered in her ear, “You need fast cars, fun times and everyone to think you’re ‘cool.’” Harlan would be crushed if he knew that she was going out with Jimmy Fields but... she was just going along for the ride.

Little did Valerie Jo know that the whole evening in Jimmy's plan to date this cute, little Yankee girl was pre-meditated towards *destruction!* He had made a bet with his high school buddies that he could get into her britches on the first date....

Valerie was waiting that evening all dressed up in a pretty, new dress Mae had bought her for the occasion. She wished Harlan was there to tell her how beautiful she looked. Jimmy wasn't her type at all. She just loved his car, that’s all. Unbeknownst to her this evening was to become another single event that would be transforming her entire life.

Jimmy quickly ate his hamburger. He was in such a hurry she barely got to finish eating her tater tots. Couldn't they drive around and around the Hi-D-Ho just a few more times or sit sipping on a “Cherry Lime Ricky” just a little while longer? Everyone was here. It was so early yet. He was taking her to a drive-in movie he said. “How fun!” she thought naively. “To a drive-in movie?” She’d never been to one with a boy before...

Before the evening was gone, Jimmy had accomplished what he had set out to do. It was easy with Valerie Jo because she was raised to pay back what was given her. There were strings attached to the car ride, the burger, and the show...

Valerie Jo had been in Lubbock for only six short months, when she turned fifteen in February. Harlan had bought her a dozen, long-stemmed, red roses for her birthday. The first flowers he had bought any girl; the first flowers she had ever received. Now she was pregnant with Jimmy's baby; she found out right after her fifteenth birthday while Harlan's roses were still fresh in the vase in her room. She cried all night long, staring at their beauty; he said in his card they reminded him of her.

Ginger asked if she could share Valerie’s situation with her mother. They had come up with a plan that might work. Harlan was invited over to Ginger's house for a candlelight dinner on the coffee table, in the living room, with soft music playing and all. The atmosphere was romantic. Ginger and her mom disappeared through the kitchen and out the back door, leaving Harlan and Valerie alone. The plan was to get Harlan to make love to her so that it would be *his*

*baby* instead of Jimmy's. There was a problem though. He wouldn't desecrate this precious young lady he had loved so much. She thought he was rejecting her when he resisted her advances, but in reality, he was giving her the greatest honor and compliment a man can give a woman. He would not defile his queen! It got late... Harlan had to leave.....

Valerie remembered how Pa had said she could tell him anything, and he cried when she shared the news of her pregnancy. She didn't get a chance to tell Harlan what she had done. How could he ever forgive her for doing such an awful thing? Jimmy said it was impossible; "We only did it once." He was trying to weasel out of it all, but he knew he was trapped. "Valerie, you've ruined my life!" he told her.

Jimmy and Valerie were married on March 19, 1962. The first three months of her pregnancy was hell! Jimmy had her living in a run-down, one-bedroom house while he worked at a gas station with his dad. He had to quit school and deeply resented even the sight of her. He was in love with a girl named Ann and had planned on marrying her some day. His marriage to Valerie didn't stop him from seeing Ann, however. Days would go by before he would come home. Valerie never learned to cook, and besides, there was no food in the house anyway except for some half-rotten potatoes in the bottom of the old refrigerator drawer, so she fried them in used lard to stay alive.....

Jimmy hadn't been around for a week or two while Valerie Jo vomited up bile constantly as she went through a morning sickness she was too young to understand. Her weight dropped down to ninety pounds and her body dehydrated. She had developed an acute kidney infection along with the malnutrition, and her kidneys hurt so bad, she couldn't lay on her back, sides or stomach. There was no telephone, no friends or family; she was burning up with fever from infection when they found her.....

When she woke up she was in the hospital delirious with fever and had unknowingly been there for days. The doctor didn't realize she was five months pregnant.

Jimmy seemed to be around a little more after recovery, and that was strange. She couldn't stand for him to touch her, though, especially when he insisted on getting his need met. There was never any real affection from the beginning. He told her she had her wifely duties to perform and "that" was one of them. She owed him. He said she had ruined his life. It was all her fault for getting pregnant to begin with. She hated the sight of him for ever so long, yet they both had to resolve somewhere along the line, now that they were soon to be a family, and they'd better adjust to it, Jimmy's mother told them.

When Valerie was six months pregnant they followed Jimmy's parents to Sherman, Texas; moved into places one right after another until finally settling into a big, white, two-story

house. It was there that her baby was born. During labor, she cried silently and painfully alone, not understanding what was happening and why everything hurt so much. Jimmy wasn't there; no one was there with her, except this one nurse who came in to bring comfort periodically. She was very nice, but... Valerie wanted her mommy.

After several days in the hospital with anemia, kidney infection, dehydration, and a reaction to the spinal block... Valerie eventually got to come home with her new baby boy. They named him Jimmy Jay. He was her delight, and the only twinkle in her eyes. She wanted to be a good mother so badly for him, but how to was the question. If the diaper's weren't white, white (like on TV), in Valerie's way of thinking, she was not a good mother. Jay's little rump would be raw from the over-bleaching. The powder formula wouldn't mix right, and he cried all the time, and she didn't know why. Jimmy wasn't home much. What was a new mother to do? Jimmy did finally, kindly buy her a scrub board for her to wash the diapers on, and she scrubbed them in the bleach water until her knuckles bled, soaked, then scrubbed again, only to have another three dozen to do the following day.....

When Jay was seven months old they moved back to Lubbock. Jimmy and Valerie fought a lot when they returned. His violent behavior progressively got worse and more frequent. He told her he was seeing his old girl friend, Ann, and he loved and wanted her; he didn't know how to get rid of Valerie without losing his son. Pa would sometimes bring her and Jay food; there was hardly any in the house... just enough to survive until Jimmy returned.

They moved again and again, this time to an apartment on 34th Street. It was the nicest one yet... Jay was nearly two when he got the flu real bad. He was put into the hospital as a very sick little boy and Valerie was told that it was all her fault. He nearly died... She could sense her in-laws' disapproval of her ability to mother her child correctly. The guilt of her failures weighed heavily.

In the seventh month of her second pregnancy, a serious kidney infection was back. One night while she was lying in bed recovering, she heard laughing coming from outside below. She looked out from her upstairs window, down onto the parking lot in front of the apartments. Jimmy was standing alongside of a car talking loud and laughing with some girl that was in the driver's seat. He was kissing and hugging her while Valerie looked on from her bedroom window. She had learned to be so afraid of him, and she shook inside as she heard the front door open to the apartment and Jimmy staggering up the stairs. He walked directly into her room, took off his pants and proceeded to rape her not seeming to care about her bulging stomach underneath him. She told him he had raped her. He told her it was his right. The next night and the night after were the same. This was supposed to be "love and marriage?" There was no place

to go and nowhere to hide. After the third day of this, Valerie swiped the car keys and his wallet while he was sleeping, and quickly ran down the stairs and out the front door to start the car, to warm it up; then hurrying back inside, up the stairs again, she woke Jay, dressed him and went downstairs to the kitchen to get him some baby food; then, quickly back up the stairs she went again to get her purse she forgot. "Where in the hell do you think you are going?" he demanded to know. "Nowhere," she said timidly, paralyzed with fear! "You're damn right you're not," he yelled, as he pushed her backwards down the stairs. She tumbled head-over-heels down the wooden stairway until she hit the bottom with a thump! Dazed she tried to stand to hurry across the living room to get Jay out of his playpen for protection; surely, he wouldn't hit her then. Boy, was she sadly mistaken!

There was a sudden sting, then an excruciating pain across the upper part of her back as she bent over to reach for her baby. The snap of a broom handle across her kidneys had put her to her knees. Valerie Jo screamed in pain, and this time... in anger, with a rage of her own slowly straightened up to a standing position; she'd had enough! He was never going to hit her again! Valerie picked up the broken broom handle and plunged the sharp, pointed edge of it through Jimmy's foot as he sat on the couch in his underwear, laughing at her staggering in pain. Jay was screaming, and while she could get away, she quickly grabbed him up into her arms, rushing as fast as she could out of the apartment door to the parking lot.

There was no turning back now. She quickly put Jay in the back seat, ran to the driver's side of the car, got in, put it in gear and pushed the accelerator to the floor. Jay was crying, and so was she, in pain and fear; her mind was a fog with the combination. She would have never imagined what had taken place in that short span of time between the apartment and the car. Just before tearing off down the street, Jimmy had managed to get to the car and was trying to open the back door when she took off out of the driveway. It was 11:00 a.m. in the morning down busy Thirty-Fourth Street when Valerie suddenly slammed on the brakes, and Jimmy fell off, sprawled out in the middle of the street with nothing on but his jockey shorts. She didn't stick around to see what happened next.

Valerie called her mom collect and begged her for fifty dollars for a train ticket to return to Des Moines. "You got yourself in this mess, now you wiggle yourself out of it!" That was all she had to say, so... horrified, back to the apartment she went; there was no place else to go. How could she ever survive on her own with two babies, no education, or job training? After Jimmy got to feeling better, he came back. His mother said Valerie had nearly castrated him... but he never hit her again.

During labor with her second baby, she had a real hard time. This time it was a little girl;



Tanya Yvette was her name. Right out of the hospital there were diapers, bottles, and sleepless nights. It was much harder this time with the new baby plus a two-year-old. Due to lifting heavy baskets of wet diapers too soon, to hang on the clothes line, Valerie began hemorrhaging and was hospitalized, nearly bleeding to death. Jimmy's mother kept the kids for the entire time she was recuperating from the surgery.

It had only been two-and-a-half years since Jimmy and Valerie were married; now they were getting a divorce with no support from him for the children. Mae and Pa graciously let her and her two small children come to their new home to live. They had purchased this house in 1961 as a surprise for Valerie when she was attending O.L. Slaton Jr. High. They had signed the contract on the home just before Valerie had discovered she was pregnant with Jay. Mae had all kinds of wonderful plans for her back then. She never knew about them, though, until it was too late; never realizing she had been so loved. Because of the guilt, it had been her last resort to live with them now. Valerie's babies meant everything to her. Jimmy's mother and dad had offered several times to take the children off her hands. How dare they think she could give up her babies! She would show everyone she could make it on her own. It was her and her kids from now on.

Valerie started working with Janice, her old school friend. They worked together at a small cafe, and she was doing great at this first job ever, until she accidentally poured hot coffee on a man's hand, and was fired on the spot! Forty cents an hour was hard to make a living on anyway... so, Pa took her to Globe Department Store. They had heard that they were hiring cashiers at the new department store. The good news came with a warning however about the manager: a very intimidating man named Mr. Cherry. She was told he was mean, cantankerous, and very hard to please. Valerie was petrified over authority figures, but she was also desperate for a way to support her children.

Valerie mustered all the courage she could gather to apply for the training job. She struggled with the words on the application and fought the embarrassment over her lack of education... This manager was everything the warning foretold, and then some. After looking over Valerie's application in his office that day, he suddenly frowned, and then growled (glaring over the top of his half-glasses); he barked sarcastically, "Girl, you don't even have an education. I can't hire you."

That's all it took; Valerie leaped to her feet, and with boldness she had never had before with any authority figure, she blurted out without thinking... "Oh, please Mr. Apple, I need this job! I have two small children to support and you must give me a chance to prove myself!" The man immediately sat up in his over-stuffed brown leather chair, reacting to her brave suggestion

with an outburst of his own. He beat his fist on the desk as he yelled. "The name's Cherry, Cherry!" he bellowed. In unredeemable embarrassment, because of her stupidity, Valerie covered her face in shame, and instantly replied without thinking, again, "Oh please forgive me, I'm so sorry...I just knew you were some kinda fruit." She instantly realized she had made a terrible mistake as she sat back down in her chair feeling defeated. "Oh great! This only makes matters worse," she thought. "How dumb can you get and still survive?" However, as hard as Mr. Cherry tried not to, the more he thought about it, he began to crack a smile and then suddenly he burst into laughter... Valerie had the job!

The pay was better than she imagined. For the first time she had a good job worth keeping with the possibility for advancement. This was such an uplifting experience for her. Had things begun to turn onto a better road? Pa helped by taking care of the kids until she got her first paycheck to hire a sitter.

A man named Don was Valerie's new supervisor. He was right under Mr. Cherry in authority, and for some reason, Don (he told her to call him) seemed to favor Valerie over the other employees. She thought at first it was because she was so good at her job; then a month or so after she was hired, he began to make uncomfortable advances towards her. Soon after he let her know, in no uncertain terms, that everything was at stake for her future at Globe Department Store, if she didn't comply with his wishes. Almost daily Don seduced Valerie Jo in the candy vault while reminding her constantly that he was her boss and could make or break her job.

She obeyed what he demanded for fear of being fired, but yet, in the middle of all this pressure, something wonderful had suddenly happened to her. She was stocking shampoo on the shelves one day when she heard a familiar voice behind her say, "Hello, Valerie Jo. My... you're just as beautiful as you always were." She would know that voice anywhere. It was Harlan. He had married that winter after they had broken up, and his wife, Rita, had just left him two weeks ago. It didn't look to him as if she wanted him back, so, he asked Valerie out on a date! A real date! How could she ever forget how good Harlan had been to her? Maybe it wasn't too late to be his queen after all. Would he love her, Jay, and Tanya, too? That was the big question.

It was the big day before the date and all she could think of, while she was at work. All of a sudden, she saw Harlan walking down the next aisle. He looked so cute and hadn't changed that much from their school days either. He'd just grown up some, that's all. Then her heart sank... He didn't see her standing there at first as he was talking with some girl he was with. He had thought it was Valerie's day off, and his wife, Rita wanted a new, red dress. Harlan and Valerie stared at one another for one longing moment, but the pain of the rejection overwhelmed her, and she ran towards the stock room in tears!

Valerie went out with Don instead, that Tuesday night. He took her to a motel, saying he

had talked to Mr. Cherry about her work performance and felt she was ready for a promotion to cashier training. She hated it; God, she hated it! When she got home she pulled her stiff panties off and threw them away in the bottom of the garbage can, and got into a hot tub of water, trying so hard to scrub, scrub, scrub the filth away.....

Just as they were leaving the motel one night, about to drive off, a car charged in behind Don's car and screeched to a halt, blocking his backing out. "Oh, damn!" he yelled. "It's my wife!" She got out of her car screaming at him at the top of her lungs as she slapped and hit his face uncontrollably. She flung herself on the ground, grief-stricken at what she had found. The next day at work Don had this strange look on his face as he told Valerie he wouldn't be seeing her any more. His wife had been hospitalized with a complete mental breakdown. The employees at Globe Department Store hated Valerie, because they believed it was all her fault for what had happened to Don's wife. Strangely, however, a few weeks later Mr. Cherry called Valerie into his office with a big surprise; she had been promoted to cashier's training.

Don wasn't around much longer after that. Valerie never did hear what had happened to him. She loved her job at Globe now that he was gone and soon made the grade to become one of the best cashiers they had. Pa had believed in her ability and taught her how to make change. She loved the Christmas rush because of running the cash registers; seldom did she work in the stock room any more.

It was one of Valerie's few days off work. Mae was at work, as usual; the kids were napping. She and Pa were in the living room talking when suddenly he got this strange look on his face. "What's wrong, Pa?" she asked with concern. Then not even saying a word, he slowly got up from the couch and walked around to the back of her chair... and he put his hand on her breast. Valerie was devastated!

The loss of her grandfather was nearly too much to bear. Her trust in him was shattered. It would never be the same again. The dear man she had believed so much in, with all of her heart, had become just like all the rest. She had loved him so much and she thought... he walked on water. He was requiring payment for the love he had given to her, she supposed. Valerie was confused and heartsick that she would never know her grandpa's natural love and affection again. Attempting to hide his guilt and shame that day, he put a paper bag over her head and seduced his granddaughter in her grandmother's (his wife's) bedroom that day.

Valerie was called into the office again at work. But this time her cash register was coming up short at the end of the day. She was being accused of stealing. She had taken some baby clothes from the stock room before Christmas, but she hadn't taken any money! A lie detector test was given and the needle jumped like a jack rabbit back and forth across the paper. She was guilty, as far as they were concerned... and fired!

Working at several cafes her meals were free; the sitter fed her kids, so she thought. Jay

and Tanya were sick constantly and Jay cried out during the night, "mommy, eat, mommy, eat," but there was no food. Rats and roaches were all over the small apartment and the winter winds howled in the cold of the night. Her babies were hungry; there was no way to wash diapers, except by hand, but there was no soap, no car, no child support from Jimmy and no one to care... and, Jay had just stopped talking one day. Something more was happening to her children during the day at the baby sitter's while she was working, but she had to work and couldn't investigate what the problem was. How could she know what had been going on? She had been told the sitter's husband had been accused of killing his small son, but they seemed like such nice people; could that really be true? Who would do such a thing to a two-year-old little boy?

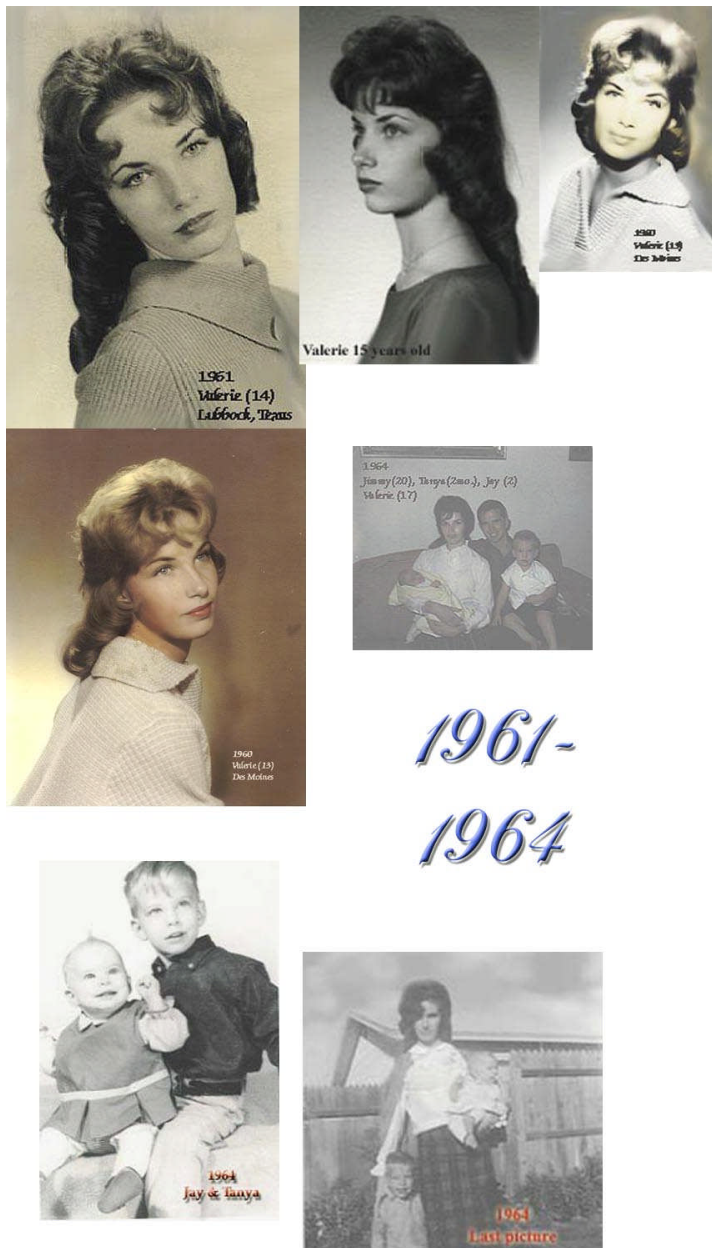
After what happened to Jay and Tanya, Valerie became a basket case of guilt. She'd met a

girl named Judy at work that had been married, and when she divorced had let her husband have custody of her two small children. When Valerie would fall apart crying because she missed Jay and Tanya, Judy would say out of her own kind of pain, "Let them go, get them out of your heart, Valerie; they're better off with their grandmother, Model. You'll never be able to provide the kind of home they deserve anyway."

After that day, signing her children away, she pulled inside herself even more and became like a walking dead woman... a "walking zombie." Valerie was seventeen years old.

This was another turning point towards a negative direction for Valerie Jo as she numbed her feelings even more so and hardened her heart. ... her emotional survival depended on it!

Judy and Valerie decided to



1961-  
1964

combine their incomes and get an apartment; however first and last month's rent was high. Judy had a few cowboy friends who offered to pay half the rent on a small house if they could move in with them and pair-off. The girls consented. "What the hell," Valerie thought. She'd given up on being good after losing the kids. But God, how her arms ached for her children! This new experience began a way of life that Valerie had fought so hard against, for as long as she could remember. Before, there had been strings attached; now, she just gave it away. She didn't even remember his name; only that his behavior made her sick to her stomach.

Eventually, Judy and Valerie decided to move out of Lubbock. It was 1965 when they packed Judy's 1939 Mercury and headed for Albuquerque, New Mexico. The lights of Lubbock, Texas, twinkled in the dark as Valerie stared out the rear window thinking about her babies she was leaving behind. It was past their bedtime. She could still see their little faces in her mind so clearly. Would she ever see them again? And as her mind flashed back in time at the injustices that had been done to her, walls went up around her hardening heart; and the combination of grief and hatred welled up for those who had caused it all.

The next day they arrived. Albuquerque was a lot different than what they had expected. It had been freezing with no heater in the car but they'd made it, and Valerie soon found a job offered in the local newspaper, working in a professional photography studio helping develop pictures. It sounded like such an exciting job and one she could put her natural interests into except... within a week or two the owner wanted her to pose for nude photos. So much for that job, and hello to cafe work again, and forty cents an hour; until Valerie dumped a tray full of ice-water down a lady's formal, backless dress, while working a banquet one evening. There went another job!!! What else could she do at eighteen? The girls bought another newspaper and turned to the want ads.....

Judy and Valerie interviewed for an incredible traveling job, selling magazines with a crew of fifteen other girls... and they got it! *What an opportunity!* These young women were all very attractive and occupied several motel rooms with three or four in each room. Each subscription to a large variety of magazines would win them points, supposedly. Judy and she were given a sales pitch they were to use, and it was to be memorized by the next day. That freaked Valerie out, since she couldn't read and remembering things had become so hard to do.

As they pulled out of Albuquerque heading for Colorado, Valerie was awestruck at this caravan of brand new cars driving along with all of these good-looking women inside, across the countryside. It was impressive to say the least, and just think, she was a part of it all: including free meals, free board, and a lotta' other freebies. Valerie never asked Bill about her salary. She did ask him, however, if half of whatever she made could be sent to her kids, and then she provided him with Model's address. He said he'd make sure the bookkeeper took care of the details. Her only motivation now was to make money to get her babies back again some day, and

to find a loving daddy who would care for and support them. All she ever wanted out of life was a family. Was that too much to ask?

Valerie soon *mastered* her magazine sales pitch... her own way. If someone told her they wouldn't have any money until later, she'd tell them the company would hold their check for two or three weeks, but before the magazine crew left town that day the check was cashed at the local bank. If they just didn't want to buy any magazines, she guaranteed them she would tear up their post-dated check (after the points were posted at the end of the day, of course). Valerie couldn't believe how many men fell for that one. She batted her eyelashes and pretended to be s-o-o disappointed that they would even consider turning her down; especially when all she needed was fifty or a hundred more points to win the contest. It was all a scam and what a con artist she was becoming. Valerie Jo was learning to use her looks and body to her advantage for a change. Their refusing to buy any magazines would mean they were responsible then for her failure to win. Now the guilt and the shame was on them!

Each one of the girls had their own technique for swindling the poor, unsuspecting farmers they stalked every day. They only canvassed rural areas in small communities where farmers were at stockyard auctions selling their livestock. "Their hard-earned money is thick in their wallets," Bill told the girls before they left the motel that morning. As the farmers left the auction building they became an easy target for a good sell.

Valerie could read body language so well that she could easily discern who had the softest heart or... the most perverted mind. These types of men were the easiest ones to sway with the pretense of, "Pretty girl working her way through nursing school." Their money wasn't settled in their wallet, when suddenly, these attractive, young women seemed to come out of nowhere "smack dab" in the middle of an old country town. At the end of the day the girls would all cash their checks and scurry out of town as fast as they could travel (before they got caught)... counting their booty and laughing at the fools.

On the weekends all of the girls would go out to the bars. Fifteen attractive young women hitting one bar was quite a sight. It was during this time that Valerie began to drink and she didn't piddle around with that either. She would soon become a pro booze-drinker and would get back to the motel soused, only in time to leave with the crew at daybreak. Like a frog being cooked, she became more and more desensitized towards the things she had hated for herself most in life: using people and being used. Now drinking, smoking, and sex were becoming her *new* way of living.

Valerie soon cut off her long, beautiful, blonde hair... real short and dyed it coal black to match her new identity. At the bars she had learned all the latest dances. The guys practically stood in line for an opportunity to have a dance or two with her. That was "cool" to a point: but

the real truth was, it made her feel like a piece of meat displayed in a store window most of the time, with a pack of dogs drooling from the outside of the window looking in. When you've heard that you're stupid, ugly, and worthless all your life, suddenly flattery is so wonderful, no matter what form it comes in or what it costs you! "You're a great dancer; so beautiful! Why don't you go to Vegas or Hollywood? Baby, you can put the booze away and you're great in bed!" All of these remarks were insulting, speaking to her of only what she could do, and not at all of who she really was, and yet these crude remarks and actions were Valerie's only source of attention, acceptance, and affection. She wanted so badly to believe these men really loved her, but was so confused about what love really meant. All of the meaningless relationships in the world could not fulfill the emptiness in her heart.....

Six months passed traveling with the magazine crew. Though she had only been exposed to small country towns, rural areas, and stockyards, they had journeyed to nearly every western state in the U.S.: New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, and then back to Texas again. Just knowing she was this close to her children consumed her every thought.....

As Smutts drove Valerie all the way to Lubbock from Amarillo that day, Valerie speculated about how her kids must have grown, and if they remembered their momma. Model came to the door, "Oh... Hi, Val, what are you doing here?" She didn't seem too pleased that Valerie was back in town. "I'd like to see Jay and Tanya." "Look... I've been dreading this moment; they aren't yours any more and you'll only upset them. Jay and Tanya are happy, now... now go away," and she shut the door in her face. Paralyzed with grief, Valerie just stood there; just on the other side of the door she could hear her children laughing and playing... just on the other side of the door.

Even more determined than ever to get them back she put all of her thoughts toward that effort in high gear. She was going to find a husband. A lot of money was made for that magazine company from all of Valerie's sales. They topped just about anything anyone else had done. She never saw much of the money she made, however, because of the purchase of a few personal items: some jeans and sweat shirts and stuff like that; she figured she must have an awful lot of money being saved from her daily earnings. Bill had told her, "I'm saving your hard-earned money for you, kinda' like a savings account for when you might need it most." Bill was sleeping with Smutts, Judy, and all the other girls, too, except he never invited Valerie to his motel room in the evening. One day she asked Smutts why. "You're jail bait, Val; be thankful for that." "Now what in the heck did she mean by that?" Valerie wondered; feeling terribly rejected. It turned out that the men buying magazines weren't the only victims! The entire gig was a scam.

They hadn't been in Boise, Idaho, two days when the girls were ready to go "out on the town!" It was at the "Tikki Room" that night that Valerie met this really cute blonde guy. He

asked her to dance several times, and she couldn't help but notice that he seemed really different, a little drunk, but different. He was sitting alone at his table, and yet when he asked her to dance, he took control of the moment even if it meant interrupting someone else that was dancing with her. After an hour or so she had turned down all the rest, moved to his table, and just danced with him.

Before the night was over, seven months of hurt, grieving, guilt, and frustration came gushing out. She had held inside herself everything, even what had happened with her children. It just came pouring out like water from a broken faucet. His arms felt so comforting around her as she buried her face in his chest to cry.

Owen told her all about being in the Navy while he had been married to a woman named Carol, who lived in Burbank, California. She'd gotten pregnant when he was on leave, and eight months later, while on a ship somewhere in the Pacific, he was notified by her that she had gone into labor and his little son had been stillborn. For the first time ever, Valerie actually saw a grown man weep. He told her that three months later he received a "Dear John" letter from Carol. She'd met another man and wanted a divorce. Valerie could tell that he still loved her as he struggled to choke back the tears. Now Owen wanted to start all over with someone he could share his life with, someone that had the same values as he did. He didn't want to merely exist anymore, and the night-life was getting old and leading to nowhere.

From only one over-nighter... Valerie Jo and Owen Starr felt as if they'd always known one another; now he was asking her to marry him. It seemed like the natural thing to do; after all, he told her he wanted to be a good husband, give her a home and that he would be honored to be a loving daddy to Jay and Tanya. They shouldn't go any farther in life lonely, without someone to care for...

They made a vow to write every day while she thought about his proposal. Valerie may have never heard from Model, but every week there were several letters from Owen, all saying the same kinds of things, "I love you, marry me, I want to spend the rest of my life with you..." It all sounded so wonderful; telling Bill was the problem. Valerie was the best sales girl he had, and... sure enough, she was right, he was livid!

First Bill refused to let her leave; then he all but kicked her out telling her that she had thirty minutes to get packed and "Get the hell out!" "What about my money?" she asked. "What money?" he blasted. "I've made a lot of money, Bill, and you said you were saving it for me, you know... when I would need it most? Isn't that what you said?" "What do you think I've been paying for everything with? You've been staying in nice motels for eight months; your new luggage wasn't free. I gave you money for clothes, food, and gas to get to work, and what about your drinkin' and bar hoppin' ... it's cost you, you tramp!" he yelled in her face. "Have you been sending half of what I made to my kids like you promised?" she asked. "Hell no, I just told you,



you spent it." Then he peeled off a \$100 bill from the huge wad of cash in his bulging wallet, threw it in her face, "Now get out, Bitch!" he bellowed.

Valerie arrived at Boise International Airport straining in her mind through the crowd to remember what Owen's face looked like. "What if they didn't recognize each other?" she thought. After waiting a half hour or so, she began to really get worried. There was no sign of him anywhere, and here she was, broke, sitting in a strange airport in a strange town. There were people everywhere hugging loved ones hello and goodbye, and just about the time she was beginning to cry... she saw him! He was running upstream through the crowd of people who had just disembarked from a plane. She could see his head bobbing up and down as he jumped in the air to see over the crowd. He was looking for her! Out of breath, he grabbed and hugged her tight, kissed her on the lips.

Since she didn't own a dress, she re-made one of his step-mother, Mary's old powder-blue dresses. It had a silky feel to it, and the embossed roses on the fabric made it sorta' kinda' look like what a wedding dress should look like. She'd married Jimmy in her jeans at some preacher's house in a big hurry, so this time around would be more special.

Owen and Valerie were married on October 31, 1965. Halloween night, if that makes any difference. She was no longer Valerie Fields now, but Mrs. Owen Michael Starr. Owen rented a little duplex for them, and the first few months were real "Lovie-Dovie." He worked at a tire shop recapping tires at night; she got a job working at a department store, in the camera department, but even though they both worked they always seemed to be broke. They didn't drink or go out, so rent, cigarettes and gas were it, but Owen had his dreams and seemed under a lot of pressure with their lack of finances. Bless his heart, he lived for that some day when he would show his dad that he could be somebody successful, and money had a lot to do with that desire... money and racing motorcycles that is.

One morning Valerie tried to get a conversation going about what plans they could make now for getting Jay and Tanya back, like he promised. Owen exploded! "How in the hell do you expect me to take care of two kids! We can't even pay bills! You're not at all what I expected; you're sure not like Carol. I knew every freckle on her back, every dimple in her smile. Don't talk to me about kids... I'm having a hard enough time getting used to you!" Valerie stood there speechless, and then... "You son of a bitch!" she screamed! That was a mistake she'd never forget. Owen leaped to his feet in the most vicious, violent outburst she had experienced yet, and as if she were a punching bag, he beat her until she hit the floor. "Don't you ever, ever call me a son of a bitch again," he yelled as he hit and punched and slapped her senseless... until she was unconscious. When she woke up he was crying, mopping her bleeding, swollen face with a wet

cloth. Then he wanted to... "Make love?" She was terrified of him after that day and horrified of mentioning the kids to him ever again.

Owen tried a new business with a friend making and selling bed headboards and was out of town a lot. They had no phone and she hated the loneliness. Everything she had tried in life left something missing. Valerie knew Owen was going out on her, but she was afraid to ask; even if she could prove it what good would it do? Valerie tried to make him love her, but the more effort she put into it, the further he moved away from her....

As she took the entire bottle of thirty-six sleeping pills, she envisioned him finding her on the bed when he came home, *looking beautiful*, like the Sleeping Beauty of her childhood fairy-tale dreams.... It was subtle, but the fantasy soon turned into a hideous nightmare. As she doubled up with stomach pain her heart beat fast and hard. Soon she couldn't even get up from the bed to relieve herself in the bathroom; urinating and defecating all over where she was laying... and on her pretty peignoir. She wasn't able to crawl to the door for help; God, she didn't want to die this way lying there with her head in her own vomit, sweat, tears, nose secretion, and slobber. Her hair was soaked in it, and she was so cold, so very cold. She knew that she was dying... Suddenly Owen was home. He was shocked at what he saw. "What in the hell have you done?" he yelled, picking up the empty bottle of "*Nite All.*"

Owen wrapped a blanket around her chilled, limp body and carried her to the car and to the emergency room at the nearest hospital. The nurses and doctors quickly pushed this huge tube down her throat, yelling... "swallow, swallow," as she gagged violently. "What would make you do such a thing?" the doctor scolded... they kept her only a few hours after learning that they had no insurance. Owen lectured her all the way home in the car about the cost of the emergency room, the trouble she'd caused him, and how stupid she was to try such a dumb, immature thing.

After Valerie's suicide attempt Owen stopped traveling as much and finally just quit the idea of making a living selling bed headboards altogether. The beatings still came here and there whenever she tried to force her opinion, but not as much it seemed, as long as Valerie kept her mouth shut and didn't say anything stupid that would irritate him. Owen and she were actually growing somewhat closer, if that makes any sense. There were good times and there were bad times, but she loved him and was willing to do anything that would please in hopes that he would one day love her, too, more than he ever loved anyone. Perhaps if they had a child together, she thought, that would bond them for life. She would never lose him then.

When Owen began to hang around with old friends again he took Valerie along with them to the go-go bars to watch the dancers. She thought to herself one night, "I can dance ten times better than these girls can," so... one evening, she got up the nerve to ask him if he cared if she

worked as a go-go dancer at the Cedar Bar. It had been months since he'd had a job; they needed the money. "Sure," he replied right away, without even thinking about it first. "I think that would be great; we need the money." This was a test of sorts, and Valerie was hurt that he would allow her to wiggle herself around in front of other men.....

One cold, winter day Owen took off to a place deep in the mountains by the Snake River in Idaho, hundreds of miles away, called Macky Bar; a hunting and fishing resort for the rich. He just took off one day and didn't ask Valerie if she wanted to go or anything. All he left her with was two months rent and utilities past due, twenty dollars, and the old, black Plymouth. She felt there was nowhere to go to survive financially, but where Owen had suggested, to the bars to look for work. The first place she went, they hired her on the spot. The owner of the popular go-go club bought her a flimsy, two-piece swim suit and some two-and-a-half inch, white fringe. One of the cocktail waitresses sewed it on for her. Valerie borrowed some fishnet hose to wear and stuffed toilet paper under her tiny breasts for cleavage... That night the black-light shone on the white fringe, giving it a sexy iridescent play on colors; turning the color white into almost an angelic glow. The girls, slim, shapely bodies gave those staring long enough, a hypnotic exhibition. The girls skin appeared so much darker under the black-light as the translucency gave it a sexier appeal.

This "hole in the wall" became a bustling, little enterprise as, nightly, men filled the seating capacity to the max while Patsy, another dancer, and Valerie did their best... "Wahtoosie", "Jerk", "Pony"... and "A Little Bit of Soul."

The raise in pay they had been promised weeks before never materialized. Patsy felt that, as a dance team, they could really make some big bucks traveling with an agent of their own. So she made all the arrangements, left her two children temporarily with her mother, and they took off on their first booking, as "Professional Dancers." It wasn't at all what Valerie had imagined. There was very little real glamour and a whole lot of hard work, for not much pay. They worked several towns in Idaho and Oregon; some nice and semi-respectful, some dirty and dumpy. They were actually a hit everywhere they went. The girls worked up a routine to many of the more popular songs and had a variety of costumes they wore, but Patsy missed her kids, and Valerie missed Owen and was sick and tired of this night life, drunk men pawing her, and smelly bars.

In town at Al Teese's house one day, Valerie asked him point blank to please take her to Owen. She couldn't live another day without him. She assured the man that she would scrub floors, clean toilets or do anything he wanted, if he'd just let her be with her husband.....

It was a magnificent three-hour flight. "Macky Bar" was a breathtaking place; she'd never seen anything like it! Al introduced her to the cook, "Mattie," a sweet, pleasantly plump elderly

lady with silver-grey hair. She welcomed her, then put her right to work peeling potatoes. In just a few hours the hunters and fishermen would be coming into the lodge's huge dining room to eat. Mattie showed Valerie how to set the massively long table, just so. It was 6:30 p.m., sharp; the men came through the door, talking, laughing and discussing the big catch of the day. Then suddenly she saw him... Owen was walking up the steps. She hid in the kitchen for the surprise. Owen and two other hands started toward the kitchen door and... just as the door swung open, Valerie stepped out from the pantry. Owen's mouth dropped open in utter astonishment and without a word spoken he grabbed her, pulled her close to him deep into his arms. She thought he was going to be mad and felt so relieved that he must want her after all.

Out of the front door of the lodge they ran... forget about supper! Owen looked frantically for a place to make love, finally laying her down on a cot in one of the men's bunkhouses. For disrupting the evening meal and in retaliation for her distracting and side-tracking Owen, Al put her to hard labor the next day. She was assigned to clean all of the cabins, scrub floors, clean toilets, haul wood, clean fish; and Mr. Teese had sent Owen back into the mountains on a hunting expedition, punishing her for turning down his proposal.

Valerie was nineteen years old now, and she and Owen had been married one year. She was a month pregnant with Owen's baby before figuring out why she was so tired and vomiting all day, every day, for the past few weeks. Owen was elated at the news. She was going to have his baby. Owen informed Al that they were leaving Macky Bar, and he proudly announced to Valerie that they were moving to..... Lubbock, Texas.

They stayed with Mae and Pa (that was hard for her), until Owen found a job working at Johnson's Manufacturing Company. Within a few weeks they were able to rent a small, furnished house, cheap.

Valerie was finally able to visit her children, "for just a short visit," Model told her. Jay was five now, Tanya was almost three; my, how they'd grown... and they didn't remember her at all. Valerie was heartsick. They acted shy and silly around her, as if she were just a visiting stranger. Model introduced her as Val, not their mother. They called Model... "Momma."

Owen loved his job; he worked all the time it seemed. Valerie enjoyed keeping a spotless house, but she often slept out of boredom during the day. The bowling league in the middle of the week was the highlight of the week and gave her something to look forward to.

A couple on Owen's team, Gwen and Ed, began to get real chummy with them, but Gwen and Owen were friendlier than Valerie liked. Ed worked mostly nights, so they were either over at Gwen's house or she was at theirs or... she wanted to go to the bars. She and Owen would slow dance together while pregnant Valerie watched. Owen denied there was any problem. Finally, it

all came out one night as they sat in Gwen's new, white Camaro. "Gwen wants to take care of me sexually until you deliver," Owen said matter-of-factly. How could he do this to her? "Now don't get your self in a tizzy, Valerie," Gwen said laughing at her. "We don't want you to have that baby early." Valerie tried so hard to hold it in, but out of pure frustration she began to cry. They couldn't see her tears from where she was sitting... in the back seat. She was eight months pregnant; Owen didn't come home that night. Valerie wasn't totally alone though, she still had her baby, but her heart was aching from one disappointment after another... Owen sweet-talked his way back into her graces the next day and promised that he wouldn't see Gwen anymore. Valerie forgave him, shoved the hurt inside, and life went on.

Valerie's dad had been in a lot of trouble with the police because of his drinking and passing bad checks. He had hit Owen and her up for a place to stay, since they had a two-bedroom house and the new baby's bedroom would be unoccupied for at least another few months or so. After some sad "song and dance" from her dad, Owen offered to let him stay with them for awhile, just until he got on his feet. That was a joke! Once you let him in you almost had to call the cops to get him out; if Owen only knew the truth about her dad (or would it even matter if he did know the whole story?)

After a bowling night one evening, as they walked through the front door, three men in suits stood to their feet. Dad was slouched in a chair with his shirt off, drunk as usual. "Hi, Sugar, these kind gentlemen have saved your daddy's life," he slurred. The tallest man said, in an apologetic voice, "Forgive us for being in your home like this. My name is Reverend Pennington of the Flint Baptist Church." He introduced the other men as his deacons. "Your dad was going into D.T.'s. He got scared and called our church at random from the yellow pages. We rushed right over... I'm sure he's going to be all right." Her dad did this sort of thing all the time to get attention. Owen was furious! "Get out of my house," he yelled at all three of them. The Reverend apologized again and asked if they could please stay and visit, just for a little while longer; dad staggered off to bed.

Owen and Valerie sat together clinging to every word as the Reverend explained how he believed God had divinely ordained this evening; perhaps not for her dad, after all, but for Owen and Valerie's sake. Owen's face looked solemn; he became speechless as this incredible story about Jesus Christ was told to them. He forgave them of all their sins? They were accepted by God just as they were? Tears dripped onto the carpet, especially from Valerie's eyes. Soon they were on their knees telling God they were sorry in a prayer the preacher man was having them repeat.

That next Sunday Owen and Valerie attended the Flint Baptist Church. Reverend Pennington preached the sermon. They walked the aisle to make a public profession of their new commitment to God, were baptized, and joined the church. The congregation gave Owen a black Bible, and Valerie a white one with their names engraved on the front in gold and silver. The people were so warm and friendly there. It was a new world they had stepped into, and everything was washed clean, like after a spring rain shower... Every time the doors opened, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday night Bible study, pot lucks, picnics, bake sales, and church clean-up days, there they were. The church gave them a lovely baby shower and Valerie looked so pretty in her white maternity dress one of the church ladies had made for this special occasion.

Owen and the Reverend had become like father and son from the start. He was spending time with him and teaching Owen all kinds of things about the Bible. Owen wanted to learn everything there was to know as he read the Bible every night when he got off work. Valerie couldn't wait for him to teach her what he was so excited about, and then one Sunday, the good Reverend didn't preach; Owen approached one of the deacons to ask his whereabouts. "He's no longer with us," the deacon critically replied. The man said something to Owen about "black-balled" and that the Reverend's family had moved to Tucson, Arizona. That was it..."Come on Valerie," Owen told her and they walked out of Flint Baptist Church and...out on Christianity. Valerie was so in hopes they could stay. These people were so nice, and besides, there was so much she wanted to know about God.....

On June 30, 1967, Valerie went into labor with her third child. "It doesn't look good," the doctor told them. "The baby is in great distress and we don't know why. We'll have to induce your wife's labor or take it by Cesarean if that doesn't work,"... but an hour and twenty minutes later this beautiful, little baby girl was born to Owen and Valerie Starr. The umbilical cord had been wrapped around her neck; she was very tiny, but little Michelle Marie Starr was alive. Valerie had her baby in her arms once again and it felt so good. She had heard something said about twins. The doctor mentioned it to someone, but she never got a chance to ask any other questions.....

When Michelle was two months old Owen began a new job at the Coca Cola Company in Lubbock. He made some new friends and was back again to drinking beer, cussing, and going out with the guys to the go-go bars. Then when Michelle was five months old, Owen informed Valerie that he was moving to Tucson, Arizona. He'd send for her and Michelle later. At first she couldn't understand why this sudden unexpected decision. Owen had been somewhat withdrawn lately and had been shutting her out. He used the excuse that he could get a better job and a cheaper apartment, but Valerie felt, for some reason, as if she would never hear from him again. The truth of the matter was, he couldn't get over the loss of the Reverend's and his relationship.

Why had this preacher left so suddenly without as much as saying goodbye? Owen had told Valerie several times that he was like the father he'd never really had. He lived for spending time with "that man of God." Promising to send her some money for the past-due bills, he just kissed them good-bye, and took off.

One week, two weeks went by, and she didn't hear a word from him. The phone was disconnected; the electricity was next. The rent was two months past due, and the landlord had already paid her a visit. Valerie got a sitter for Michelle with the promise to pay her later and walked in the snow to the Ko Ko Inn.

One after the other, the girls auditioned by dancing to the jukebox in their little, two-piece outfits, in the middle of the small dance-room floor, with two men looking on. This one man was obviously the owner, and this older guy must have been a customer, friend, or something. Valerie hated the looks they were both giving the girls. The old man's eyes scanned up and down the scantily-dressed body of each girl. "Soul Man" played as Valerie began her best dance routine. Suddenly, the old man motioned for her to come over to him and the owner. "Hold out your hand"... and he placed a hundred dollar bill in it. "What's this for?" she asked suspiciously. "You could say it's a Christmas present, or else...." In one moment in time it appeared that all of her immediate needs could be met: Christmas presents for Michelle, a month's rent, the light bill paid, some baby food?.... The job started that evening.

Not long after Valerie started working at the Ko Ko she met a lonely Reese Air Force boy. His four years were nearly over and he was soon to be discharged, even though the Vietnam War was still on. She was desperate at this point, missing Owen and wondering why he hadn't contacted her since he left. "How big was Tucson? How far away was it? Why didn't he call?" she wondered. So many bills were seriously past due. This young man was so infatuated over her that he offered to re-enlist in the Air Force for another four years. He told her he could receive a \$1,400 re-enlistment bonus and wanted to help her with her bills, knowing nothing about Owen. With confused emotions, mixed with guilt and shame, she accepted his offer; and for the lousy 1,400 bucks this lonely, love-sick young man re-enlisted for another four years. It was amazing what she had reduced herself to in order to survive and... it is disheartening to think that this young man most likely went back to Vietnam.

Valerie had become very popular at the Ko Ko Club with the guys. (She was twenty-one now, and it was all legal.) She never went any further than just stringing them along; always thinking ahead about what she could glean out of the relationships for her and Michelle's survival. The fear of losing Michelle, being abandoned by Owen, and not being able to make it on her own was the driving force behind this manipulative behavior. The phone was hooked back up; bills were paid; there was food again. All she had to do was play the game. Now she was the one making and breaking the promises, but hating every moment of it! Like a spider with her fly

victim, she would lure these men to her web and after she got what she wanted, she'd keep the game going until they got wise and got out, feeling used and stupid like she had felt so many times before. Now it was their turn to feel dirty!

"Hello... Valerie?" he said. Neither one could believe their eyes; it was Jimmy Fields. It had been three years since they'd seen one another. Jumping down off of her dancing platform to get a closer look, my... had he changed! He wasn't that tall, skinny, young teenager any more; he'd grown-up. "Has it been that long ago?," she wondered. "Would you like to come over to my house after I get off work?" There were so many unanswered questions Valerie had; maybe this would be the time for her to ask him why it all had to happen. They never had discussed anything, it was all so confusing.

All night long Jimmy talked about his marriage, his three-year-old son, and what he had been doing for the past three years... then they parted. "It was the strangest encounter," she thought as she waved goodbye to him at the door. She had two children by Jimmy, but she never really knew the man and he never knew her.

Two days later Valerie was at work at the Ko Ko when she heard the news... Jimmy Fields had been shot outside of a bar in Lubbock. He was helping a friend as a bouncer; it was closing time. A drunk in the parking lot was horribly enraged and argued with him about being told to leave. He pulled out a gun..."You're too much of a chicken-shit to shoot anybody," Jimmy said, and then.... the man pulled the trigger, shot him through the heart, and he died instantly. That was it that was all of his life. Little Jay and Tanya had just lost their daddy and Jimmy Fields was gone, forever!

Finally, she heard from Owen. He had gotten a job at a gas station and told her to come on. How she would get there was up to her. She paid seventy-five dollars to two strange men she had met at the club. All of their family belongings were left behind. She packed a few clothes, Michelle's toys, and her dancing outfits... just in case, and she and Michelle were off to Tucson, Arizona.

Owen seemed real happy to see his little daughter, but at first he was distant toward Valerie, as if she were a stranger. They rented a small, furnished apartment, and a short time later Owen got a good mechanic's job at Thoroughbred Cars. He had purchased a racing motorcycle while they were apart and spent most of his time and money at the races in Phoenix, or going to the Cedar Bar with his new motorcycle buddies. Owen was somewhat surprised at the person returning to him after all that time apart. Valerie was now more of what he wanted in a woman, but she hated what she had become! Her image of herself was reflecting from him and their lives as a married couple... as a family it was hell! What would it take to get him to see the light again?



Valerie located Reverend Pennington to see if he could help in getting their family back to church, like it had been before. Owen would listen to him... They met at Sambo's and she poured out her guts in confession: the bar dancing, the Air Force boy, the shame of it all! The preacher-man listened to her intently without as much as a word being said; then slowly and gently he placed his hand on hers, "Valerie, you're a very beautiful young girl. I was attracted to you from the beginning... You know, my wife and I haven't been intimate in a long time. I know this may sound awful to you but..." She couldn't believe her ears. The blood rushed to her head like the mercury rises in a thermometer that's been plunged into boiling water. The pressure was mounting and an explosion was imminent! God, she hated that look in his eyes!

Tears of disappointment and anger welled up as she sat there stunned, staring at this man that to her, (like Pa), represented her concept of God..."Don't tell Owen, Valerie, please," he begged as she got up from the table and stormed out of the restaurant. It was as if she were drowning and couldn't catch her breath; every time her head bobbed up out of the water someone would push her down under again.

Now, those mini-skirts left little to the imagination, and cussing like a sailor helped to express feelings of self-hatred and anger towards herself and life in general. Out of the abundance of her heart, her mouth was speaking. They needed the money, so Owen insisted she go back to go-go dancing. It had taken less persuasion this time. He'd come to the bar where Valerie worked with his motorcycle buddies, only to watch the other girls shake their "Wah-toosie," not hers. But one evening, to her surprise, Owen unexpectedly brought his boss, Bob, in to watch her dance. Shortly after that night, Bob offered to take the two of them on a fun filled, all expenses paid weekend trip to Las Vegas.....

Bob rented a motel suite at the Stardust, and Owen and Valerie had a connecting room to his. That night he took them to an exclusive dress shop to buy her two of the most expensive, beautiful (but somewhat seductive) evening gowns she'd ever seen. He lavished them with dinner, champagne, dance shows, and gave Valerie a hundred dollars worth of nickels to put into the slot machines... She was like a little girl with a new toy playing those machines: so impressed and... so naive. How she could continue to trust like she did was so much like a child. Why would Bob want to spend all this money on her? Just to be a nice guy?

The grand finale: it was the night before they were to return to Tucson. Owen and she were sitting in Bob's room anxiously awaiting what he had to tell. It took Valerie a long time to process his words directed towards her that evening. Even after all his "beating around the bush" she still had no idea what was going on, until Bob said to her... "Thousands of very rich men pour into Vegas every day... This could change the course of yours and Owen's life. You'd never want for anything again. Just think about it..." Valerie looked over at Owen for direction and

affirmation.

She was confused! What was he talking about? Owen smiled favorably at her and winked his eye. Bob continued... "These wealthy businessmen need an attractive young lady, like yourself, to accompany them while they have a good time on the town. They have money to burn, and lady... you're the hot number to start their flame!" Owen and Bob chuckled at that pun, but Valerie didn't think it was very funny. "Why, sweetie, they'll wine and dine you; buy you pretty things just to enjoy your company; then at the end of their fling... there will be a camera set up in the room. These dopes are married; they got it comin'." He chuckled leaning back on the bed. Owen laughed, too.

Finally, it hit! "You want me to be a prostitute? Owen, did you know about this?" Owen looked up at her and said, "Honey, you don't have to have sex with them. It's the picture of you in bed that will do the job... come on Baby, do it; do it for us!" She couldn't believe this. The bitter pain of another betrayal burned and stung, as it trickled over the unhealed accumulation of wounds from all the other past experiences. Bob then reminded Valerie that he was having to lay-off a few men at Thoroughbred Cars, due to slow business... and Owen was the last man he hired.

At this point in her young life Valerie Jo was barely twenty-two years old. She'd been through numerous beatings, incest, rape, and an unfair institutionalization as a young teenager. She was twice-married, had three children (losing two of them). She had traveled the U.S.(conning, stealing and lying); worked numerous bar jobs, just short of strip-dancing (the embarrassment of her little breasts saved her there). There had been multiple, meaningless, sexual relationships (in her search for love in all the wrong places); and she'd experienced the death of her first husband, leaving her first two children without a daddy. Valerie had weathered sickness, disease, and near starvation, homelessness, more beatings, more rape, more adultery, and two suicide attempts.

Through seemingly constant rejection, abandonment, loneliness, disappointment, and guilt and shame, Valerie Jo had survived. What more could happen? She had planted many bad seeds already in her life... and sadly, her harvest was yet to come.....

By the end of that week, Owen was lavishing her with attention and affection, desperate to sway her decision. The temptation was great..... and she almost consented, but there was subconsciously this curious line drawn that kept her at bay; how fragile a foundation her life was built upon. Like a starving puppy, she would do nearly anything for his love. They had a terrible fight when she told him... no! Owen was fired shortly after her decision.....

The next door neighbor, Red, had a small son, and his wife was pregnant with their second child and didn't suspect a thing. He was unhappy in this marriage and couldn't leave her because of his kids, so he just handed her his paycheck and put up with her nagging and whining. Valerie didn't want him, or anyone else for that matter, she just wanted Owen, but... he seemed

unreachable. She couldn't make him care about her, especially now. He had stopped working altogether after losing his job and just raced motorcycles for trophies. Red and she were two lonely people just needing the company. Their short, non-intimate relationship was abruptly ended one evening when his wife found out about their friendship. Red moved his family to another state; Valerie lost her good buddy.

Her bleeding feelings continued to weave through the torn tapestry of her damaged emotions. Self-hatred and self-destructive behaviors caused havoc in nearly all she did. As the weeks and months passed, this destructive mentality progressed to the point of consuming every thought. The depression was unbearable. The loneliness and feelings of failure and hopelessness had her feeling as if she were being sucked down a deep, dark hole to nowhere. There was no remembrance of her two year-old-daughter, Michelle, during this turbulent time. The only thing she remembered about then was working in several bars and passing hot checks. Doing destructive things was a cry for help for something or someone to stop this insanity.

Owen was in his own kind of hell. He still raced his motorcycles hoping to some day win that first place trophy. Oh, how his dad would be proud of him...some day. Valerie came in at all hours of the morning, and Owen didn't care. She couldn't hold on to him; he was slipping right through her fingers; and then, one hot, summer, Tucson night... Owen Michael Starr, Jr. packed his bags and left. She'd begged him not to go, but he said he didn't want her anymore. He had met someone else and wanted his freedom. He cried as he kissed his little pumpkin (Michelle) goodbye and then, he walked out the door. Valerie was shattered!

It was the summer of 1969. Valerie was a cocktail waitress at a Polynesian restaurant, when this nicely-dressed man sitting at the bar motioned for her to come over to him. "I hear you're having some financial problems; got some hot checks floating around town; warrant out for your arrest?" he asked nonchalantly as he took a sip out of his bourbon and seven. "How did you know I had a warrant out for my arrest?" she asked, amazed he knew so much about her. Actually there were two warrants; one for bad checks and one for rear-ending a cop in her Datsun sports car (while trying to curl her eyelashes)... "Be at my office at 7:00 p.m., sharp," he told her, handing her his address scribbled out on a napkin.

Valerie arrived at 7:00 p.m. on the dot. In his office the man pulled out a large, flat box from his locked desk drawer and handed her several hundred dollar bills. Speechless, she slowly took them from his hand. "I'm loaning you this money. You do whatever you want with it... Now listen, and listen r-e-a-l close. Every month I want you to pay me fifty bucks. If some month you just want to buy a new dress or something, or you're just short on the payment, call me. We'll skip a month. If you have any reason at all for not making the payment, all you have to do is... call me; we'll skip a month... But girlie, listen... don't not call me! Do you understand?" Valerie nodded her head in agreement, but was still a lot confused about this strange man and his

intentions. This was a new twist; had to be a rope attached somewhere.....

“When things get rough, the tough... go shopping!” she thought to herself as she left that day counting the handful of hundred dollar bills. Within a few days she had spent every dime of the five-hundred dollar fortune. Michelle now had nice clothes and new toys... She was so easily deceived. The Mafia was in Tucson, big time! They owned nearly all the bars.

“Come into my office; Harry wants to meet you,” Dick said. Harry was scary. He looked to be at least sixty or so, had a scarred, cratered face, and a large, pitted nose that looked as if it had been splattered on and pressed firmly into place. His lips were thick and the poor man looked as if he should be in a Dick Tracy comic book or something. His suit was obviously very expensive, and he wore it well, with the traditional black shirt, white tie thing, just like you see in the movies. “I would like to take you to dinner tomorrow night,” he told her emphatically, as he peeled off several twenty-dollar bills and handed them to her smiling. “Here, go shopping tomorrow and buy a silk, peacock-blue dress with matching purse, shoes, and earrings... but no necklace.” Valerie gulped, “I have to work tomorrow night,” she told him. “Not any more,” he instantly replied.....

Harry arrived to pick her up that evening in a chauffeur-driven, black Cadi with tinted windows. Just as the chauffeur opened their door, Harry pulled out of his pocket a small, black velvet box, and opened it at Valerie’s eye level. Cradled in the plush, velvet lining was a single diamond stone. It was tear-shaped and as big as a dime hanging on a gold chain. “Turn around,” Harry told her. “Let me put this on you.” Was she dreaming?.....

The chauffeur drove them to a very exclusive restaurant. Everyone who worked there knew Harry and seemed to reverence the man in an intimidated sorta’ way, as if he were some kinda’ royalty or something. She wasn't about to tell him she couldn't read the menu so...“You order, Mister Harry,” she politely told him. Boy, did he... starting off with champagne, shrimp cocktail (she'd never seen shrimp before); the black stuff smelled gross like dead fish, looked like tiny eggs. He spread it all over his crackers... yuck!

Harry seemed strangely nervous as he ate without saying much of anything, except some small talk. He really didn’t know how to relax; finally, later on that evening...“You look like you need to talk to somebody; I’m a good listener; you can tell me anything,” she told him. With that bold invitation something very strange happened. Big, tough Harry laid down his brandy glass, hung his head, and like the breaking of a dam...“They call me Harry,” he began, “Harry The Horse.” He talked non-stop for hours, it seemed, telling Valerie one hideous story after the other about horrible, terrible things he had done. It was as if he were in a confessional, pouring his guts out to a priest. Stories about mutilations and murders shocked Valerie. “I’m what is called an exterminator. I’m an executioner, an eraser, a hit-man... I maim and kill people!” he whispered forcefully in her ear. “Do you understand me, Valerie? I’m one hell of a BAD MAN!” Her eyes widened and she gulped again.

Another thing that was so scary about this Harry guy was... he knew all about Valerie. But how and why? Why would this dangerous man want anything to do with her? Harry finally confessed about this unusual trust. She reminds him of a woman he deeply loved during the first world war. He tells Valerie that it was uncanny the way they resembled. That was real nice and all, but Valerie didn't like the feeling she had when he'd stare into her face as if he were in another world, at another time and another place.

"I don't want you seeing Owen! He's no good for you," Harry blurted out suddenly in a warning. "I can give you anything you want. I'll treat you like a lady." He obviously wanted her to be his woman and she felt sorry for him and all, but... she told him in no uncertain terms, she wanted Owen. That didn't go over too good with Harry. He took her home around 3:00 a.m.(my, how time flies when you're having fun!) and... he removed the diamond necklace. Yet, before he placed it back into the black velvet box, he took Valerie's hand and indicated to her that he felt it had found its permanent home... around her neck!

Owen lost his job at the dude ranch where he was living and soon was kicked out of his room there. He begged Valerie to let him move in with Shirley and her at their apartment. Maybe he would take her back again, eventually. So there they were, in this small two-bedroom apartment: Owen, Shirley (her two kids), Michelle, and the sixteen-year-old baby sitter. But no matter how hard she tried, Owen seemed disinterested in her and in any reconciliation.

One of Valerie's most recent cocktail waitress jobs was at the Ramada Inn. She met a man there named Louie who was a regular when he was in town. When she complained to him about Owen and how unhappy she was, he told her she should leave this town and that if she ever wanted to go to California he knew of a really nice lady who lived in Santa Barbara. She could live with her. Valerie told him thanks, but no thanks. It looked as if she was stuck in Tucson, for now anyway. Then strangely, soon after Louie's and her conversation, another man she met insisted she should go to Hollywood to get discovered, as a model or something. She was movie star material, he told her. Anything sounded good that would get her out of this bar scene and give her a positive break in life. That wasn't true. In reality, all she really wanted was Owen, her little Michelle with her real daddy... and a home.

Valerie wasn't feeling too good one night. It must have been around 1:00 a.m. when she came home from work, earlier than usual. She knew the kids would be in bed but certainly was not prepared for what was about to happen. As she walked through the door into the apartment, she heard orgasmic moaning(s) coming from hers and Shirley's bedroom. It was as if her life's blood was being drained from her body at what she saw. Owen and Shirley were in her bed. She quietly tiptoed to Michelle's bedroom unnoticed and cried herself to sleep. At sunrise when everyone was still asleep, she got up, but to her horror the previous scene had drastically changed. Owen was now in her bed with... the baby sitter.

It felt as if she were in a sad movie and there was no ending. Louie tried to give her the simplest of instructions on how to get to Hollywood as he slipped a small piece of paper in her hand saying, "If you're ever in Santa Barbara now, look up this friend of mine. Her name is Joanne. "Just point me in the right direction, Louie." She interrupted... "I'll find my own way from now on."

Like a wearisome vagabond Valerie drove down the dark highways, hoping that she was going in the right direction. Every time she thought of Owen she'd burst into tears. Would she ever see him again? She felt so alone and confused as she drove on and on... and on, all that night, listening to the radio. "You and me against the world, sometimes it seems like you and me against the world." Valerie reached back and stroked her little Michelle's soft blond hair. "That's our song, Mikki," she said softly. Michelle looked just like her daddy. Tears filled her eyes again until she could hardly see to drive. Michelle slept like a little angel in the back seat of the Datsun sports car all that long night. There had only been enough time to pack a few of her favorite toys and only some of her new clothes Valerie had bought her. Everything else that had been accumulated of Valerie's, Owen's, and Michelle's was left behind... again!

It was "Hollywood or bust." It was nearly eight a.m. when they entered the L.A. area. She didn't dare get off the main highway because there was so much traffic. It was like a maze with all those signs she couldn't read and the dirty air burned her eyes.

After hours, it seemed, of moving at a snail's pace the traffic finally began to break up somewhat. "Oh, no, I'll bet I passed Hollywood, now what?" she asked herself as she looked frantically at the gas gauge that was reading... nearly empty. The only alternative was to just drive on until she ran out of gas somewhere. No telling where she'd end up, especially because she didn't know where she was going.....

As she drove along the sea coast Valerie was deeply moved with its beauty. It calmed her aching soul and gave her a moment's peace. She could hardly keep her eyes on the road. In all of her magazine-crew travels she had never seen the ocean, nor realized there was something that powerfully beautiful. Valerie hadn't given this side of life any mind. It took all she had just to survive.

Along the coast she drove... for miles, she drove. Michelle was awake now and crying. Her ear was hurting and she was hungry. They soon came upon this town. It had such a good feeling to it and was a breathtakingly beautiful place, like you would only see in a magazine. The gas gauge was nearly on empty so she pulled the car over and just sat there awhile... They were homeless, out of gas. On the beach with her little daughter in her arms, watching the wave's crash against the shore, she worried about where they were and where they were going from here and... how far she could stretch fifteen bucks. The hours passed slowly. Michelle had messed in

her panties and was screaming because her ears hurt so badly. She took her to one of the beach restrooms to clean her up. "Oh, God, help me," she cried, "What am I going to do?"

Suddenly Valerie remembered someone who might care about her enough to help; Owen's mother, Marie, in Bellevue, Washington. She quickly went back to the car, laid Michelle in the back seat, and walked to a nearby telephone booth. "This is a collect call, will you accept the charges?" the operator said.... "Marie, this is Valerie. I have a terrible problem, can you please help me?" she begged. "I have fifteen dollars, I'm out of gas, Michelle's sick and..." she began to cry. "Where are you?" Marie questioned. All she knew was that it was beautiful place; there were palm trees and ocean all around. The only person near enough to speak to was a black lady digging through a trash can nearby. "Excuse me, ma'am," she said, "Can you please tell me what town this is?" "Why honey, doncha' knows? You is in beautiful downtown Santa Barbara, California." Quickly transferring the information..."Marie, I'm in Santa Barbara, California." Marie got all excited... "Valerie, my mother lives there, so does my sister, Alice, and her husband, and my son Bob." They were both oblivious to the miracle that had just taken place. Valerie got a phone number from Marie and within a few moments, Owen's brother, Bob, arrived to have her follow him to his grandmother, Adaline's apartment.....

Adaline had her up early that next morning to look for work. She filled the car with gas one more time, and drove to several cafes to apply, but to no avail. Discouraged, Valerie reached into her jacket pocket for a roll-your-own cigarette, accidentally pulling out this small, folded piece of paper with the tobacco pouch. It was the paper Louie had given to her before she left Tucson. She quickly drove to the nearest phone booth to call Joanne. Valerie and Michelle would soon be moving into this friend of Louie's one-bedroom apartment the next day. Joanne would become Valerie's very first, very best friend; that friend she'd always hoped for.....

It wasn't too long before Valerie had gotten a job, where else but... at a bar. Life was still so hard, and Michelle was sicker than ever with constant ear infection pain. Marie kindly and gladly offered to take the child for awhile until Valerie got on her feet. But only until she got on her feet! There was that horror that she wouldn't get her back again. Marie arranged to have little Michelle flown to Washington..."but what if she never gave her back to me?" Valerie thought as she watched the stewardess walk down the ramp to the plane, holding her little girl's hand. "Bye, Mommy." Michelle said, turning to wave one last time before they boarded. Valerie blew her a kiss, then broke into tears again. Without Michelle and Owen there was really nothing to live for, she thought, as she watched the plane fly out of sight.....

Soon after Michelle was gone Valerie took on two cocktail waitress jobs. The Yankee Clipper and a place called The Silver Spur. She'd become as wild as they get and was collecting men like some women collect shoes and earrings. There were little to no feelings for what was right and honest anymore. It had sadly become a "dog-eat-dog" existence.

Hanging out at the bars with Joanne and drinking nightly soon gave Valerie the reputation as "the town lush." She strove to be the center of attention everywhere she went, turning on the charm to the men no matter how it made her look, or how big a fool she made of herself. On the outside she appeared to be the life of the party. She could dance better, drink more, and turn every head in the place... or could she?

One evening she and Joanne were at the Matador Lounge, where they hung out. Valerie was soused as usual, when she got up from their table and staggered over to a table at the far end of the room, where two men were seated. This one guy was really handsome, and he hadn't as much as noticed her dancing all evening..."How about dancing with me?" she slurred, leaning over to get in his face... "No, thank you." He politely replied. "Oh, come on, have some fun!" She insisted. "Go away, you're drunk," he insisted..."Oh, come on, you chicken, let's dance."... "No thanks!" he repeated abruptly. Finally, giving in to her persuasiveness, they danced a fast dance, or two; then a slow one or two. Soon the two men had moved over to Joanne's and her table. "My name is Valerie Starr, and this is my friend, Joanne." "My name's Roy... Roy; this is Tony," he replied. "Phew", this Roy guy was quite a hunk: Six feet two inches tall, dark, and handsome. Black, thick hair, dark skin, huge hands, and a deep, deep dimple smack dab in the middle of his chin. They danced some more and, they... danced some more. Then when the evening had ended, he helped Joanne pour Valerie into her little, red sports car. Joanne did the driving. She left a trail of vomit from the bar to the car, and from the car, she puked all the way home. The next day she barely remembered that evening and what a stupid fool she'd made of herself.

"The Back Door Bar" was Valerie's third job. It was a really slow night, and she had just made a selection on the juke box. "Is That All There Is?" when suddenly she noticed that there was a man sitting at the small corner table near the entrance. "I'm sorry... I didn't see you come in. What can I get you to drink?" she asked, placing a cocktail napkin on the table directly in front of him. "Don't you remember me? The other night at the Matador Room... you danced with me and you were pretty drunk."



After chatting an hour or so with Roy, Valerie briefly mentioned that she was hungry, and Arby's beef sandwich was her favorite. The closest Arby's was in Ventura, thirty-five miles away. Roy left to get her just a hamburger... she thought, but an hour later he returned with an Arby's beef sandwich... just for her? She could hardly believe his kindness. He was out of her class, for sure.

It was near Christmas, and Michelle was still at her grandmother's in Washington. Valerie missed her so much. She kept all of her feelings inside, and played and acted as if she had it all together, but it wasn't easy to pretend this long without being found out by someone. Joanne saw right through her facade, but still, she was there for her in this strange, unconditional way.

It was a few days before the twenty-fifth of December when Joanne came home with news to cheer her up. "Mona gave me these pills, Valerie. They're called Mescaline with Speed. You have to try this stuff, it'll make you feel w-o-n-d-e-r-f-u-l!" Why not... so she popped all four at once into her mouth, and swallowed. Joanne had taken only two. They weren't even to the bottom of Mona's stairs, when everything slowly began to change. The dreary, dirty, dark, and dingy house Mona lived in suddenly began to transform before her eyes, into a bright and vividly beautiful fairyland of colors; more intense and striking than she'd ever seen colors before. What a wonderland it was! Joanne's face was radiantly beautiful. Her flawlessly smooth-looking skin gave her an angelic appearance.

It was as if the spirit realm had been opened up and a dimension usually unseen by mere mortal man was revealing what heaven must be like. It was all so lovely, for as long as it lasted... for it was then that Mona's visiting friends decided to pull a prank on Valerie. They put this record on the record player. It was only meant to be funny and to add a twisted thrill to her first-time experience with drugs. Little did they know that the negative state of mind she had lived in all of her life would thrust this first experience into... *the nightmare of all nightmares!*

The story on the record began playing. It was about a girl who was on a bad L.S.D. trip. Valerie innocently listened, as they had instructed her to do. She didn't know that they were laughing at her... a picture book about circus freaks was dropped into her lap, for her to look at, at the same time the narrator was describing, in hoary-gory detail, this poor girl's helplessness... "A man came closer... and closer from behind. She can feel him breathing at the back of her neck... but can't move!" (Complete with music!) Then, suddenly, there was a loud... **"SCREAM!"** Immediately all the beauty Valerie had been seeing disappeared and something

horrifying had taken its place. Now everything was the extreme opposite from the bright and beautiful. Now it was... DEATH everywhere she looked. If the other was heaven... this must be hell!

Smells, feelings, and emotions; all her senses were nerved to the max. There were no bright colors anymore, only grays, dirty whites, and blacks. Valerie looked down at her hands. She could see past the skin to any layer of flesh she willed. Blue blood was slowly pumping through her veins in rhythm to her heart beat. She saw her bones, the marrow in her bones. The thought seemed to be the act. Whatever her negative thinking mind, set to imagine... became the nightmare. The inside of Mona's house was horror beyond description!

Valerie frantically ran to the front door to look outside into the daylight for any sign of life, but it was as if an atomic bomb had been dropped somewhere, and the fallout had destroyed everything alive for miles around. The trees were bare; no leaves at all. Then she saw one blood-red poinsettia flower that stood out alone on the bush that had been full of blossoms just minutes before. Valerie ran as fast as she could towards the shrub, just to touch its life, but the plant immediately withered in her hand, leaving nothing but ashes that fell through her fingers to the dirt ground. "Take me home, Joanne, please!" she begged in hysterical tones.

Hours went by as Valerie paced back and forth across Joanne's kitchen floor like a caged lion; whispering voices taunting her mind, laughing, and mocking. She could hear and understand thousands of voices simultaneously. Vile, filthy words were said.

Looking in terror into the bathroom mirror she saw bugs and worms crawling in and out of her nose, ears, and mouth; doubling up in abdominal pain she couldn't take anymore. Joanne was very concerned. It looked as if the worst was about to happen to her. Taking her to the hospital was out of the question. Everyone would get busted for drugs. "What if you never come out of this, Valerie? You have to try to think of something positive, something happy... think about Michelle." She couldn't; the name had no meaning to her whatsoever. Now all she could think about was Joanne's haunting remark; about never coming out of this... never! With that she bolted up from the kitchen table, ran back into the bathroom, grabbed a razor blade, and screamed..."I'd rather die!"

Conrad, a friend of Joanne's, held Valerie's convulsing body and stroked her hair, whispering kind, sweet words in her ear all night. He seemed to know just what to do, as if he had possibly been there before. It was a long, anguishing night and then...they both finally fell asleep.

As the sun rose Christmas Eve morning, the memory of the night before remained as only

a bad dream. The nightmare was over... Joanne's Christmas tree was more beautiful than any tree Valerie had ever seen in her life, because the bright and beautiful colors had returned somewhere on her way down. But, they were slowly fading away... even though she wished they would stay forever...

Valerie worked a banquet at the Silver Spur that Christmas Eve night. Hundreds of people filled the restaurant and many of them were in the lounge where she served drinks. For some weird reason her insight, knowledge, and comprehension had expanded. Usually she couldn't remember the drinks that were being ordered and had to write them down. Oddly, tonight she was remembering them all, as if she had a photographic mind or something! Everyone at her job couldn't believe the change in her as they watched her call out twenty drinks at a time to the bartender, by memory. This mind-altering experience lasted only for that evening. It was a "far-out" experience, but wasn't worth the cost of the admission.

It was three days after Christmas now. Valerie had gotten to talk to her little Michelle briefly on the phone on Christmas day. She was so in hopes that Owen would have called to wish her Merry Christmas, or better yet, tell her that all was changed and he was coming to get her and Michelle. In fact, she was thinking about all of this when there was a knock at the door. It was Alice and Bill (Owen's mother's sister and her husband)... What a nice surprise. "Valerie, you need to sit down... I have some bad news for you."

"Alice told her..." "What? What's wrong?" She couldn't imagine what was wrong... they looked so serious. "Owen's been fatally injured." "What does that mean?" she screamed in her head. "Is he hurt bad? What happened?" she asked, frantically running her questions together. "You don't understand, Valerie... Owen's dead!"

What does dead mean? Forever? Whatever happened to... "And everyone lived happily ever after?" How could this be? She always believed they would be together as a family again one day, and what about little Michelle? This wasn't fair! She was only two years old, without a daddy, too? Like Jay and Tanya were?

It was soon after Alice and her husband had left, when Joanne came in the house from the mailbox with a letter in her hand. She handed it to Valerie. "This is for you..." Her face turned pale... " She cried, "It's from Owen!" Valerie didn't realize it at the time, but Owen had mailed the letter airmail, just moments before he had been killed. The postmark on the envelope said, 11:00 p.m., December 27th, 1969. With nervous apprehension she slowly opened it, and the four-page letter began:



1967  
Owen & Me  
Flint Baptist Church  
baby shower



1967  
After we left the church



November 21, 1967  
After police photos of where bike was killed

*Dear Valerie,*

*The days grow longer. My life has no meaning... I'm like  
an old man walking down a road to nowhere with a bag on  
my shoulders full of nothing but shattered dreams.....  
Take care of my little pumpkin for me and tell her, her  
Daddy loves her.....*

*Bye Love,  
Owen M. Starr, Jr.*

Had Owen killed himself two days after Christmas because of the pain and depression of their separation and him missing his little daughter? Or, had Harry the Horse kept his commitment to exterminate him if he ever hurt or even saw her again? Or, was his death just an unfortunate accident happening within moments after mailing the letter she received the following day? It was also very puzzling that his letter was signed, "Bye Love," as if he knew he were going somewhere, before he died. Owen had never expressed himself that way before. She knew him so well: "Every freckle, every mole on his back, every dimple in his smile."

Valerie had to know the answers to these questions. She had to see for herself exactly what happened. There was no money for a plane ticket to Tucson, but she had to see, she had to know what had happened to Owen, and what about his funeral? Shouldn't she be there? After all, she was his wife and it didn't seem right to not say good-bye to her husband. Dirty tricks played with her mind as Valerie tried to believe that all of this was just flashbacks from the hell she had gone through a few days earlier. There wasn't any place to put this kind of grief except to bottle it!

The Silver Spur Restaurant was crowded that night. Valerie had taken the night off. It was three days after Christmas, one day after Owen's death and the day she had found out the horrible news. The triples she had gulped down were well into effect when Roy and his wife Karen came in unexpectedly. Roy left his wife visiting with friends and approached Valerie sitting at the bar. "What are you doing here by yourself?" he asked her. "Getting drunk, what does it look like?" she answered sarcastically. "Why, what have you got to get drunk about?" She looked up at him with mascara-filled tears running down her cheeks... "Owen's dead and I really don't want to live anymore," she cried out, as she slid off the bar stool and ran out the back door toward the parking lot.

Roy called her the next morning and told her, "Let me know if there's anything I can do. I want to be there to comfort you if you need me." Comfort was what she needed, but Roy was a married man and wanted more from her than just being the friend she so badly needed at this time in her life.

As she hung up, the phone rang again. This time it was Owen's dad. She hadn't seen or heard from him since after she and Owen were married, when they lived in Boise. "We have flown his body to Boise and I've made arrangements for you to fly here for the funeral. Owen was in the Navy and plane fare is provided for the wife of the deceased." It was the first time she had ever heard herself addressed as Owen's wife by anybody except herself. How ironic this realization had happened at his death.

"I can't go alone and face this," she cried, picking up the phone once again to dial her mother's phone number. It had been seven years since they had seen one another. The last time they spoke was when Valerie had, out of desperation, asked her for a train ticket back to Des Moines. Her mom had told her back then, "You got yourself into this mess, now you wiggle yourself out of it." Could she be there for her now, when she needed her more than at any other time in her life? "Mom," Valerie sobbed, trying desperately to control her emotions and appear strong and mature. "Owen's been killed... Mom, *please*... I need you." "What, another one?" she blurted out. "Damn, Valerie, can't you hold on to a husband?" It was harsh, but she did agree to meet her at the airport in Boise the next day.

There Valerie Jo was... back at the same spot she had been just five years earlier: the Boise, Idaho, airport. Memories were so cruel as they haunted and taunted. She almost thought for a moment that she saw Owen running upstream through the crowd of people who had just disembarked from a plane. She almost thought she saw his head bobbing up and down as he jumped in the air to see over the crowd looking for her. Marrying him seemed like so long ago.....

Suddenly... near the entrance to the building, Valerie saw her coming down the escalator; She was *so beautiful* standing out like some kinda' flashy movie star among the crowd. It couldn't have been more theatrical. She looked almost exactly like Marilyn Monroe with her big bosoms, lightly bleached shoulder-length hair, full red lips, bright red long Cashmere coat (with a huge, gray fox tail fur collar) and, of course, her three-inch spike heels... "*Click, click, click,*" was the sound their high heels rhythmized as they walked together over the airport's tile floor.

People stopped and stared, but the two of them pretended to be oblivious to all the gawking going on. Like an illustrious celebrity with her head held high she strutted past everyone; Valerie had now joined in on her mother's performance as she once again proudly walked by her side... beside her, like old times. Only now she wasn't the little five-year-old girl she had been seventeen years before. Valerie Jo had grown up, grown up to be... just like her mother!

The funeral home was decorated in bright colors with fresh flower arrangements placed here and there throughout the foyer. It seemed to be such a clashing combination. Organ music played softly, giving the atmosphere that morbid twist. Valerie always hated organ music. There

was a dead silence everywhere. No one seemed to be around to tell her what to do next, so very slowly she walked towards two doors that opened up into a large room. "Was Owen in there?" she wondered as she peeped inside, frightened that maybe he was... and what was she to do with this black veil that was in her hand? Was it time to cover her head like she'd seen the bereaved widow do in the movies, to show respect for her dearly departed? What was the veil for anyway? Her mother had bought it for her, but it never came with instructions.

Holding her breath she entered, her heart felt as if it would stop beating when she saw this dark brown casket at the front end of the large room. The contour of a dark-suited figure was laying there. Only the chest, flesh color of the side of the face, and folded hands were exposed. She was hoping that she was in the wrong place so she could procrastinate this awful moment.

As she walked slowly closer: "Please let this all be just a bad dream."

Sadly it was true... there lay Owen. He looked so peaceful and quiet. Something suddenly took her breath away... She looked around the room to make sure they were alone, then slid to her knees next to the casket. Poor Owen, she couldn't believe he was gone. Valerie touched his face ever so gently as her eyes scanned every hair on his head, every pore in his skin, that cute pug nose little Michelle had inherited. The dark blue suit he had on didn't look like something he'd wear, he didn't look like himself at all. His lips were painted on; his hair was combed wrong. Then she noticed his left hand was bandaged. Where was his ring? She hadn't been told just how he died. Did he suffer? Did he call out her name in his last moments?

She wanted to whisper in his ear in revengeful despair, "This time you left me and Michelle for the last time," but the grief welled up instead, like an ocean swell rising in a storm. Her hopes, her dreams, her whole life was lying in this brown box. The guilt was overwhelming. His letter had expressed to her, in no uncertain terms, that everything was her fault! Maybe if she would have been a better wife he would still be alive.

Valerie was beating herself up with all she thought she deserved, and it was during the worst of the condemnation when she heard this still small voice coming from somewhere deep inside her say, "He's not here. He's with Me. This is only a shell you see." Finally, finally, those cleansing tears necessary for healing streamed down her face onto Owen's shoulder, then,... suddenly, a hand firmly grasped her right upper arm as fingernails dug into her black dress. "Get up, Valerie, people are coming in. You're making an ass out of yourself!" her mother said.

It was soon to be midnight at the Tikki Room. The band was playing some of their old favorite songs: "Unchained Melody," "You'll Never Walk Alone"... Her mother had just ordered another drink when Valerie had an overwhelming compulsion to say, "Goodbye", one last time, and she didn't care what her mother thought about it, either.

New Year's Eve and a deep snow had fallen that day of the funeral. Its cold, thick blanket had perfectly preserved all of the beautiful flowers that covered Owen's grave site. As Valerie

knelt down, her bare legs buried in the snow, the church clock tolled twelve times. It was 1970. "I love you, Owen," she said as she broke off one red rose bud from a bouquet and held it near to her heart. Her mother never said a word.....

The following day after Valerie's mother had left to go back to Des Moines, Owen, Sr., Mary, and Valerie took off in their camper for Tucson, Arizona... Arriving, they parted company for three days. It didn't take Valerie any time at all to locate Buddy and Skip, Owen's closest friends, to ask them all those questions she needed answers for.

"Owen had been really depressed for weeks," Skip told her, beginning his rendition of what took place that night. "It was Friday night and we were all sitting around at this table, here at the Cedar, drinking beer and talking about the motorcycle races in Phoenix we'd just been to the night before, when Owen came in," he continued. "He looked like hell! He walked right over to us, ordered a beer and right away told me to help him find the cheapest lookin' bitch in the place. We all laughed, but he didn't; he was dead serious. He seemed real ticked-off as he looked all around, as if he would know what he was looking for when he saw it."

Then he noticed this girl sittin' between these two guys at the bar. She had real long hair and a real short skirt on. There was a cigarette hangin' out of her mouth as she laughed and talked with these two men. She had an arm around each one, and man, was she smashed!" Then Buddy added, "It was weird. Owen just stood up and said, 'There she is,' He walked right over to her and asked her if she wanted to go for a motorcycle ride. She swung around on her bar stool, jumped right into his arms, and said she'd love to go, but, 'only if we go like hell.' Owen told her, 'I'll give you the thrill of your life,' and he grabbed her hand and pulled her staggering behind him out the front door. We asked him where he was going but he didn't answer. He just unloaded his racing bike out of the back of his truck, in the dark; got on it and tore off down the street like a "bat outa' hell." That's all we knew until we heard the next day he was dead," Buddy concluded.....

The woman who lived across the street from where the accident occurred was helpful, but still didn't give Valerie the answers she was so desperately searching for. The lady could only inform her of what the police had said about that Saturday night of December 27th... Evidently Owen had driven straight to this residential neighborhood, opened up the motorcycle full throttle, sped several blocks straight down Richey Boulevard (in the dark) on his stripped-down racing motorcycle (with no lights on it), with the eighteen-year-old drunk girl on the back, and crashed... full speed into a chain-link fence that ended that street, separating it from the high school. The impact hurled the bike, the girl, and Owen straight up into the air. Owen plummeted to the ground; the bike landed on top of him mangling his left arm from the elbow down and crushing



him internally.

"He lived only a short time," the woman told Valerie. "In fact my husband was there when he took his last breath." Valerie sickened inside as she thought about how he must have suffered, and what were the very last thoughts of a dying man? Were they of her and Michelle? "Did he say anything at all before he died?" Valerie asked her. Inside she was begging and pleading for that single answer she needed so desperately to hear. She struggled to hold back the tears while waiting for the lady's reply..."My husband said that he was crying out a woman's name over and over again"...

Roy had been coming to see Valerie almost daily since she returned from the funeral. Everything was so disconnected. She needed to be alone to go through the normal grieving process, but it hurt too much to think. She placed the red rosebud from Owen's grave in the black Bible that Reverend Pennington and the Flint Baptist Church had given him. That was the extent of allowing herself any space to feel. Burying this loss down under the compost pile of her life, with all the rest of the decaying experiences, was all she knew to do. She had to hurry and step on over from that life to the next without too much of a hesitation in between, lest she by any means allow any part of herself to feel too much! Life was too hard to take the time to live it right. Roy told her that he was already in love with her, like no one he'd ever met before. That was comforting..... Valerie Jo could handle, and had handled, a lot in her twenty- two years of life, but the hardest of it all (besides losing her children), was the loneliness and the insecurity of not being able to make it on her own. The fear was the monster *that ruled!* Roy was attentive, sincere, sensitive, and really seemed to care about Michelle and her... and before Owen was cold in the grave, Roy was leaving his wife of five years and his one-year-old son and Roy, Valerie and Michelle were moving into a one-bedroom apartment. The Cinderella story rendition of true love was a lie! There wasn't such a thing as, nobody getting hurt, and everyone lives happily ever after.....

It wasn't easy for Roy to leave his little boy behind. He loved Brian so much and walking out on his wife, Karen simply devastated her. One morning when Valerie was taking Roy to work at Cable T.V., Karen's car was parked next to the building. When she got out of her car, her eyes were swollen from crying. She begged Roy to come home. It was so sad! Valerie felt like scum at what was happening. So much pain, and it was all her fault, as usual. The guilt and the shame spoke loudly of her offense.....

Valerie soon found out that Roy was still not the perfect one. He came with his own set of baggage. There were deep emotional problems going back into his childhood... and beyond. His mother and dad lived a very unhappy marriage when he was growing up. Roy's dad was a perfectionist and a work-a-holic, and he was hardly ever available for his son, for his own set of

reasons. There was little to no communication between the two of them, and Roy suffered terribly from that alienation. Like everyone so far in Valerie's life, the missing or abusive dad seemed to be the thorn in the side of each one she'd ever known.....

Roy was born with an enlarged heart, so, coupled with the missing father, he was pitied, pampered and babied by an over-protective mother and grandmother. Because his heart was so large he was unable to play normally with other children, so his loving mother and grandmother fed him cakes, pies, and cookies... instead. He became a sweet-toothed fat boy, which only made matters worse for him socially. Then during high school, with his dad never around, Roy became a typical sixteen-year-old, beer drinkin', hot roddin', party animal. He was insecure with the ladies and married Karen on the rebound of a puppy-love infatuation with the senior homecoming queen.

It was soon after they had moved into this one-bedroom apartment that Roy went on a trip to Mexico with a friend for a week. Owen's death was still so fresh, but Valerie had done a real good job of burying everything. The only thing that remained un-disposable was the guilt and fear she couldn't hide. At times this fear was so intense that she couldn't walk into a dark room, horrified that the ghost of Owen might be behind the door waiting for her to punish her for all the evil she had done to everyone.

It was 3:00 a.m. when she was awakened by hard footsteps coming down the sidewalk, towards the apartment door. Then they stopped... right outside. It was quiet...too quiet. Somebody was out there! She heard them stop, right outside the door... **KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!** She nearly jumped out of her skin! There was no way she was going to go to that door and open it! Thirty seconds seemed like hours... it was too quiet ... A slight scuffle from the soles of his shoes on the dirt outside the door let her know that he was still there. She hugged her pillow with her eyes squinted closed real tight then... this person, or whatever it was, walked away at the same pace he came. She stayed awake all night worrying, simply dreading the next night, knowing he'd be back!

Sure enough, the next night as 3:00 a.m. approached, that same paralyzing fear came like a dark force and gripped her; holding her in bondage with no hope for escape! Again, just as he got to the door... **KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!** And then he left. How could anyone believe her dead husband was after her? He was dead, and dead was dead... Wasn't it?

The next night exactly at 3:00... **KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK!** This time she couldn't take anymore of this relentless persecution, so she ran to the front door and *flung* it open. "GASP!"... Her greatest fear had come upon her... there stood Owen, over one month dead, staring right into her face; bandaged, mangled arm, and all.

Owen's blue suit was wrinkled, torn, and covered with dirt. His hair was much longer than it was in the casket, and the skin on his face was withered and drawn tight as it adhered to his bone structure like stretched paper-Mache. She couldn't move, frozen with fear... until he started to reach out his bandaged hand towards her. Valerie slammed the door fast and hard, then dropped to her knees crying, frightened and wondering, "Could ghosts walk through doors?".....

That next evening as she laid in bed looking out of her bedroom window, up at the pitch-black, starry California sky, she cried out to God in desperation. "Help me...forgive me... please be there for me... I'm so afraid!" She turned around in the bed to look at her little Michelle, wondering if they would ever find peace of mind, and would this pain of living ever go away? Was there happiness anywhere? Then suddenly, this white mist began to gather across the room, right near Michelle's bed. It swirled and swirled, then slowly formed into the figure of a man in a white gown.....

Valerie and Roy were talking on the couch one romantic evening when he asked her point blank, "How many men have you been to bed with?" Valerie hesitated about telling Roy the truth, so instead she greatly over-exaggerated to test his reaction. If it was okay and he understood, then perhaps she could tell him more about so much she was never able to tell anyone, because no one cared or was willing to listen. "Oh, probably a hundred or so," she answered nonchalantly. This wasn't humorous... "WHAT?" he shrieked. "Oh, good grief, Roy. I'm just kidding, can't you take a joke?" He relaxed... a little. "Only three, honey: Jimmy, Owen... and you." She lied, oh, how she lied, and her black secret was locked away for perhaps another day. He was too good for her, she thought, and too good to lose.



Roy took Valerie and Michelle to Disneyland one weekend. He was always taking them some place special. Disneyland was Valerie's favorite. All those familiar Disney characters from her childhood movie days out with Gram brought some special memories of being five years old. She cried when they rode through "its A Small World." She had never experienced anything touching her mind and emotions quite like that. "When You Wish Upon A Star" and "A Dream Is A Wish Your Heart Makes" were her favorite songs from that era. She wished Roy could know some of these things about what she

loved and... what she hated. He wasn't the kinda guy to talk about such things, though, so it was

best to just keep her mouth shut and enjoy the good attention she was getting.

Valerie had been experiencing some abdominal pain for the past several days. After finishing the vacuuming that afternoon and trying to drag the vacuum up the apartment stairs to return it to the landlady, she collapsed at the foot of the stairs in excruciating pain. Roy rushed her to County General Hospital where she was checked in as a single mother. There was no insurance... "You're a charity case," she heard the voices in her head whisper. After a long wait Valerie was given a sedative to ease the agonizing pain. The medication was so strong she barely noticed when an intern wheeled her, on the gurney, into an examining room. There were no pictures on the gray walls in this room, only the echoes of men's voices. Her legs were put into stirrups as six or seven young men in white, long hospital jackets stood at the foot of the table she was on. Things looked obscure. Valerie was embarrassed; even though she was so sedated it really shouldn't matter. These were doctors, weren't they? What were they smiling and whispering to one another about? Then the unspeakable happened as one after the other, each one... except one man in horn-rimmed glasses, proceeded to do more than examine her. Her eyes were saying, "Please help me," as she searched his face for any sign of compassion... and the rapes continued on.

Back in her room again the physician explains, "Based on the magnitude of the infection, we suspect you have a severe case of... Gonorrhea."

Early the next morning an older man came in. He was kinder than the others as he sat on the side of her bed and held her hand. "You're a very sick young lady. We've come to the conclusion that you have a large cyst or growth on one of your ovaries." But what about the Gonorrhea I have?" Valerie asked. "What Gonorrhea? I haven't diagnosed such a thing. Who told you that you had Gonorrhea?" he questioned. She told him about the visit earlier from the man who had told her the bad news. "It looks like someone's been playing doctor," he barked. "I'll take care of this!" Oh, God, she wanted to tell him that's not all they were playing, but she kept quiet, afraid they wouldn't believe her.

It was later on that day when the doctor returned. Valerie had been prepped for surgery. "You need to sign this," the good doctor told her. "What is it?" she asked. "It's a consent form for your daughter. Where is your family that could take her should something happen to you in the operating room? It doesn't look too good; I can't lie to you."....

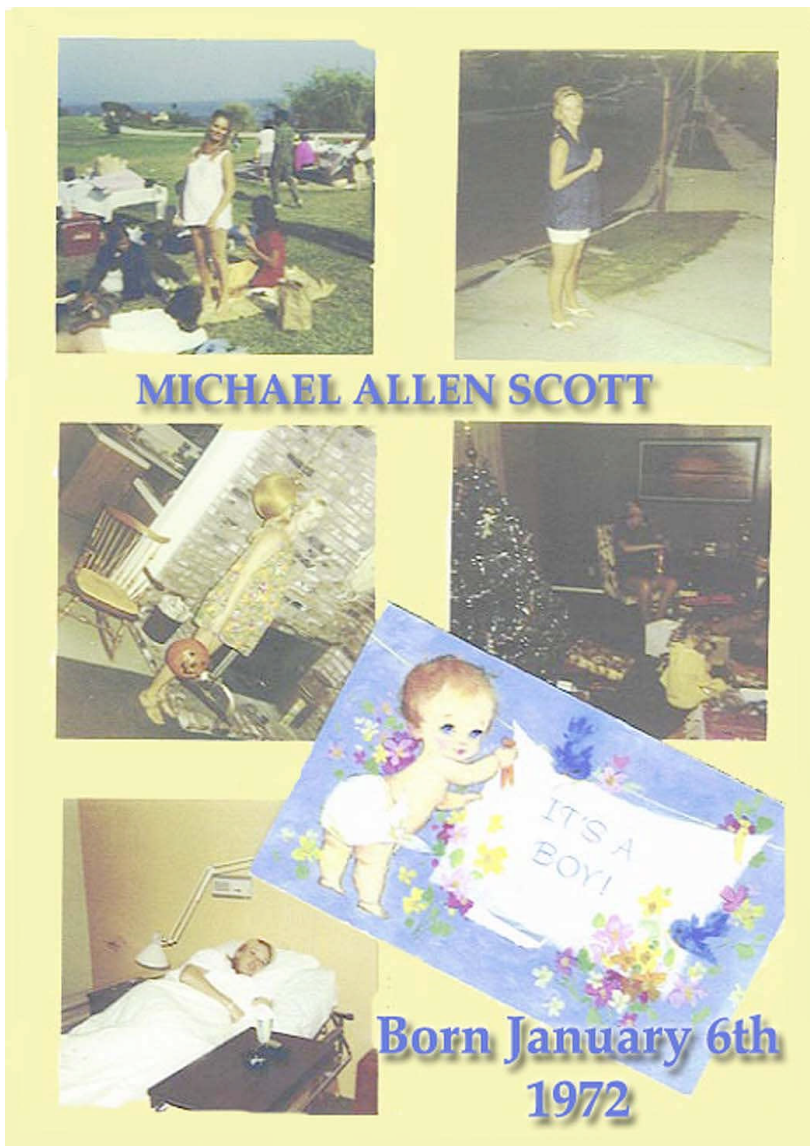
In the surgery room the anesthesiologist was preparing her for the countdown. Valerie groggily watched the doctor draw a black, crooked, diagonal line across the middle of her abdomen. "Psssssst".... He responded by leaning over her face and whispered compassionately, "Is there anything I can do for you? Do you have any last requests? Anything?" he asked. Valerie had told him earlier that she had little to no family that really cared whether she lived or died and the doctor's feeling really bad about her situation. "Come closer," she whispered, "So no one can

hear." "Yes? I'm listening, Valerie.... I'm listening." She hesitated for a moment, and then whispered softly in his ear... "Doctor... could you please make the incision below my bikini line?" "That's it?" the doctor asked, chuckling. "That's it!" she answered. "You got it! Now start counting 10-9-8" .....

After a week or so she was discharged. The doctor said there had been a massive infection as he suspected, caused from pulling the I.U.D. out by herself a few weeks earlier. She had wanted to have Roy's child. They had been told before the surgery that she probably would never be able to conceive another child ever, since the scar tissue was so massive. Roy told her that he'd prayed while she was having the operation that God would not let her die and that she'd be able to have children with him some day.....

One year later... Valerie gave birth to a nine-pound eleven-ounce baby boy; they named him Michael Allen. Roy was there with her every moment, through to delivery. At twenty-five now, her new family was well under way, and for the first time in her entire life she felt as if she had a man she could trust to be a good husband and father. Someone she could spend the rest of her life with: Roy, Michelle, and little Michael. What more could she want?

Roy had rented a beautiful home for his new family. It was like one of those houses out of "Better Homes and Garden" to Valerie. She had her first best ever Christmas in that home and her whole life had begun to come alive.



Motherhood, and all that went with it, fulfilled the greater part of her, and soon after Michael was born, her affection for Roy suddenly and strangely transferred over to her new baby. She put off sex as long as she could with one excuse after the other. The constant rejection wore on Roy heavily and he just couldn't understand what made this sudden change in her love for him. She couldn't understand why it was so important to the relationship. Couldn't they just love each other without... THAT?

It was only a few months after delivering Michael when she became pregnant again with their second child, her fifth.

They had to move from the rental home Valerie had loved so much and bought their own house. It wasn't nearly as nice as the rental; in fact, she didn't like it at all. It was small and not like the modern, upper class tract home they had lived in for nearly a year. Roy didn't feel the same way, as he was more conservative and interested in the investment. Another thing he didn't feel nor try to understand was something Valerie knew so well... This new house had something creepy about it. Valerie was very sensitive about these things.

Macramé plant hangers, crocheted quilts, hand-made braided rugs, wall papering, painting, and planting grass and flowers all over the place blossomed a part of Valerie she didn't know she had inside herself. These newly-discovered accomplishments inspired her hidden creativity to make it the home her new family deserved, and yet, she couldn't dismiss something. All of her newly-found domestic skills didn't cover up that bad feeling that was ever present there within this house.

Michelle was six years old when she began to see something in her room at night. She described it as being a round, flat disc that would spin slowly, horizontally in front of her bedroom door. Then it would change to a vertical position, begin to spin faster and slowly move toward her. She'd scream and scream as it came closer... and closer. Roy and Valerie took her to one doctor after another, but to no avail. She wasn't sick. Valerie knew better, but who would ever listen to her about experiences she'd had with these sorts of things that go bump in the night. It wasn't Michelle's imagination or bad dreams... there was something in this house.

It was January 13, 1973. Exactly one year and one week after Michael was born, when Valerie delivered a beautiful dark-haired, baby girl she and Roy named Rebecca Nicole. She had her hands full with two babies in diapers again. Michelle was a busy six-year-old involved in ice skating and baton lessons.

Valerie had developed several female infections after Rebecca's birth and decided on a hysterectomy. "Take it all out, Doctor Green, my breeding days are over!" There, for sure, was no reason now to have sex as much, as far as she was concerned.....



A babysitting job caring for six additional two-year-olds (besides her one-and-a-half and six-month-old) kept her busy and brought in some extra money to the family, to help Roy out with expenses. He would come home from work tired and wasn't in the mood to listen to all her baby talk. He just wanted to relax and escape with a dozen donuts and the TV. Unable to get his approval and gather any significance from her efforts, within a few months she gave up the child care business. He seemed mad at her a lot. It all revolved around sex and she hated it. Roy wouldn't be able to understand why she hated sex so much, even if she could explain.



When Michael was two, Rebecca was one, and Michelle was seven, Roy and Valerie had been together nearly five years now. She had turned twenty-seven her last birthday. It was the summer of 1974. Michelle had been going to Temple Baptist Church, to Vacation Bible School, learning about Jesus, when Mrs. Holly {the Vacation Bible School teacher} announced, "I've talked to Michelle in class about asking Jesus into her life and I wanted to get your permission to pray with her. Do you mind?" Mrs. Holly put her arm around Michelle on the couch and scooted her close.

All of this flashed Valerie back in her memory to another day, another time, another place... "Michelle," the lady said softly, "Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?" "Yes," she replied. "Do you believe He died on the Cross and took your sins on Himself so you could be forgiven, free and blameless before God the Father?" "Yes," Michelle answered. Valerie just sat there with this lump in her throat. "Do you accept what Jesus did for you on the cross?... and do you want to give Him your life?" Michelle nodded her head, yes. "Then pray this prayer after me, honey. 'Jesus.....' " It all flooded back into her mind with all of these words she was hearing now... Valerie recalled an evening seven years before when she was pregnant with Michelle, when Reverend Pennington prayed with her and Owen to surrender their lives to Jesus. Then Valerie suddenly realized that God had never let her go all this time, even after all the terribly bad things she had done. Overwhelmed by this incredible reality of God's unconditional love for her, while hearing Michelle pray that day, made the child-like simplicity speak louder to Valerie than any other thing possibly could. He had broken through her life at last through the

salvation of her little daughter. This time, there wouldn't be a turning back. This time she was all His... because she had found the pure truth she had spent her life looking for.

Valerie dug through old boxes until she spotted the little, white Bible the Flint Baptist Church had given to her, when Owen and she had joined the church. She had always loved to write, but reading was so difficult. This could take awhile, so she went into the bathroom, locked the bathroom door for privacy and sat down on the toilet lid to attempt to read some of this Bible. Perhaps she could get some insight as to what to do next. She had wanted to know all about God before, when Owen and the preacher man used to read the Bible together. Now she would find out herself somehow, because she'd never let go of Him again.



1974  
Michael (2)  
Michelle (7)

“There’s more to this life; there has to be”, she thought, as her eyes hastily scanned over one page after the other, looking for something to hold on to. There were so many words, if she could only know what they were saying. Finally she rested on a single verse that was on the very last page at the back of the book. She read one word at a time, while pointing her finger at each one, sounding it out... ”S-u-r-e-l-y, I come q-u-i-c-k-l-y,” it said... “Surely **who** come quickly?” she blurted out in surprise. Did she read that right? Reading on under the red lettering it was written... “*Even so, come Lord Jesus.*” “Jesus is coming back again? It has to be true; it’s the Bible I’m holding here in my hand,” she whispered to herself. “I’ve never heard of such a thing! Why didn’t anyone ever tell me this before? Jesus is coming back? This isn’t all there is to this?”

The realization of what God had done for Valerie hit her hard, and it had exploded into a fresh, new awakening. A fire was ignited that day that would soon turn into an intense blaze, burning away all that wasn’t real within her. There was a hope after all! “How many others were there who didn’t know about this good news?” No one had ever told her they knew this about Jesus before.....



Valerie's mind flashed back in time to people she'd known during her life, to the ones who had been good to her. There weren't many. Uncle Bob and Aunt Betty came to mind first. God, it had been so long since she'd seen them! Her grandmother, Mae, had been there for her. She couldn't think about Pa without deep pain and regrets, so she just quickly passed over the thought and moved on along through to more pleasant relationships. Her friend, Joanne, came into her mind. Valerie would have to tell Joanne this good news right away!

And then there was... there was this one who stood out nearly more than any other... Harlan. His face suddenly came to her so clearly. He was the only male that had never taken advantage of her sexually. He had no idea how she had never forgotten that. There had to be something extra special in God's Plan for a person like him. She whispered a prayer as she pressed her white Bible to her chest. "God, I don't know where Harlan is, but you do. Please send someone to tell him about all of this."

The following Sunday, Valerie and Michelle went to Temple Baptist Church and walked forward to join the church. Pastor Lewis let her know he'd personally be paying her a visit that coming week to evaluate whether or not the church could accept their application. And so he did. They talked awhile about trivial things: what Roy did for a living, how long they'd lived in this house, where she was from originally, and then..."How long have you and your husband been married?" The pastor asked.

"Oh, we're not married, not legally," she replied. "We're just living together, because I get this social security check from when my husband died, and we could never live without it. It pays the house payment and..."

She was going to explain the rest of their situation, but he abruptly interrupted her. "Don't you have children by this man?" he asked with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "Yes, two: Michael, he's two years old. Rebecca, she's one and..." He interrupted again and said something about a woman at a well and then... "You know this makes your children bastards, don't you?"

After the preacher left, Valerie nearly cried her eyes out. How could God be so accepting and these church people be so condemning? What was a piece of paper anyway? Roy and she loved each other, and besides that, they couldn't live without that check that came each month like clockwork. Roy wasn't going to like this, and she was right; he was furious over what this preacher had said and done.

"They're all a bunch of hypocrites," he told Valerie. "I don't want anything to do with them!" But what Roy didn't know is what she had found out; that thing that happened down deep inside of her. How could she ever explain such spiritually profound things to him when she didn't even understand them? Valerie couldn't let the same thing happen again with Roy that happened with Owen. There was no walking away this time for her! She prayed, "Please God,

Roy needs You in his life, like me. Our whole family needs You.”

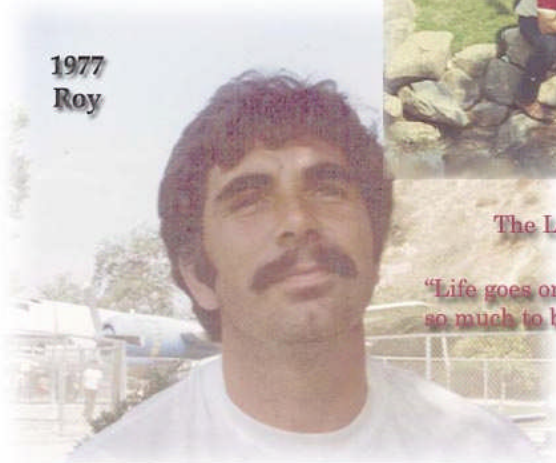
Roy's hobby was boats. He'd helped a co-worker build a large twenty-five footer and then bought it from him to get into the commercial fishing business diving for sea urchins. Working at Cable TV wasn't working out. After being employed there for so many years, he was burned out, so he'd recently quit his job for this new fishing venture that was sure to make a good living, plus satisfy one of his greatest desires. The ocean and fishing was his life.

Every day “Fisherman Roy” would leave out before dawn for the sea. It wasn't very many days after Valerie had prayed for God to speak to Roy, about turning his and their family's direction towards Him, before he came home with a bit of exciting news. He told her, "I was on the deck of my boat; the blue sky was beautiful as it reflected off of the ocean. I got this feeling... like God was right there with me or something. I felt real close to the thought that what you had said about Him might be true." He didn't need to say any more as she saw the tears well up in his eyes... Roy had met his Maker and they both agreed that the next step would have to be

marriage.

One afternoon, Lynn, a new friend of Valerie's from church, mentioned that Roy and Valerie needed to get rid of this Egyptian sundial they had on their living room wall, and especially the Ouija board game Valerie said was in the hall closet. Lynn told her those things were of the devil. There was not a moment's hesitation as far as Valerie was concerned. With that warning she immediately tossed them both into the trash cans on the side of the house. "Well, that's that," she said, slapping her hands together.

One afternoon when she was changing the sheets on the bed, while digging through that hall closet for pillow cases, Valerie



The Love of her life

“Life goes on; there was so much to be thankful for.”

noticed something. This familiar, dark square box was on the top shelf. It was the Ouija board she'd thrown away several weeks earlier. What was going on here? She took it down and threw it into the garbage can again, half angry at Roy for removing it in the first place. Not mentioning it to him she thought he should take such matters more seriously.

Two weeks later when changing the sheets on the beds again... her blood ran cold when she noticed the Ouija board back on the top shelf of the closet. What in the heck was Roy trying to prove? To her shock and amazement he didn't know what she was talking about. He'd never put it back in the closet, even the first time. Fear gripped her like a vise. She tried to tell Roy, but he wouldn't believe her. Michelle was only seven; Michael and Rebecca were two and one. There was no way they could reach that shelf...Valerie broke the Ouija board in pieces this time and hand-delivered it to the garbage man the next time he came around. She'd get rid of it for good this time.... or would she?

The once thriving fishing business suddenly wasn't doing so good. Japan was paying less and less for the urchins, and by this time sea urchin divers and commercial fishermen like Roy were all over the ocean. Because of Roy and Valerie legally marrying there was no more social security check to make the house payments, and after a few more months of tiny paychecks, the house payment was seriously behind, the utilities were near being shut off, and Michael was needing surgery on his ears, like Michelle had needed (with no insurance). They were desperate! Valerie said, "Trust God!"

Tuna sandwiches were on the menu for Thanksgiving dinner that day when they heard a knock on the door. The knob turned and the door was kicked open. It was Lynn Smith standing there with a bag of groceries in both of her arms and several bags around her feet. "Happy Thanksgiving," she yelled joyfully, with her face beaming in excitement.

"Lynn, what have you done?" Valerie took one of the grocery bags out of her arms. "This is your Thanksgiving present from the Lord." Lynn told her. It was hard to receive such a gift, especially when Lynn and Dennis were doing without to provide it. Their bills were past due also. "This is God's love," Lynn said.

Roy was still beside himself with worry, yet there was this strange peace among the storms that seemed to tell him and Valerie that everything was going to be all right. So much had changed since their family had turned their lives over to trust this God neither one of them could see. With only days before foreclosure on their home, there was an unexpected surprise in the mailbox one day. They could hardly believe their eyes. It was for \$1,500, made out to Roy. His grandfather, whom he barely knew, had passed away and left an inheritance to Roy's dad, except Roy's dad was dead, so the money was being split between Roy and his sister, Patsy. Bills were

paid, food was bought, and the house payment was caught up.

Soon after that miracle another followed right behind. Roy received a phone call from the main Cable TV office in San Diego, California. One of the top executives for the company wanted to literally hand over the Construction Department of Santa Barbara Cable Company to Roy, setting him up in his own business. It was incredible what this opportunity could provide for the family. It was all as if it had been dropped right out of heaven!

Valerie decided to find a job since the kids were gone now most of the day to private Christian school. Goleta Union School District was taking applications for school bus drivers, and it sounded like something she could do. She loved kids and she was a good driver. What more was needed? All she'd ever known before was cocktail waitress work. There was such a brand new, born-again feeling in Valerie now-a-days to explore this other side of life she'd never known before existed. The challenge of discovering positive, new things about her self beckoned.....

In a corner of the room she struggled to read the application form. Nearly one-hundred applications would be accepted and then reviewed during this phase of hiring; thirty would be chosen to interview and only six would actually be hired. Though it was so difficult to read, and though all odds seemed to be against her qualifying for this job, this newfound determination to discover her potential somehow kept her mind thrusting forward to believe for the impossible. This new-found faith that was replacing so much fear and doubt kept saying to her that she was special and unique, and with God by her side she could do anything!

The *interview* went great! Valerie was one of the thirty chosen to... take the written test. There was page after page of multiple-choice questions. She read them the best she could by putting the single edge of a piece of paper directly under each line to block out all of the other words on the page; then concentrating on the farthest word to the left only, she'd sound out each word, one at a time, to the end of the sentence. Sometimes in trying to figure out what the more difficult words were, she'd forget what the sentence was saying and have to start all over again. Some questions she had to read over and over... and over; most she just had to guess at the answer and then mark anything. She'd close her eyes, whisper a prayer and darken in the box that felt right. She finished last, but this time, she didn't quit!

"Valerie, we're pleased to tell you that out of thirty taking the tests, you were one of the six who passed." She'd made it! Six weeks of bus training was next. Valerie would soon be an officially certified school bus driver, operating a sixty-nine passenger, ten-speed, double-clutching, diesel transit, (with hopes that she could figure out where she was going, since she had little to no sense of direction); plus baby-sitting sixty-two pre-schoolers with the three-

minute attention span a four-year-old has.

Everyone had warned Valerie of this particular bus route no other bus driver wanted. There had to be a way to keep these little rug rats calmly in their seats, facing the front and not biting, hitting, spitting, kicking, and licking the bus windows. Valerie said the problem was a simple one to solve, if she had the route..

She bought a tape recorder, put a rubber band around the microphone to hold the button down, laid the microphone face-down on the tape recorder speaker and played nursery rhymes, songs and children's stories through the school bus intercom for the kids all the way to school. It worked, of course, and these children that no one could tame suddenly became little angels, singing along with Valerie to "Old McDonald Had A Farm... E-I, E-I,-O." She bought winter coats for the migrant worker's kids, (for the colder winter months), converted her bowling trophies into an award system for the best-behaved kids on the bus; the "Kid of The Month" award it was called. She learned all she could about safe driving to be the best school bus driver her precious cargo deserved.

Roy had named his new Cable TV business "System Services." It grew fast during three short years, and like most businesses, took a lot of his time and mental energy. The family was a very happy, busy young family though. Every day was full of activities. There was church three times a week; plus Michelle took baton, guitar and ice-skating lessons. Michael and Rebecca took flute and singing lessons. Then Valerie played on a women's softball team (right field), and Roy and Valerie belonged to a bowling team with her friend, Joanne, and her new husband, Butch.

With the kids in school, Valerie and Roy working during the day, plus all of her household duties, there was seldom much time for the two of them to be alone together. Roy noticed and mentioned this missing piece to their perfect family picture more than she did. There hadn't been time, in the seven years they'd been together, for them to really discover one another it seemed. Valerie still had her problems with sex and Roy still didn't understand why. She couldn't tell him what she thought was wrong, because he didn't want to hear. So... she pretended that it wasn't there, and faked it. "Life goes on; there was so much to be thankful for; why bring up the past anyway?" Valerie guessed that was Roy's philosophy.

He didn't talk much about deep things. What was he thinking about most of the time? Valerie thought deep. Wasn't that important? There were so many things she desired to know about which amounted to everything life had robbed from her. If he would only attempt to know her as a woman, as an individual person, she knew that they could have that closer relationship he desired. She could fight for his approval in one way or the other, but even if she did get it, there was no way of knowing for sure if she had it... because he'd never say.

It was the spring of 1977 when Roy and Valerie attended a James Dobson seminar on marriage held at the Santa Barbara City College. For three wonderful days they listened to this extremely inspirational and knowledgeable man, along with his wife, talk and teach on every aspect of married life. They covered subjects pertaining to relationship-building, communication, sex, finances and children. Valerie and Roy had a real special time together as they listened intently, clinging to every word... and to one another. This seminar inspired them both to move towards being the best husband, wife, and parents they were intended to be. Valerie saw Roy and herself under a new light now and she believed that he felt the same also.....

It was the final day of the seminar. The women and the men were divided into separate groups and given a list of questions to answer about their spouse; questions that would help each one in recognizing and acknowledging special qualities and attributes each mate had. When the men and women returned from their separate groups they were even closer towards one another... all “huggy-kissy” and stuff like that. You couldn’t pry them apart with a crowbar. The seminar was now over and everyone was leaving.

That afternoon, still on campus, Roy and Valerie sat holding hands on a large rock overlooking the ocean, in the warm California sun, when Valerie asked Roy affectionately, yet in a giddy sort of way, "Tell me honey... what did you say about me on that questionnaire?" She put her head on his big strong shoulder and took a deep breath of the cologne that was on his bare arm. It filled her senses. She always loved Roy’s muscular, hairy arms.

Valerie waited to hear what his response would be to her question... but he didn't answer; he just sat there looking out at the ocean. "Hey, you good-lookin’ man, tell me. What did you say... come on, tell me," she joked, punching his arm playfully. Suddenly, she felt a distance come between them as his hand relaxed under hers. Her smile slowly faded. She sat straight up and with more assertiveness this time repeated..."Roy, tell me. What did you say about me? Tell me what you said that was good about me?..."

"I'm sorry," Roy said, still looking away towards the ocean. He hesitated, then he just simply told her...

"I couldn't think of anything."

Valerie’s heart cracked! His words stung as they injected a poison that trickled deep into her soul, into dormant, infected places. Surely she must have misunderstood him; he must be kidding. Valerie warred in her mind as tears filled her eyes behind her sunglasses. "You couldn't think of anything that was unique, or gifted, talented or valuable about me?" she persisted, trying hard not to allow her pain to come through into her voice. “Not anything?”...

"I'm sorry, Valerie," Roy told her, and this time he was looking directly into her face. "I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but, I thought and thought, and I couldn't think of one thing for

some reason.”

Valerie quickly turned her head away to keep him from seeing the tears flowing down her cheeks. He was so sincere and yet, so sincerely, wrong about her. She had tried so hard to prove that she could become whatever she put her mind to, and she had thought she was good at a lot of different things, things that would make him proud she was his wife. Didn't he notice any of them?

Other couples from the seminar were walking hand-in-hand, kissing, hugging and giggling in conversation, but everything was spoiled as far as she was concerned. Now, all she could remember of this past three days of bliss, were Roy's words that echoed in her ears..... “I couldn't think of **anything...anything.. anything... anything... anything.**”

“We'd better go; it's getting late,” Valerie quickly interjected before her thoughts exploded into something she would regret later. She stood up from the rock they were sitting on, her face still turned away; and rather than start an argument she just held it in and pretended to be okay... but his words still echoed in her mind all the way home and every day after that. The first thing that was damaged, worse than before (if that were possible), was their sex life. She avoided bed-time like a plague which made Roy's opinion of her worsen, to her way of thinking. “If that's all he sees in me, what does that make me?” She wondered...

Valerie's very best friend, Joanne said that she wasn't much fun anymore since she'd become a “Jesus freak.” Before, when they met Roy in the bar that night, they'd been drinking buddies. They partied, smoked, cussed, and liked hearing dirty jokes. Valerie's life had changed so much, from night to day, and was worth much more than that now. One evening she boldly told Joanne that she needed God in her life. About how Jesus died for her sins on the Cross and was coming back again, but Joanne didn't respond like Valerie thought she would. Joanne rejected such silliness and in no uncertain terms let her know that, “If I go to hell... I'll see all of my friends there.” That comment made Valerie's blood run cold! She loved Joanne so much for all she had done for her. If it weren't for Joanne she wouldn't even be alive today. “Oh God, if she only knew what she was saying.”

It was so hard for Valerie to believe that she had just turned thirty. She was getting so-o-o old. My... where had life gone? There was still so much to learn and know about, especially in this new relationship she had with God. Roy did something real nice for her birthday though, to cheer the old lady up. He'd bought her a little, red sports car like she had wanted ever since her Datsun had been repo-ed in 1970, only this one was an MGB. “A darn good investment,” Roy told her. It was a classic model car, somewhat a fixer-upper he supposed, but it would bring a

good resale price once it was renovated.

Valerie loved her little car. She was the envy of all the school bus drivers and just about everyone else; her long, waist-length hair blew behind her, along with her long chiffon scarf she tied around her neck when the convertible top was down, like they did on TV. Thirty wasn't so bad after all... When Valerie finished cleaning up that little, red sports car on the outside, anyone would have to swear that it was brand-new.....

Michelle had been having problems in school. Valerie had thought that now that the whole family was Christians, their lives would somehow bypass the entire negative flow one lived in before giving their lives over to God. Wasn't He supposed to fix everything and make it all as if the bad stuff had never happened? Not so with Michelle anyway. A lot of damage had been done to her when she was developing back during babyhood. Like all babies, Michelle had come out of her mother's womb like a blank sheet of paper. Anything written there had come from what she had learned so far in life.

Only God knew what she had been through when things weren't so good with Valerie and Owen... that seemed like another lifetime ago. It was like a recurring nightmare for Valerie, watching her daughter go through some of the same traumatic, emotional symptoms she had suffered as a child at her age. It was like watching a game of checkers being played except... it was the same checkerboard, but a different game.

Michelle seemed so lonely and quiet, and she spoke with such a timid, frail tone of voice. She was emotionally fragile, overly- sensitive and got her feelings hurt easily. She was withdrawn around her peers, unable to hold her head up with confidence, and felt rejected by everyone, as if she didn't fit in anywhere... didn't belong anywhere. Everyone seemed to intimidate her, and her self-worth was based on others' opinions of who and what they thought she was or should be. At eleven years old Michelle was already a prisoner of someone else's lies told to her.

She ate lunch alone at school, played alone, and had problems concentrating and retaining information. She had a very low motivation towards much of anything. Valerie felt so sorry for her she could cry, but how could she help her daughter when she was having a hard time either running from or understanding herself? Teacher's conferences at school left Valerie nearly in tears, as teacher after teacher would make these sad remarks about Michelle being withdrawn and shy. Valerie felt so helpless, it made her want to just run and hide to keep from having to hear anymore. Had she been trying so hard to find out who she was that Michelle had gotten emotionally neglected?



She dressed her like a little doll with pretty ribbons in her long, blonde hair. Valerie made sure that everything in Michelle's wardrobe for school and play perfectly matched: dress, socks, ribbons, everything right down to correlating the shades of the colors she wore... but there had been very few hugs and kisses and too much of what she didn't, couldn't and shouldn't do. Valerie pretended so hard that everything would be okay. This was the false pretense she and everyone else hid behind. Michelle's and her new song became, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow".....Dreams come true.

"If we had a bigger house or the kids had nicer things, perhaps then Michelle and everyone else in the family would be happier," she thought. Maybe if she were a better wife and mother. So to compensate for what was lacking, Valerie thought of more creative ways to pull her household together and to convince herself and her family that they would one day be the model that every other family would want to live their lives by. After all, they were Christians and had all of Heaven on their side.

So from now on, everything would become more than a major celebration in the family household. Birthdays, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas soon out-shone, out-did, and transcended every other family's functions around: the most, the biggest, the best looking. All the other kids in the neighborhood wanted to be involved in the family's fun-filled activities. Valerie called all of this "memory-builders." She'd make sure her children never forgot their childhood... not ever!



There had been rolls and rolls of pictures taken. Album after album was full... Pictures of the family that Valerie took for every - and any occasion. If she only had a movie camera, she could most likely produce something so spectacular it would make the Brady Bunch household look like yesterday's re-runs. When Brian (Roy's son from his marriage to Karen) was visiting them, there were six in the family. It was all a

well-rounded combination of his, mine, and ours. Michelle was eleven, Brian was ten, Michael was soon to be six, and Rebecca would be five in a few weeks.....

It was New Year's Day when Roy, Valerie, and the kids had gone on a ride over the mountains of Santa Barbara to a beautiful, breath-taking valley called the Santa Ynez Valley. They'd been looking around for a larger home for several months now. This gorgeous valley area was like another world. It was surrounded by lush, green, alfalfa fields, and the rolling hills were dotted with hundred-year-old oak trees. It was one of the most beautiful and richest communities in America with elaborate horse ranches all over the place. Roy said that some of the horse barns cost more than the homes the people lived in. Renowned celebrities lived all through the small community. It had a tiny, connected tourist sub-division nearby named Solvang, a simulated Danish town. People came from all over the world to visit Solvang and bask in the entire valley's wealth of beauty.

"How would you like to live here?" Roy asked after they had driven around awhile. Well, lo and behold, it just so happened they looked at a house that day that had been on the market for a year. It had not been placed in the multiple listings book. Nobody knew about it, either, except the realtor, so Valerie thought. Roy seemed to always be springing surprises on her; never divulging the fact that he had taken a great deal of time and effort to orchestrate the outcome. The house was absolutely unbelievable...it was perfect for their family; her dream home come true.

In this huge, three-story house, each one of the three bedrooms upstairs were just made for the kids... and Michelle, Oh, my, she was so excited! Her large bedroom had its own bathroom and a picture-window that overlooked the green pasture where the horses would go... and there was a view of the mountains from there that was so beautiful.

The kitchen was all of Valerie's favorite colors (earth tones) and the kitchen window looked out onto a huge backyard and an acre of white-fenced pasture. Two bedrooms, two baths downstairs, three bedrooms, two baths upstairs, a dining room, living room with a wonderfully large, used, brick fireplace and raised brick hearth, sunken family room and large laundry room, two patios, and a long driveway that ended in what looked like a circular parking lot at a roadside park... Valerie knew this home was made just for them. The problem was the cost, Roy told her; \$118,000 was a lot of money. Payments would be high... What was impossible for man was possible for God, and four months later, the family moved into their new home... Roy hung a tire-swing.



"I don't care what you do, Valerie," Ray told her, "as long as I don't have to do any of the work and it doesn't cost me anything. Okay?"

Donna Reed, Harriet Nelson, and Betty Crocker, step aside; Valerie became the integrated trio in no time flat. A Suzie Homemaker Deluxe, to say the least. She had soon re-seeded (by herself), the entire one-acre of yard that had been nothing but weeds when they moved in. Jane Fonda, (the movie star), had ordered grass seed from the local nursery, and then decided that she didn't want it after

all, after the sack had been opened, Valerie was able to purchase the seed very cheaply and had a great conversational piece besides.

She planted flowers in every bare space available and completely decorated the entire inside of the house with garage sale specials, saving Roy a bundle. Speaking of Roy... Valerie planted hundreds of daffodil bulbs down the driveway just for him. They were his favorite flower. He could enjoy them when he drove down the driveway coming home from work in the spring. Her whole motivation was to be the perfect wife and mother, and to make up for the things she'd never gotten to experience before. Her kids were going to have what she never had.

Now it appeared as if Valerie had it all. A huge beautiful home; a tall, dark, and handsome husband who was the envy of every woman around; two beautiful daughters; and a good-looking son; and yet, there was still something wrong. A monster lay buried deep and she didn't dare disturb the grave for fear of its rising from the dead to haunt her. No matter how she performed or how grand her accomplishments were, there was still nothing that seemed to fill the void. The only pure realization of undiluted truth was the child-like trust she had developed for a God whose love has no strings and whose promises would never fail her.

Time marched on... Within this explosion of discovering untapped talents and abilities lay a sudden burning desire to raise food-producing animals. She needed barns, corrals, a chicken coop and cleared space to garden and.... she had no idea what she was doing or how to get started. "I don't care what you do, Valerie," Roy told her, "as long as I don't have to do any of the work and it doesn't cost me anything. Okay?"

The first garden she planted was about fifty feet by one- hundred feet. She just made some rows in the dirt with a hoe and put some seeds in the ground and then kept it watered. That sounded simple enough. There was no such thing as reading the instructions on the seed packages either. Within a few weeks plants were everywhere and something had to be pulled

out... but which ones? She had no idea which were vegetable plants and which weeds were. After a few more months she surely found out when discovering that she had pulled out all of the vegetables, and left the weeds. The next planting year Valerie was much wiser than the year before.

Spring was fresh in the air when she looked through the pictures of several poultry magazines and ordered by mail... one hundred baby chicks. It was confusing which kind to get. They all were so cute, so... she ordered a male and female of each. Roy thought she'd flipped out for sure. A hundred baby chicks were now in the laundry room, in a brooder she'd charged at Sears.

Valerie's faith in God had really grown... There was no place prepared for two adult chickens, let alone one-hundred. Once they outgrew their temporary home, there would have to be something prepared for them to live in. As outrageous as this seemed, she knew when the time was right, God would make the way. Roy said she did things backwards. She always had the cart before the horse. He told her, "You're supposed to get the chicken coop before the chickens; the pen before the pigs." But Valerie didn't think that way. Good grief, why get so excited over such trivial details? God had put this desire in her heart to grow food. She didn't know that yet, but she was soon to find out...

Baby chicks in place now, it was time for pigs. No pen yet? But that's no sweat... just pray! God said it that settled it, Valerie believed it. Sure enough within a few weeks she had three, free, little, white Yorkshires; Valerie's very own "three little pigs." Not knowing what to do next, she leaned a few boards up against the pasture fence and asked God to put angels around them to keep them on their property. The next morning... there they were. The boards were knocked over, but they were right where she'd put them. Later that afternoon a neighbor was telling Valerie about these darling little pigs (three of them) that had been running around in the middle of the street in front of her house, real early that morning. Evidently, God had let them run off to play, then brought them back home by the time Valerie went outside to do her chores.

Her mind thought like this all the time: simple, child-like, naive, teachable, and pliable. Roy still thought she'd gone ballistic and couldn't understand what drove her to such extremes. Reluctantly, he did build a corral for her three little pigs that afternoon. She could have kissed the ground he walked on after that.....

Let's see... chicks are still growing in the laundry room, piggies are getting bigger in the piggie pen, but... "Where's the beef?" All farms have cows! It was time for the beef cow, or what- ever it was called, so she prayed. Within a few weeks she had one cheap heifer... that was nearly free and almost ready to butcher.

Valerie planted sixteen fruit trees of nearly every variety of fruit. She acquired a Troy-Built rototiller to help with the ground turning for her gardens and planted four varieties of grapes and six types of berries. Flowers were everywhere... and the chickens were looking a little crowded in the brooder by this time. Added to her prayer list was a greenhouse so she could start her own seedlings to save money and time.

Valerie knew hardly anyone in the Santa Ynez Valley. She was busy all the time tending to her home, family, and farm chores and didn't have time for outside relationships. But she did meet a special acquaintance at the Buellton monthly livestock auction. He taught her a lot about things like cows, goats, geese, and chickens. The old farmer's name was Bud Harwood. He raised goats and told Valerie that goat's milk was good for the pigs to eat, along with day-old bread she could pick up at the grocery stores. So she started praying for goats.

In the meantime, while the answer was on its way, Valerie drove to Santa Barbara on Tuesday's and Thursday's to pick up bakery items from one store. They loaded her pick-up truck with every bakery item imaginable, just from what one market threw out daily. Just one day's worth was so much it filled the pick-up truck to the top of the cab. She drove to a dairy dock in Buellton every evening before dinner, and picked up buttermilk, cheese, milk, cream, cottage cheese, sour cream, yogurt, butter, eggs, half and half, cheese... every type of dairy product. These out-dated dairy items were going to be thrown away, too. It seemed like such a sin to waste like this, when children were going hungry. Having no hungry children around, Valerie fed it to her pigs: gallons and gallons of it and there were still gallons and gallons left over.

The chickens were getting restless! It was nearly time to get ready for the transition from the laundry room to a chicken yard. Roy laughed because there still was no chicken coop and Valerie planted sixteen fruit trees of nearly every variety of fruit. She acquired a Troy-Built rototiller to help with the ground turning for her gardens and planted four varieties of grapes and six types of berries. Flowers were everywhere... and the chickens were looking a little crowded in the brooder by this time. Added to her prayer list was a greenhouse so she could start her own seedlings to save money and time.

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One afternoon, soon after the final preparation, there was a knock on the back door. "Hi, my name is Doug," the young man said. "I heard you raise your own food. I'm looking for a place to buy fresh organic vegetables; could you sell me some?" he asked.

Valerie smiled with anticipation..."I can't sell anything, but... I can trade," she told him grinning from ear to ear. "What do you do for a living?" she asked, as if she didn't know.

"I'm a carpenter," he replied. There he was, right on time! The two of them made a deal for him to build her chicken coop in exchange for fresh organic groceries. The wood and chickens were waiting. Doug said that the wood was exactly what he needed for the job.....

"Oh wow, it's beautiful!" Valerie told Doug. The penthouse chicken coop was finished. It had two egg laying rooms, complete with built-in-the-wall nesting boxes, plus there was a storage room for the chicken feed and supplies. Doug built Valerie's request for Dutch-doors at each of the two entrances. Forty-seven roosters ended up in the freezer though, the nasty things. She lovingly placed twenty-five laying hens in each of the two rooms, with their own private entryway into separate chicken yards. It surely wasn't your average chicken coop, that's for sure!

In no time at all, the hens altogether were laying a couple dozen eggs a day. Besides fresh organic eggs, Doug was receiving vegetables right out of the ground, fruit fresh from the trees, homemade jams and jellies, fresh chickens (roosters), and all the goat's milk he could drink.

Valerie traded with him: fresh baked, homemade breads, and it wasn't long before steaks, roasts, bacon, and pork chops were available. Roy was trapping lobsters as a hobby and for a write-off for his boat, so there were four and six-pound bull lobsters to give Doug a once in awhile treat just to bless the socks off of him. He'd been so good to her and... he loved lobster.

Everything Valerie prayed for seemed to come to pass sooner or later. It was remarkable to those who knew her how God seemed to give her favor. It was remarkable to everyone except Roy. He had, soon after she started, resented all of her agricultural activities. He just didn't care for this sort of thing, and besides that, the feed bill was too high. She convinced him that she was working on that one. There had to be a way around having much of a feed bill at all. Roy complained that it was also hard for the family to go anywhere because of all the animals and daily chores... He could hire someone to help her if he was really that concerned. It wasn't like they couldn't afford it. Roy was making real good money at his business now, working a fleet of cable trucks. They were in the upper tax bracket; she'd heard him almost complaining about one day. Wasn't that a good indicator?

Valerie really believed that she was doing her family a service by raising all of their food, butchering much of it herself, and then preserving it all for the winter months. After all, what wife and mother wouldn't go to such extremes to give her family the very best?

Valerie couldn't understand why Roy couldn't put his blessing on something, anything, she did? She cooked these wonderful meals; he liked McDonalds and Taco Bell. She spent all of her waking hours working hard to be the best wife and mother she could be; he wanted her to sit down and watch television with him, instead. What a waste of time. Roy just didn't understand.

It hurt when he was critical at times and made jokes to the kids about the huge meals she served... Actually, they were a little outrageous: hand-churned butter straight from the cow, homegrown turkey, ham, roast, pork chops; honey from the bees she raised (to put on the fresh baked rolls she ground the wheat to make.) The mashed potatoes, corn, cauliflower, carrots, green beans, and salad fixin's all came out of her gardens... "But did she have to serve it all in one meal?" was Roy's gripe. There was just so much food everywhere, what was she to do with it all? Four freezers were full and it was harvest time again.

No wonder Roy was frustrated, but if he only knew how Valerie was just wanting to please him and what she was capable of doing for the family she loved so dearly. Roy said he just wanted her to be normal, the way she was when they first met. Now what did he mean by that? Roy put up with Valerie's grandiose ideas, but thought her a fool for doing all of this "growing food stuff"... when the grocery store was just a few blocks away.

Valerie had been noticing a sudden change in Rebecca's behavior that really bothered her. She had lost much of her giggle and sparkle for some reason. Valerie couldn't put her finger on what was wrong. Rebecca was clinging and couldn't seem to get her need for affection and attention met, no matter how much she got from Valerie. She especially wanted Roy to hold her, but he was tired when he came home from work and wanted to unwind in front of the TV. He'd put his brain in neutral to shut everything out. Valerie tried to tell Roy that he needed to pay more attention to Rebecca; she had seemed almost desperate at times for his love and approval. "Dad, please hold me," she would say, as she would climb up into his lap." Go play, honey, I'm busy right now, maybe later."

Winter was coming, and the greenhouse Valerie had prayed for hadn't arrived yet. No one knew that she believed God for it, either. Some of those who knew that she prayed for things had begun to laugh at her, so she decided to keep most things like this to herself. Looking through several magazines she found the perfect one to meet the greenhouse need she had. It was beautiful! She seemed to automatically know everything that was needed to grow seedlings the correct way in a greenhouse. Misters would raise the humidity on dry days; heat was important in the winter. There had to be a lot of the right kind of sunlight, and redwood lattice was important for durability. After Valerie had done all of her research to determine everything she wanted for the perfect greenhouse... she prayed. In the Bible she had heard that nothing was impossible with God, and that she could do anything through Him who strengthened her." Valerie believed that with all her heart, so now it was time to thank Him for the answer, and wait....

It looked like a first-class zoo out there on "God's Little Acres." Valerie even bartered for a sign to be made that said just that: Our family, God's Little Acres. Sometimes people would stop, before driving on past the house, to look at the beautiful flowers all around the property, the animals in the pasture, and ducks waddling around in the plush green grass. It was like something that should be in a Better Homes and Garden Magazine. Some of the passers-by would stop, get out of their car, knock on the door... and ask for a tour. Grade schools would schedule God's Little Acres for school field trips. The little children loved the trip. Even a garden club of professional gardeners scheduled a class at Valerie's to learn a thing or two from her expertise.

It had cost to feed certain animals, but she maneuvered it in such a way that everything tended to get recycled, in a strange sorta' way. Not much was wasted and the cost was kept to a minimum. Now she was waking up every morning at 4:00 a.m. instead of 5:00; spending time until dawn with the Lord, listening to the Bible on tape and then out she went to milk six goats and a cow, slop pigs, feed chickens and ducks, and water the huge gardens. Just after the sun was rising, she'd start a healthy breakfast for her family, and then get the kids off to school and Roy



off to work with healthy sack-lunches, of course.

Man-o-man... what a homemaker! Valerie kept all the poop cleaned up twice a day and put it into three compost bins to decompose into rich, organic soil for the gardens. She stacked hay for the horses and cows, with the help of a friend, and would put on her rubber muckies (boots) every morning and evening to hose down the cow manure in the pasture to organically fertilize it while it was fresh and squishy. She and the Lord talked a lot then, too.....

It was 1979 and well into late summer by now. God always showed Valerie when it was about time for her prayers to arrive... She knew seed needed to be put into flats if she was going to grow seedlings for her winter gardens.

Then Doug came down the driveway one afternoon in his old, green Ford truck with camper shell. "I have something for you, Valerie," he yelled as he walked to the pasture where she was working. "I don't even know if you want it or not, but I couldn't pass it up," he hollered. He shut the big metal gate and locked it. "What is it Doug?" she asked. "I was at Michael Douglas' house"... (the movie star?) Valerie interrupted... "Yeah, he's sort of a friend of mine... anyway, he was having these things hauled off to the dump so I told him I knew a nice lady who might like to have one," he told Valerie, as they talked and walked together towards his truck. "Well, here it is," he said with a smile pointing to the top of the camper shell. "It's all dismantled, but shouldn't take much to put together." The first thing she noticed among the pile of redwood was this stack of lattice. "It's a greenhouse," Doug exclaimed.

Valerie yelled with excitement... "Doug, I've been waiting for this... Oh thank you!" she told him hugging his neck. Valerie told him the whole story about the magazines, and all she



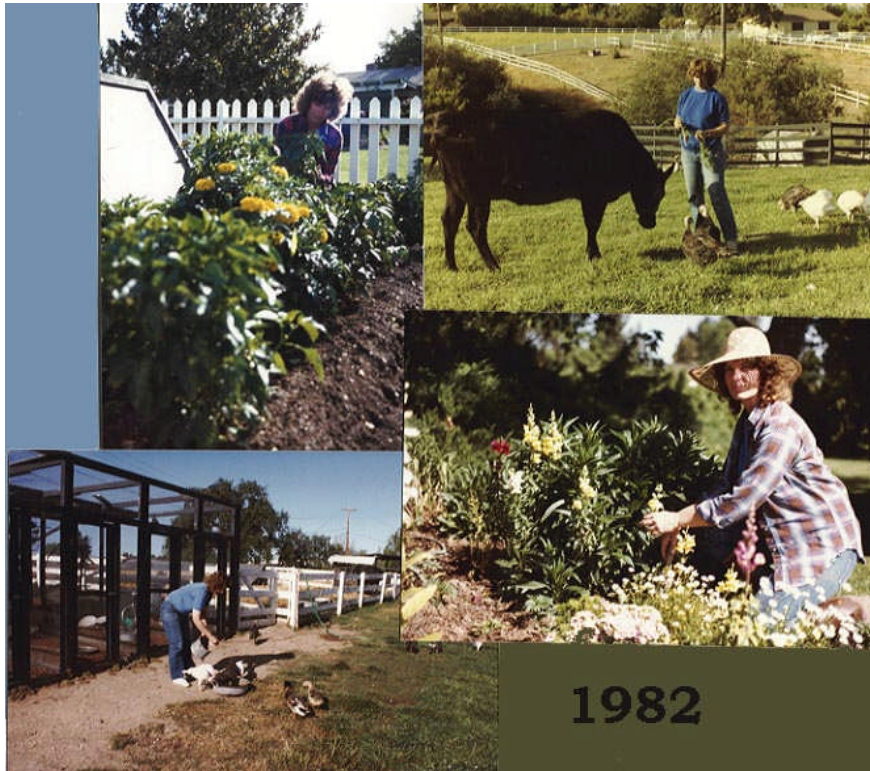
believed for. Doug looked at her strangely. "Either you're making this stuff all up, or you're some kinda' witch or something." They both laughed. He could kid around with her that way, because she knew that he knew, no matter how he tried to deny it, that it was all true. Doug had witnessed too much; it had all made a believer out of him.

"I want your pick-up truck, Doug," she yelled as he drove up the drive to leave that day. "Not mine, no way, never! I'll never give up my old truck," he yelled, as he drove off down the street. "**N-e-v-e-r... s-a-y... n-e-v-e-r!**" Valerie yelled back... Within a few months Doug moved out of state, but before he left, he sold Valerie his old, green Ford truck and camper shell, for much less than what it was worth. Roy figured that it was a good investment

All in all, the whole family seemed pretty happy lately. Michelle was even doing better in school, now that she had changed schools and all. She had made some very special new friends. That winter the smell of home-made bread filled the air for blocks. Valerie timed the baking of it perfectly, so the kids would smell the delicious aroma while walking down the driveway after school. Those wonderful memory-builders she constantly dreamed up would have an impact on their lives one day. They would never forget the kind of home they were raised in, and what a loving mother they had.

All the kids had chores with the animals, and sometimes it was hard to get them to follow through. She wanted to teach them responsibility, but it was hard when Roy wasn't more supportive of it all. The kids followed their leader, naturally.

The only one that really seemed to get into all of this animal stuff with Valerie was Rebecca. She was only five-years-old, but man, could she milk a goat just as well as her momma could. Rebecca and Valerie learned to love the animals together and had a lot of fun times together delivering baby goats, collecting big goose eggs in the spring and picking and washing veggies for supper. Rebecca didn't seem one bit squeamish over things like afterbirth, and blood and guts stuff. She didn't like it when mom butchered, though. It was hard for her to understand why you would kill your pets.



Valerie wanted to teach her kids, by example, what her words just couldn't convey. The truth about life, and the way it was really supposed to be, was in the Bible; not the way she had learned everything. Conception, birth, and death were all a part of the life-cycle God created, and what better way to learn about it than on a farm. Michael wouldn't even drink the cows' milk, but

he was in charge of the chickens, he didn't like it either. Valerie and Rebecca became very close because of all the animals they loved...

A young Mexican man came by looking for work in the spring. Juan was his name. He was here from Mexico, and like most of the migrant workers, would work for next to nothing during the summer months and send the money back to his family in Mexico. Most of them would return to Mexico in the winter, if they could sneak back across the border. Roy consented earlier to let Valerie hire Juan to do some of the heavier work. (That was real sweet of him. It said something she really needed to hear.)

They treated Juan like a member of the family, and even took him on vacation with them once. He eventually ended up living in an extra room their neighbors down the street had, in exchange for work. Juan spent most of his time at Valerie's home though, because there was always something fun going on. These neighbors down the street had a daughter Rebecca's age, and the two girls would play together almost daily. Juan played like a little kid with Michael and Rebecca; he especially liked Rebecca.....

All during that year of planting and working on the yard, Juan and Valerie worked together. He didn't speak English too well and was pretty shy, but she was patient and always able to get him to understand what she was trying to say.



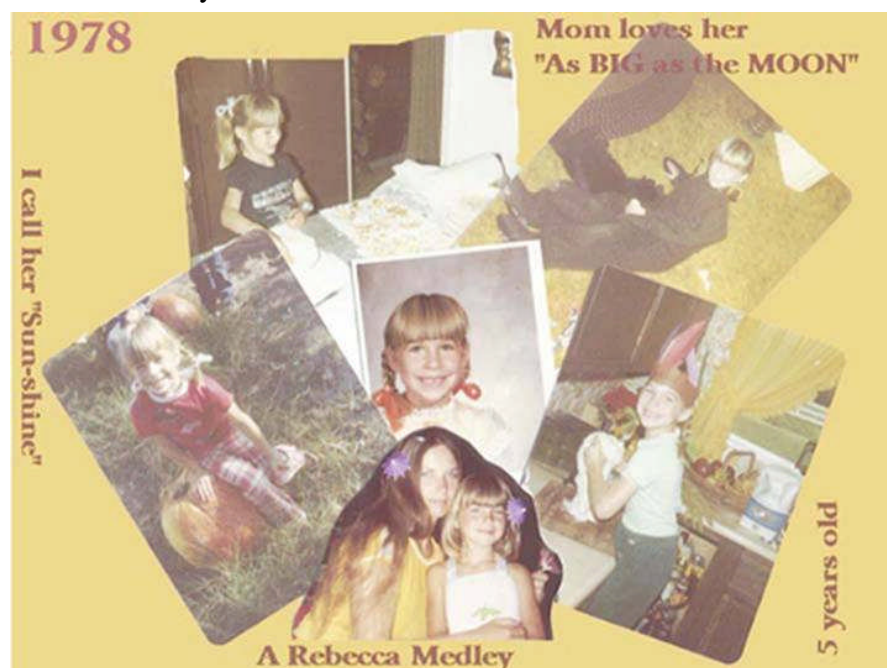
"Juan, I've spent all this summer telling you about Jesus and how much He loves you. He wants you to know that He has forgiven all of your sins when He died on the Cross for you."

"No, no," Juan interrupted, as he nervously stood up from the picnic bench. "He doesn't want me, I do bad things, and I'm bad!" His face paled; he seemed jittery as he sat back down again. Valerie was puzzled over his frightened reaction. He was riddled with guilt!

"Calm down, Juan, and listen to me, my friend. There's nothing you have ever done that God can't forgive. Believe me, I know. I've made terrible mistakes in my lifetime," she told him. As she patted him on the arm, Juan began to cry...

Later, after a great deal of convincing, he finally accepted the truth she had told him and prayed with her that afternoon. Juan Garcia had given his life to Jesus but it didn't seem to unload that tremendous sense of guilt from his shoulders. He was saved, but not receiving his deliverance from whatever it was that was tormenting his soul. She hadn't seen that kind of fear in someone for many years. Valerie watched Juan walk away that day, still so frightened. She wondered why.....

Valerie was driving home from Santa Barbara over mountains called San Marcos Pass, when Roy called her on the two-way radio in her car. "Come home, immediately," he yelled. "Something has happened to Rebecca!" Frantically, Valerie drove as quickly as she could, arriving at home to find Rebecca in her room, with the door closed, crying from a spanking. "What happened, Roy?"... He was very distraught and angry as he told her what had happened to their little five-year-old.



The worst thing Valerie could ever imagine had happened to Rebecca. She was devastated and sickened with the mere thought of it. She tried to get help from somewhere, but there was no one. She tried to get Roy to talk to her about it and bring some kind of comfort, sense and resolve to this horrible

situation, but everything got swept under the rug, like always... for life to just go on as usual? Another deep, dark secret to hold inside to fester? No! She refused to just heap this one on top of the compost pile of life along with all of the rest of the residue. This was different anyway, this was about her child; this was about her little girl and what had just happened to her. This was a reason to die for!

Where was there to turn for help and healing? There had to be a place. Had even God abandon her? Life had taken the life out of Valerie and stolen her dignity and all of her self-esteem, but it wasn't going to rob her children too. No more; "Enough was enough!" She wasn't about to allow the same kind of hell she'd suffered to become their plight as well. If no one had any healing answers, the only solution was to use herself as the guinea pig. How could she help her children when she was so sick herself? There was a depth to Valerie's desperation that seemed to have no bottom and no end. There was a strength to her determination that could not be taken down, no matter what the cost to her personally. The energy of her pain turned outward would propel her to the healing answers she so desperately was seeking, and the freedom from this insanity that seemed to keep her and her family locked into a prison not of their making, this became the reason for her to live another day. Because life was so hard, and it was so difficult to find someone to take the responsibility for the way bad things happen and were allowed to continue, Valerie would find the healing answers and put the truth right-where it belonged, and then Valerie would rescue her own children, thank you!

## EPILOGUE

If after reading the **Part I Synopsis** (77 pages), you are able to envision some of the magnitude of potential that Valerie Jo's story offers to her readers, there is a **Part II Synopsis** (400 pages) offered you.

There is no Part III *Synopsis*.

### **Part I “*Treasures Out of Darkness*” (The Healing of Valerie)**

is represented by 444 manuscript pages (four volumes).



### **“*Beauty for Ashes*” (The Healing of Valerie Continues).**



The manuscript has within it 2189 pages (28 volumes)

***“Restoration of All Things” (Conclusion),***



There are thirty-five volumes in her Part III Manuscript, which will bring Valerie Jo’s reader up to the present and its unbelievable, climactic conclusion. The already typed Part III manuscript has within it over 1500 pages as well as volumes of manuscript yet to be typed, and there are volumes yet to be written of the miracles and victories she lives in today.

Valerie Jo is an example to us all of how nothing is impossible to those who believe the nothing is impossible. She so relentlessly declares that if she can make it through the obstacles of life, no matter what they are or how insurmountable they seem, so can you. No matter what the odds are against you, Valerie wants you to know and experience what she has discovered through it all, that, “The darkest life you have ever lived can one day be the brightest Light you will ever walk in.”

***You will not believe how her incredible story ends!!!***

# PROFILE OF SHAME

## **The definition of shame clearly identified and defined**

- Shame includes an enduring negative self-image. No matter how many wonderful things are happening in your life, no matter how many times you are complemented or recognized, none of it means anything to you because of how you feel about yourself inside.
- Shame is highly "performance conscious." You always feel you are "on." You are so anxious to please and to be needed that you measure your worth by what you can produce, and wither or not that will give you value in the eyes of yourself and others. It's like chasing an elusive butterfly that can never be captured.
- Shame makes you unaware of your personal boundaries. You're not sure who you are, separate from someone else's opinion or image of you; you're not sure where you "end" and others "begin." You find it virtually impossible to stand up for yourself and say no. It's easier to allow others to make decisions and choose for you. You reveal inappropriate personal details of your life to people you have only recently met, in an attempt to feel connected to someone, or... you don't share at all for fear of becoming rejected and shamed once again. You never feel safe with yourself, or with others.
- Shame festers in people who are "wounded." Underneath the surface of your life, in the core of your soul (mind, will and emotions) there is a wound that has never healed. You nurse it and maintain it (most times subconsciously). You build a fortress (a shield) around the wound for protection, and a false image of "The Pretender" gives you a sense of identity, however, you know it's not real, or normal. You alone hold your secrets, and they are all locked up tight behind a guarded door deep inside your soul.
- Shame flourishes in pervading tiredness. There is no place for joy in shame. This means you are always tired and weighed down by life. Burdens overwhelm you more than most people who don't try nearly as hard as you do to find their place in this world. Inside you envy them and you wonder, "What's wrong with me? Why can't I be free and happy like



others I see?" Shame has built in radar where you are acutely aware of everyone else's happiness and peace.

- A sense of shame makes you overly responsible. You make it your job to ensure everything is running smoothly and everyone else is happy, and maybe, just maybe someone will share some of that happiness you created for them, with you. But if they do, can you receive it? The test is - will you feel worthy?
- Shame makes you ignore your own needs like a martyr, or... you believe the world owes you a living. Because shame tells you that you are no good, you seek to balance the scales by ignoring your own legitimate needs, or... you are on constant demand, and everyone owes you what they have to give. Attempts to please and appease others are always more important than listening to and caring for yourself.
- Shame tends toward addictive behavior(s), which can manifest itself in over involvement in work, etc, etc, etc. You are so ashamed of yourself that you work harder and longer in a desperate search for that elusive peace.
- Shame has no concept of "normal." If you have grown up with unhealthy programming, with dysfunction ally learned behaviors in your family, you perceive that to be the norm. You lack the perspective to know what "normal" should look like. For example, if you grew up with someone yelling in your face, that became familiar to you; you don't realize it is unhealthy behavior you do not have to live with.
- Shame makes it difficult to trust others. You tend to be very guarded around others, wondering what their agenda is for your life. It is hard to let anyone in, because you're sure that person will not like what she/he sees in you, both outward and inward. This behavior can manifest in perfectionism and eventually border paranoia, or worse.
- Shame makes you possessive in relationships. Out of a feeling of unworthiness and fear of abandonment, you cling to the people in your life, afraid that if they leave no one will be there to take their place. When this happens it reinforces that lying opinion of yourself that says to you, "See, I knew I had no real value. I'm not worth loving."
- Shame has a high need for control. Life is scary to a shame-based person; the only bearable way to survive is to maintain control... at all cost. Some people may think you are keeping your life extremely manageable and have great organizational skills, and this could be true, however, if control of every thing in your world is obsessive, and a growling dog with sharp teeth has been placed at the closed and locked doors of your soul, then an evaluation and inventory of this learned behavior is necessary. Once you identify these areas of dysfunction you can make your adjustments. The knowledge and understanding you will discover within this book series will cause metamorphisms to take

place in your life. It's always good to find understanding. It's not just the knowledge of the truth that makes you free, but it's what you do with that knowledge that makes the permanent changes in your life. Let this knowledge and understanding break forth with wisdom for you. You don't have to stay where you are, a prisoner of shame and guilt. It's time to fight for your life back! Let's unlock the doors and let you go free.