

# Entering the Shadows

## *Trauma and Abuse*

### My Grandfather's Eye

My grandfather had one eye.  
All of us kids were fascinated.  
He usually wore a glass eye in the socket,  
but he could pop it out and pass it around  
just like a marble.  
Sometimes he wore a black patch like a pirate.  
Sometimes he just let the barren lid lie there and pulse.

He told us a different story every day  
about how he lost his eye.  
He'd grown up on a farm, after all --  
he told us once a mule had kicked his eye  
right out of his head.  
The next day a pitchfork had poked it out  
during haying season -- that's why  
you don't get careless handling pitchforks and such.  
He'd been a lumberjack -- a falling tree  
had scratched his eye out;  
a flying ember from the cookfire  
fried his eyeball in the socket just like an egg in a pan.  
He used to smoke, and we shouldn't ever --  
he smoked a cigar down too close once  
and burned his own eye out.  
I spent an entire evening  
quietly trying to unpuzzle that one --  
I think that's why he told it to me.

When I was sixteen he told me  
his Dad used to beat him when he drank.  
He used to beat him with a chain.

Anitra F.

### Secret Keeper

I am the keeper of secrets  
to the world on the outer  
I shine and smile brightly  
My appearance does not  
indicate anything other than  
all is right with the world.

But inside there is buried  
anger I haven't even reached yet  
Sometimes the pain is so  
intense I can't breathe

Which man is standing on  
my chest this time, grandfather,  
father, husband, boss, who else?

I thought I left the abuse  
behind. Instead it's buried  
inside -- like Pandora's box --  
once the lid has been removed  
all manner of demons arise.

Madeline L.

### Under Construction

I used to have no trespassing signs all over my body  
Some people don't know the meaning of boundaries  
One day they came busted down my door  
they came in violating code  
they tore up my floors and gutted my soul  
they put a jackhammer through my walls  
and a sledgehammer to my head:  
I have enough yellow police tape to hang myself.

Heidi H.

The Map Is Not The Territory

Eskimos have a hundred words for snow.  
Here in the land that made dysfunctional famous  
we have one word for one thousand realities – depression.

Open your eyes to the faded ceiling  
stare without interest  
fall asleep again

rock on the toilet  
stare at the razor on the sink  
teetering on the edge

walk through a crowd  
stare ahead fixedly  
ignoring all the saw-edged  
whispers of your name

walk through a crowd  
hearing nothing

my bones have turned to concrete  
my flesh bruises itself on them

I do not touch  
I do not taste  
my body is a feather  
anchored in nothing

I will never stop weeping  
I will never cry again  
rock and bone have turned villain  
I am everything that is wrong with Life

Daddy came in at midnight  
it has been midnight ever since

I lost my Daddy to cancer  
I am lost

everything is fine  
and I don't give a damn

I need more than a hundred words.

Anitra F.

Untitled

Trying to get close to my mother was like  
getting close with a vacuum sweeper.  
And being close with my father has been  
being close with a lawn mower.

Catherine H.

*(Poetry by homeless and formerly homeless women)*