

The Secret



Art & Healing from Sexual Abuse

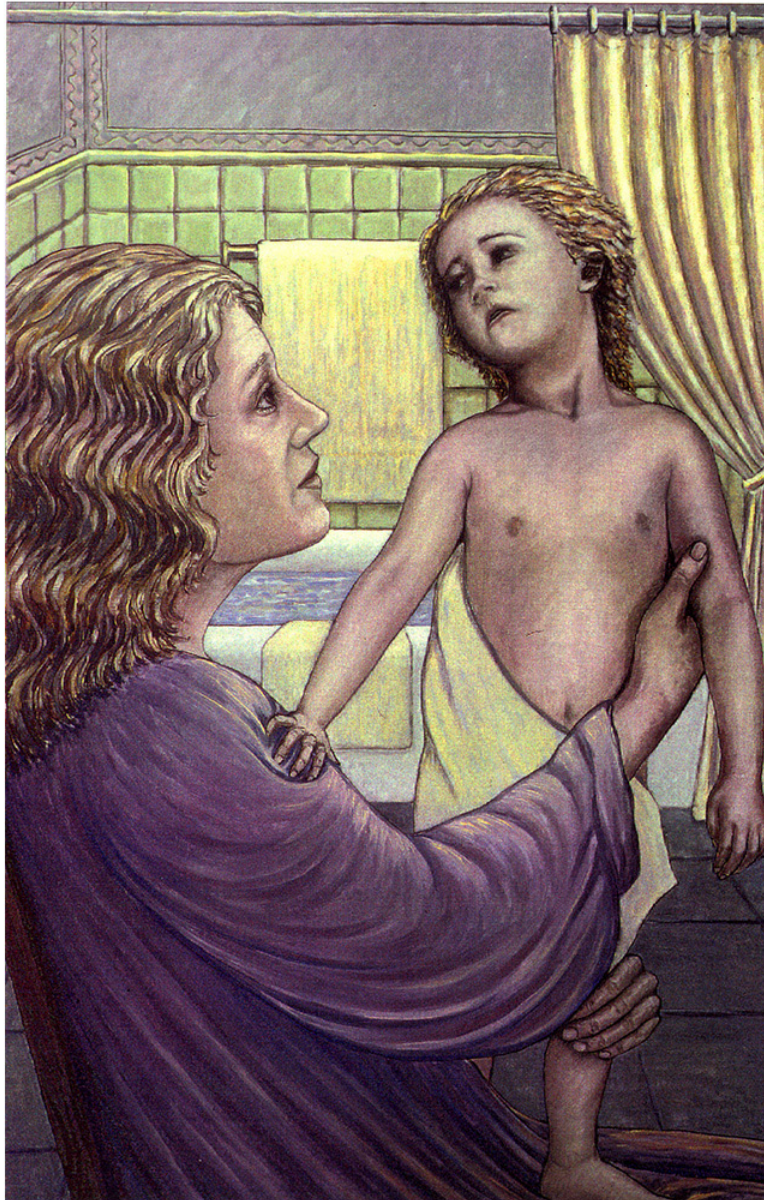
Written and illustrated by Francie Lyshak-Stelzer



*Once there was a child.
Her mother was always busy with the baby.
Her father was always away.*



She was lonely. She took a walk down the road. When the neighbor invited her to play, she was glad. When he held her too close in her lap, she was quiet. She had learned never to argue with adults.



*At nighttime her mother bathed her. She tried to tell her mother
about the neighbor and what he did, but she didn't have the words.
So her mother didn't understand.*



*When she saw the neighbor again, he took her into his house.
He touched her private parts.
Then he told her to keep it a secret, or she would be punished.*



*For a long time she was a prisoner of the secret.
Then, after a while she forgot it.*



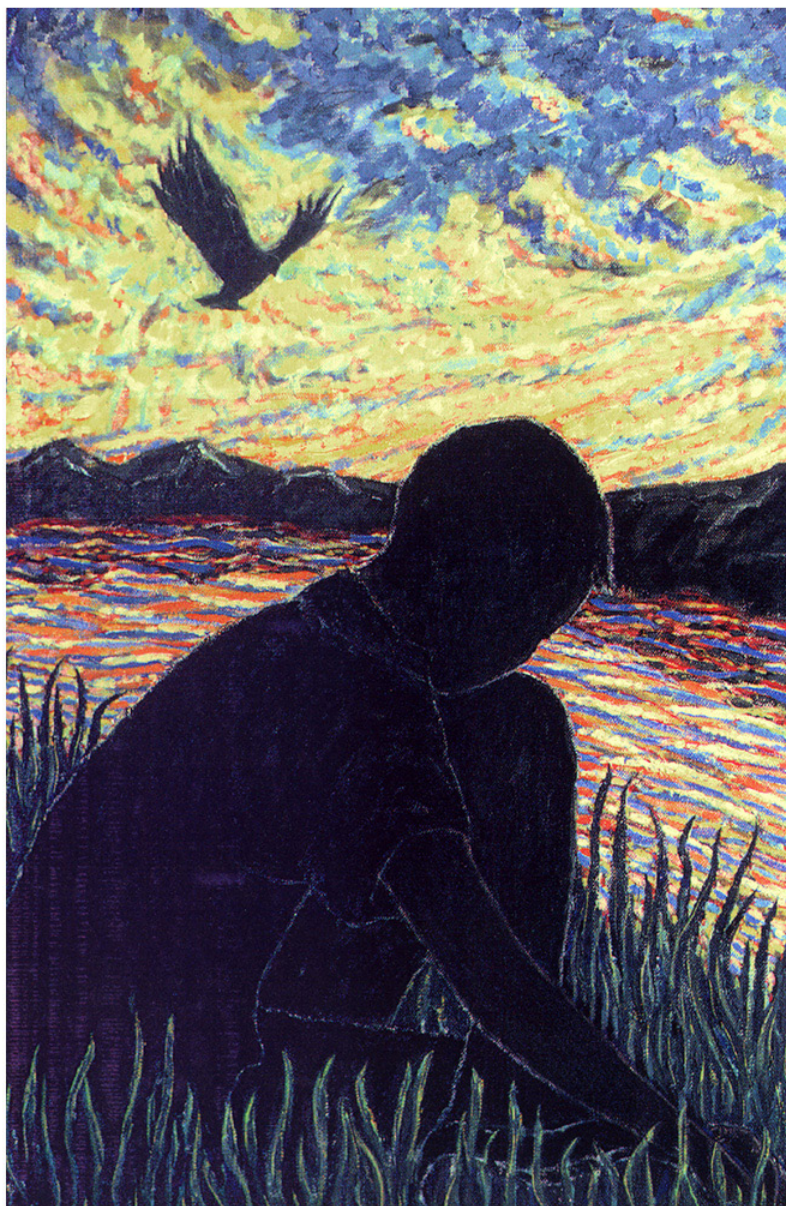
*From that time on, she felt lonely and different from others.
She didn't want to be close to anyone.*



*And when she slept, she had nightmares.
She dreamt that she was a doe at the foot of a volcano.
A vulture was swooping down on her to capture her for his food.*



*She dreamt that she was burning alive,
chained to a boat in the middle of the sea.*



As she grew older, she was sad and no longer went exploring.



When she loved, she felt trapped and powerless and consumed.



*Again and again she found herself surrounded by danger,
always playing the fool.*



*Finally, when the danger threatened to kill her,
she fled to the sea. She threw herself into the waters
and was carried to the place of remembering.*



*As she remembered the secret, her world was blown apart.
She remembered her innocence
and saw how it had been broken and thrown away.*



*In time she grew more angry than hurt.
And for a long time she raged,
until the stored-up anger was spent.*



*Once the anger had passed,
her fear subsided and her dreams changed.
The phantom that before had haunted her,
now lifts her out of the sea--an innocent child again.*



*She dreams that she is nurtured by beasts,
instead of consumed by them.*



*She dreams that she swims effortlessly,
carried by the current of a quiet river.*



And she dreams of trusting again.

The End

Paintings

- page 2 "Once there was a child ..."
Food, oil on linen, 32 x 36, 1/93.
- page 3 "She was lonely ..."
In Broad Daylight, oil on linen, 26 x 46, 12/92.
- page 4 "At nighttime her mother bathed her ..."
The Bath, oil on linen, 46 x 30, 2/93.
- page 5 "When she saw the neighbor again ..."
Pedophile, oil on linen, 60 x 30, 1/91.
- page 6 "For a long time she was a prisoner ..."
The Addict, oil on linen, 70 x 30, 10/90.
- page 7 "She felt lonely and different ..."
Porcupine, oil on linen, 26 x 44, 12/89.
- page 8 "When she slept she had nightmares ..."
Volcano, oil on linen, 50 x 30, 7/90.
- page 9 "She dreamt that she was burning alive ..."
Everyman Crosses the Great Water, oil on linen, 46 x 34, 16/91.
- page 10 "As she grew older, she was sad ..."
The Good Soul, oil on linen, 48 x 33, 9/91.
- page 11 "When she loved, she felt trapped ..."
Ravishment, oil on linen, 64 x 36, 4/92.
- page 12 "Again and again she found herself surrounded ..."
Tightrope Walker, oil on linen, 50 x 32, 2/92.
- page 13 "Finally when the danger threatened ..."
Rebirth, oil on linen, 40 x 26, 2/92.
- page 14 "As she remembered the secret ..."
Tornado, oil on linen, 29 x 22, 6/90.
- page 15 "In time she grew more angry than hurt ..."
Mad Dog, oil on linen, 28 x 62, 11/91.
- page 16 "Once the anger had passed ..."
Death Disarmed, oil on linen, 36 x 48, 10/92.
- page 17 "She dreams that she is nurtured ..."
The Real Mother, oil on linen, 32 x 60, 11/92.
- page 18 "She dreams she swims effortlessly ..."
The Quiet Moment, oil on linen, 30 x 72, 6/92.
- page 19 "And she dreams of trusting ..."
Companions, oil on linen, 28 x 50, 10/91.