

Concrete Angel

One person's journey of healing with multiple personalities

By

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INTRODUCTION

Standing in front of my mirror I turn slowly to see if there are any new bruises. Glancing down I notice two fresh welts across the back of my thighs. Surely they will become bruises as the swelling goes down – ok, no shorts for a while.

Turning back around I notice the bruise covering my entire abdomen. I didn't know a bruise could get so big. Summer will be over before I can wear a mid-drift or swimsuit again. Using my right hand I apply a gentle pressure; at least the tenderness has eased. It should be easier to move naturally without wincing in pain now.

Looking down I check my right wrist. No bruise this time; that's good. It's difficult to explain long sleeves during the summer. I rub it gently trying to work out the ache. Writing will be more of a challenge now.

The burn mark on my left hand catches my eye. I had forgotten about that. Didn't I get that one during the winter? At least it was small and easily explained away.

Turning my gaze back to the mirror I groan at the sight. My nose, still dripping blood, has swollen slightly. Great. What will the story be this time; a baseball, a Frisbee, falling down the stairs? What did I say last time?

A drop of blood slips to the floor and I glance down. That bleeding hasn't stopped yet either. The pain between my legs throbs. I can smell the sweaty palm over my mouth and nose and struggle to breathe as if it were happening again. Tears well in my eyes, but I blink them away. No crying - I will not give that to them. Why was I ever born? If this is life, I'd rather not live, but they'd see that as a coward's way out. The curtain flaps in the wind catching the gentle summer breeze and bringing me back from my thoughts.

They will be expecting me downstairs soon so I better find some clean clothes and get moving. I walk to the dresser and gingerly pull open a drawer looking for something that will hide the marks. Preparing to put on my happy face, I look outside to catch a glimpse of the bright sunshine. The pile of fresh animal guts on the porch roof in front of my window catches my attention. Nobody must ever know the truth. It makes no sense to me. Is there some other way of life I don't know about?

Will the nightmare ever end?

CHAPTER 1 Part 1

Opening Summary - Sarah

I was born into a very large but poor family, the seventh of eight kids. My parents were from even larger families. We had very little money and lived well below the poverty level, but my father's pride made him refuse to accept government aid even when agencies tried to force him to take it. The only clothes we had were hand-me-downs, which we wore whether they fit right or not, whether we liked them or not. My siblings and I quickly learned that items from other people's trash could become our toys. We would walk to the dump to find things to play with or to use at the house. Our bikes were made from parts we found, tree houses were built with nails we straightened out, and pieces from broken swing sets hung from our trees. At bath time the tub would be partly filled and at least 3 of us would take turns using the water before it could be drained. Holidays were rather unimportant and gifts were almost non-existent.

We lived in a rural area surrounded by a lot of land, trees, a river and a lake. A large part of our land was used to grow food. All of us spent time working in the gardens, canning, or freezing food. We occasionally raised rabbits or other animals for food as well. I managed to avoid butchering day for the rabbits, but I had to help with chickens because there was so much more work involved in slaughtering them. Even with all that work, we often went hungry. Sometimes we went without meat so long that my mother would threaten to eat one of the kids if we didn't get meat soon. Everything we had was watered down.

That was just the setting for my life, not the problems that came with it. In my family nobody ever said "I love you," and no one ever showed affection of any kind. Expressions of love simply didn't exist. My parents were strict and prevented me from doing anything they deemed inappropriate for a girl, which included joining the school band or planning to attend college. I was constantly put down, yelled at, degraded, called "ugly" and "stupid," and told how inferior I was to everyone else. My parents and siblings threw things at me; I was made to stay in a cupboard for hours; my hair was pulled out; I was hit with various things including a leather leash, a razor strap, a switch, or whatever else was handy. I never knew what to expect when it came to discipline or rules. It was not uncommon to feel the sting of a leather leash on bare skin without even knowing what the punishment was for. Needless to say, I had more than my share of bruises growing up.

Since money was so scarce, and everyone was expected to help make sure we would have enough to eat, we had to grow up quickly. Toys weren't considered necessary. I was never allowed to take a stuffed animal to bed, and by age ten I was expected to give up the few toys I did have. I foolishly left a few I couldn't bear to part with on my shelves, and came home from school one day to find every toy shredded and spread out on my bedroom floor.

Expectations were high when it came to any performance that others might see. When I failed to maintain straight As because I had trouble memorizing my times tables, a “tutoring session” was provided. My mother yelled at me for being so stupid, and my head was held and shaken until it hurt while I was forced to repeat the times tables over and over until I had them down perfectly.

All of that was just considered “normal” in our household, and in fact, I didn’t think of it as abuse at all. However, beginning in infancy I was also sexually molested. It seemed like most of my relatives, family friends, and even strangers molested me one way or another at some point during my childhood. It was simply something that everybody did, and it had been passed down through many generations. When an abuser was caught in the act, I was the one yelled at, blamed for not stopping it.

Yet, although this may be hard to believe, that was the good side of my life. I attended church, got good grades, did well in extra-curricular activities and volunteered for charitable events, but there was a darker, more hidden side. The side of my life that hardly anyone knew about included various members of my family being involved in the occult—in Satan worship. This too was a generational thing that had been passed down.

My participation in their gatherings began as a toddler. Through the years I was continually the victim of Satanic Ritual Abuse. While with the group, I was tortured, brainwashed, programmed, and exposed to more horrific things than most people even imagine. This included being hung, nearly drowned, sealed in a coffin, covered with bugs or body fluids, beaten, cut, and molested. I was forced to watch, and participate, in the torture and killing of an uncountable number of animals and people. There were stonings; ceremonial stabbings, sacrifices, “barbeques,” and drownings. Most of the victims were infants or children, mostly female. A few were adults who didn’t fit in with the group’s ideals.

I was forced to take communion, which included real blood and real flesh from a recent victim sacrificed on the altar. At times I was drugged or marked with Satanic symbols. The cross, which was always upside down, was used as a tool to invade bodies. True magic was used, and demons were invoked to participate in various activities. I was taught that nobody could ever love me; I was evil and belonged to Satan. Demons were attached to me, and I was programmed to return for a ritual of self-sacrifice if I ever left the group.

Although I usually tried to be as perfect as possible, I was not the most cooperative child while with the group. I tried to save chosen sacrificial victims, to run away, and to hide their special utensils, but severe punishment followed every rebellious act. Someone else was usually punished as well, while the blame for the

punishments was placed on me. The guts from some of the sacrificed animals were frequently left by my bedroom window or in my bed as a reminder to behave.

At age nineteen I decided the only way to ever escape was to just pack up and leave. I loaded my few belongings into a van and moved as far away as I could, with nothing more than enough money for one month's rent. I had no furniture or food, but I was free. After finding a job I literally lived on bread and water just to cover my bills. What I didn't know at the time was how connected the various occult groups are. Within two weeks of my arrival in Florida a young man approached me. He seemed nice at first. It wasn't long before he started abusing me, but I stayed with him anyway because abuse was familiar. When I finally decided to leave him, he raped me. At that moment I knew nobody would ever want me, leaving a choice to live a life of loneliness or stay with him. We married shortly after that.

As expected, the abuse continued to escalate. Before long his involvement in the occult became obvious. I was right back where I had started. I was introduced to people within the community and surrounding areas who participated in the occult (many of whom continue to live, and work in this community, while continuing to participate in the occult) this included a pastor, law enforcement personnel, and many highly respected citizens in the area. I was then forced to assist him as a recruiter and gradually pulled many unsuspecting people into a world of darkness. One of my husband's favorite pastimes included torturing and killing animals. To remind me of my place, he left one of the dead animals under the blankets on my side of the bed. After I discovered the animal he made me lay in its place without cleaning the bed.

While pregnant with my daughter, a ceremony was performed, and she was expected to take my place in the occult since I had turned away from my training. That was more than I could bear, so I fought to protect her. As often as possible I would step in to take her abuse as well as mine. I did everything I could to keep her away from the group. Two years later I had a son; the plan was for him to be born out of the hospital so there would be no record of his birth, as he was supposed to be sacrificed. Again I rebelled, and intentionally made sure the medical community was aware of his birth. Because of my disobedience the abuse continued to escalate to a point where I didn't think my kids or I would survive.

Because we were kept completely isolated, the only people I ever met were those my husband introduced to me. One of them was a man who was willing to help me get away from my husband. With his help I got a divorce. After seven years of abuse, I was left with two children, no job, no transportation, and no place to live. The man who helped me out began to push himself on me, and I felt obligated to stay with him because he had helped me. Within a year I was married again. Although my new husband was abusive, it was nothing like the level of abuse I had been used to. So I decided I could handle it. Like my first husband, he slept around. That didn't

bother me until he decided my daughter was old enough for him. I tried to stop him from molesting her, but nothing worked.

By this time in my life I had started working full time, supporting the four of us until my husband finished his schooling. We had just purchased a home, a first for me. We purchased a second vehicle so I didn't have to hitch rides any more. I had stopped participating in the occult. We had even started attending a church that felt real. I still had an unhappy marriage and a strained family situation, but was determined to make the best of it.

The fall of 1998, just eight years into my second marriage, the pastor phoned asking me, and my husband, to meet with him. Once in his office we were advised my daughter had revealed to a friend that my husband was molesting her. I didn't know what to do. My husband was with me, so I couldn't tell the pastor what was going on. The next day when I got home from work, a lady from the Department of Children and Family Services was waiting to interview me. Before the night was over she told my husband to leave the house and took my daughter. The following day she phoned, threatening to take my son away and have me charged criminally for failing to protect my children.

My world finally began to fall apart. Like so many times during my life, I just wanted to die; I wanted it all to be over. That was when I sought out a Christian counselor for help. I knew that a true Christian would not be involved with the occult, and I couldn't risk being forced back in.

My life hadn't left me bitter or angry. It hadn't left me in an addiction or a life of crime. It had caused me to become what is commonly known as a multiple personality. Parts of me were useless by this point in life because they had been through so much, but other parts were able to function as if nothing had ever happened. It was that part of me that faced the court hearings; the police investigations, yet another divorce, and finally getting my children back. It was that part that sustained me when my daughter started abusing alcohol, threatening to run away, and attempting suicide. It was that part of me that began counseling to get through the immediate pain that felt like it would crush me. It was that part of me that finally experienced love when the church that had turned my husband in opened their arms to me and helped me with everyday needs. I was given food; my car was repaired; someone was actually willing to spend time talking to me and was willing to let me continue to associate with them.

My plan was to see a counselor long enough for things to calm down and I could make it on my own again. I had seen other counselors, tried the abuse hotlines and churches, but nobody had ever helped. This was different; God had arranged for me to see a strong Christian who had experience with multiple personalities and Satanic Ritual Abuse survivors. He also had experience casting out demons, and I had 19 of them at that point. My journey to healing had just begun.

I didn't think I had Dissociative Identity Disorder. I thought everyone heard voices in their head and lost time. I didn't know others could remember their childhood; and thought everyone had gaps in time that seemed as if they hadn't even existed. The abuse had seemed normal to me. Emotions were something to be avoided because nothing felt good, but that's just the way life was.

When I first went to see Gordon it wasn't for me. The experiences with other therapists had not been good. Nobody understood me, and they certainly didn't help. I was only going to get my daughter some help, and get past the court battle. Nothing could be worse than losing my children, I would have done anything to get them back, and if that meant going to therapy, I would do it. I had everything under control.

What I didn't expect in therapy was finding someone I could lean on, someone who would help me through some of the most difficult things I would ever do. I had rarely let myself feel emotions, but losing my children forced me to an extreme emotional state. I had never let myself "need" anyone before, but I don't think survival would have been possible without that support. I had to fight to get my children back, decide about getting divorced again, follow through with that decision, file charges and testify against my husband, learn how to live on my own barely able to make ends meet, and work through some tough issues with my children. Hardest of all, I finally had to face what was wrong in my own life, admit to the abuse I had experienced, and admit I had Dissociative Identity Disorder. At times the healing process seemed worse than the abuse, but Gordon kept me going.

The first time I entered Gordon's office it seemed right. I didn't trust him; I didn't trust anyone, but something was different. As time went on I discovered it was his knowledge and experience in working with people like myself, as well as his relationship with God, that made the difference. Little by little my trust increased, then I started to open up a little at a time. God led me to his office, knowing he was the one who could help me heal.

There are a lot of others like myself who need help, but there are too few who know how to help them. It is my hope, by reading this book, you will gain a desire to help those with DID, gain insight into what it is like to live with DID, and learn how to help others like myself.

I never thought it possible to feel as good as I do today. I want others who have been hurt to experience the healing that is possible. However, it is not a journey they can take alone. A skilled guide is needed, and it is my hope this book will help you become that guide.

CHAPTER 1 Part 2

Opening Summary – Dr. Greenhalgh

It was 1989, and I had been practicing therapy for about eight years. An associate of mine, John Zilenhad moved to Colorado a few months earlier, and I had taken over some of his patients. One in particular, Debbie, a woman in her early twenties, had been a victim of sexual abuse by her father. She manifested the typical symptoms of a survivor of abuse – depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, codependency, relationship problems, excessive shame and identity issues.

John called one day and said he had been learning about Multiple Personality Disorder and getting some experience working with individuals with that diagnosis. He also stated that he thought Debbie might be a multiple. As a result of that discussion John flew back to Florida, and we set up an appointment with Debbie. She had continued a relationship with John via mail and had communicated to him about hearing voices and names inside her head. One of the names she gave him was Melissa, who she said sounded like a little girl's voice. Shortly after the session began, John asked Debbie if he could talk to the part of her that went by Melissa. Within seconds, Debbie's whole demeanor changed – her facial expression, body posture, even the way she spoke. Her voice was that of a young girl. She said she was six years old and her name was Melissa. She went on to talk about much of Debbie's abuse and said there were others on the inside with different names and ages.

Frankly I was blown away at what I had just witnessed. Like most therapists, I had heard about a few remote cases of Multiple Personality Disorder, and of course everyone had seen the movie Sybil. But, here it was in my office. For years I continued to work with Debbie, who became the first in a long line of patients with this "rare" disorder. I began reading all the books on Multiple Personality Disorder and attending the few seminars available. It turned out that two other patients I had been working with were also multiples. I just had no idea what to look for, or what questions to ask, let alone how to treat it. And now all of the sudden this supposed rare disorder had appeared with three different patients of mine. Over the next twelve years I would treat over twenty patients with Multiple Personality Disorder, now referred to as Dissociative Identity Disorder.

Sarah showed up in my office in September 1998. She was referred to me for the purpose of working with her daughter who had recently revealed being sexually abused by her stepfather, Sarah's second husband. As time went on I worked with the whole family, eventually ending therapy with Sarah's daughter and son. Sarah divorced her husband who consequently was incarcerated for his crime. However, Sarah continued to come to therapy to work through the divorce issues, parenting problems and codependency. As time went on she began to reveal more and more about her past, including abuse from her first husband as well as childhood abuse.

After nearly a year of therapy, she began to tell me about voices in her head, and reported some mild dissociative experiences. Even after a year of therapy I still didn't strongly consider that Sarah was a multiple. Though I now had nearly ten years of experience working with Dissociative Identity Disorder I did not quickly diagnose, nor even expect my patients to be multiples. Actually, I didn't really *want* to keep finding, dealing with, and treating people with this disorder. As time went on, Sarah continued to reveal more and more information that might indicate this diagnoses. She said she had names but would not tell me.

One night I had a dream and all I remembered was that one of the names Sarah had was Mary. I then confronted Sarah with that information and she admitted that Mary was in fact one of her names. It took two years of therapy before Sarah was able to let another "alternate personality" ("alter") out to speak with me. Though I was certain by this time Sarah was a Multiple, I couldn't confirm it until I actually spoke with another alter.

We have been working together for six years, and this is our story. As you'll see, Sarah is a remarkable individual. Her story, though unique, is representative of people with Dissociative Identity Disorder. I count it a privilege to not only be able to work with someone as incredible as Sarah, but also with my other patients who have had this diagnosis. I'll admit it is hard work, but extremely rewarding and fulfilling. Nothing has taught me more about being a therapist and growing spiritually, than working with these unbelievable people.

We have several goals in writing this book. The first one is to educate people about this disorder, the causes, symptoms, treatment and prognosis. Secondly, we hope to help professionals recognize, identify, and treat Dissociative Identity Disorder successfully. The third goal is to help those who have this disorder better understand the process and hope of healing. And finally, the book is designed to provide both a treatment model as well as an experiential perspective of Dissociative Identity Disorder.

Unfortunately, there is great misunderstanding about Dissociative Identity Disorder. Though it is recognized and delineated as a psychological disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, many professionals don't believe it actually exists or believe if it does, it must be extremely rare. I mentioned earlier about having the privilege of working with these "unbelievable" people, that's part of the problem. The disorder seems unbelievable and the stories that Dissociative Identity Disorder patients tell about their childhood seem unbelievable, hence the problem in the professional community let alone the general population. To be honest, if I had not been exposed to this as often as I have, I too would have doubts that this disorder, as well as the stories that go with it, could be real.