

Organ

Lessons

William T. Moersen

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*This book is dedicated to
sexually abused children
everywhere.*



Bill at age 11

PART I

1

It's not that I was a "whiz kid" or anything like that—my gift was for music! The muses must have made their surreptitious entrance into my life on the same day an old fashioned upright piano that my father had purchased arrived at our house. It had a dull black finish with some nicks and scratches on it, but I could have cared less. So what if it wasn't brand new? I wouldn't have known the difference anyway. After all, I was only five years old.

As I pounded out my own version of the "Anvil Chorus," it sounded great to me. However, my parents had to find a piano teacher right away, in order to keep our neighbors from complaining that I was disturbing the peace. They hired a teacher who made house calls in the afternoons after school. I can still remember my first lesson. My mother dressed me up to the nines, and as the teacher was coming up the sidewalk, my mother licked her thumbs and ran them over my eyebrows.

My new teacher was young and vivacious. Each week she assigned me a new piece in the *John Thompson Piano Course* that she used for my lessons. She had something called a "note finder" which was a square card with the musical staff printed on it. It had a small black plastic quarter note that moved up and down by turning a scrolling bar on the left-hand side. I practiced on my "new" piano with all of my heart and learned to read music very easily. I was not playing Beethoven's *Sonatas* yet but I was making excellent progress. At the end of the first year of lessons I gave my first recital. I had practiced for hours beforehand and played each note perfectly, but I as

sorely disappointed because my performance was over so quickly.

I can't remember exactly when, but at some point I became interested in the organ as well. My parents had been raised as Catholics, so they didn't hesitate in enrolling us in Catholic grammar school. We attended many religious services at the parish church where the organ was played on a regular basis. I was fascinated when I had my first opportunity to view the organ console up close. I was in awe when I saw the complicated array of stops, buttons, keyboards, and pedals.

By the time I reached the third grade I had figured out a way to jimmy the lock on the church door with a Popsicle stick. One day, when it seemed the coast was clear, I unlocked the door and crept into the sanctuary, hoping that no one would be there. I retrieved the organ key from its hidden location. (I had somehow gleaned its whereabouts.) I hurriedly unlocked the console and rolled back the hinged wooden cover revealing the keyboards, turned on the power, and after choosing certain stops, I played a resounding chord with the low note on the pedal board included. One of the nuns appeared out of nowhere when she heard the music. She exhorted me to "stop playing at once" because I was "too young to be tampering with the organ without adult supervision." Then I was told to run along, which I pretended to do. After waiting a short while, I slipped back into the church unnoticed and picked up exactly where I had left off. After that I hesitatingly asked my parents if I could take organ lessons too. Much to my surprise they agreed to this and arranged for the organist at our church to be my teacher. I met him after school for my lessons.

I found that the techniques used to play the piano and the organ, are quite different. On the organ I had to learn to play the notes in a very connected manner called *legato* because, unlike the piano, the organ does not have a sustaining pedal. At

first I learned to play devotional music and hymns. Even at this early age I was profoundly inspired by the words and music in our church hymnal. As a result, God became a big part of my life. Gradually I was introduced to the classics, such as the compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach. I had to learn to play the pedal notes with my feet while I played on the upper keyboards, called manuals, with my hands. This proved to be quite a challenge to my coordination, but again, I caught on rapidly. In fact, I took my lunch to the church when we had a day off from school so that I could play all day long; taking a break only if I had to.

One day, when my organ teacher got caught in traffic, the pastor of the church called me out of class and asked me if I thought that I would be able to play for a funeral. I said “Yes” without hesitation. As the casket was rolled down the aisle, he opened the hymnal to a certain number and asked me to play it, which I did. For the rest of the service he selected the hymns and I played them. As the next few years passed by I became even more proficient on both instruments, the piano and organ, but the organ had become my favorite. By the time I reached the end of fifth grade I was playing for weddings, funerals, and other services on a regular basis when the organist (my teacher) couldn't be there.

In the past, my classmates had not been interested in whether I played the organ or not. I was therefore not prepared when some of the boys became jealous of me and the extra attention I was getting. They began to tease me, and to my horror, some of them even stuck me with pins as they passed by the organ console; I was too embarrassed to tell anyone. In my naiveté, I did not realize that while I had been off practicing my music, a pecking order had begun to develop among the boys; apparently I was viewed as an easy victim to torment. I did not know how to deal with this painful new development in my life. I had been an altar boy, a Cub Scout and Boy Scout, and never have

any trouble with the other children when I was involved in these groups, so I was taken off guard when I discovered I suddenly didn't fit in with my classmates anymore.

When I wasn't warding off attacks at school, I was dealing with troubles at home. There were five boys in our family, I was the eldest. It was with increasing alarm that I watched my father become ever more impatient with us and harsher in his disciplinary ways. He had begun to use a leather belt when we did something wrong, and he didn't care which end of it came into contact with our skin. His temper was short, but only behind closed doors; he never dared to show this part of his personality in public.

Neither of my parents was especially enamored of classical music. My mother told me that when my father took her to the occasional piano recital before they were married, she fell asleep if a long classical piece was performed. My father enjoyed marching music like *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, by John Phillips Sousa, as well as polka and old fashioned country music with yodeling in it. My mother was fond of Broadway music. I could play these different styles but it was not important to me to include them in my repertoire. I had a passion for the music of the great composers such as Bach, Scarlatti, Purcell, Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Rachmaninoff, and even Prokofiev.

My parents had divergent outlooks on life which usually clashed with one another. For instance, my mother kept in touch with her relatives while my father rarely contacted any of his six siblings and only occasionally responded to his mother's letters. He and my mother couldn't stand one another's relatives. My father claimed that my mother's family was full of hypocrites who hung religious pictures on their walls even as they swore all of the time. My mother complained that my father's family was cold and mean to her, making her feel

unwelcome. There was rarely a time when tension was absent from our home. I had to finish practicing before my father got home from work because he didn't want to be disturbed after dinner. We hardly ever had a civil conversation at the dinner table. Most of the communication during mealtime started when a fight erupted, at which time my father would threaten to ram his fist down our throats or argue with my mother over trivial things, telling her to mind her own business if she asked a simple question. It would not be uncommon for him to throw food at her, at any of us, or even at the wall during dinner. All kinds of incidents occurred while we were eating. For instance, one of my brothers threw a fork at me one evening and it went all the way into my flesh right up to the elbow. I simply pulled it out; no one was concerned about it in the least.

My next youngest brother had a problem with wetting the bed; my mother raised Cain every time this happened. Sometimes she spanked him with a hair brush--not hard--just enough to scare him. Years later she told me that when she was ready to give birth to him the doctor was late in arriving, so the nurse lay across her legs in order to delay the delivery. As a result he was born with a slight case of cerebral palsy.

Whenever he was in the mood to do so, my father would severely criticize any one of us. For instance, if I was in the bathtub and I asked my mother to get me the shampoo he would say, "Look at Mama's little boy, he can't even take his own bath without asking for Mama's help." He was famous for telling everyone to "stop complaining," even though he constantly griped about anything and everything. My brothers disliked him, but not as much as I did. Fatherhood obviously did not appeal to him. My mother said he behaved differently during the first three years of their marriage, before we came along.

One day a stranger appeared at school, accompanied by the cantor who occasionally led the children's choir at Mass. When our eyes met upon being introduced, I felt like he was looking

at me in a rather strange way, but there was nothing about it that I could put my finger on. He said that he had been anxious to meet me, he had heard all about me. *This was my first encounter with the man who would soon turn my life upside down.*

Surprisingly, we had a wonderful summer that year. My father arranged a family membership for us at a brand new Olympic-sized swimming pool which had just been built in the neighborhood. We were there all the time! It was a funny thing about my father, he could do nice things for us occasionally; but his mood swings were still very unpredictable.

I was now entering the sixth grade at St. Catherine Labouré School and found myself looking forward to returning. I had started school there in the second grade, having transferred from a public school along with my next youngest brother, who was in the newly formed first grade. At some point, over the next few years all of my brothers and I were attending this school at the same time. When the parish was first founded, the school and the church were still under construction, so we attended Sunday Mass at the local movie theater. When we knelt down, gum was often stuck to our knees when we stood up again. My family wasn't accustomed to this. We had moved from Georgetown in Washington, D.C., where we attended Mass at Holy Trinity Church and where my next youngest brother and I had been baptized. (This was the same church that was later desecrated by Satan in the movie *The Exorcist*.)

St. Catherine Labouré School was named after a French nun who claimed that she was visited by the Virgin Mary at the Motherhouse Chapel in Paris one evening at midnight. Catherine claimed that a mysterious young child had beckoned her from her bed and told her that she was about to meet the

Virgin Mary, which she claimed actually happened. This same chapel exists today on the Rue du Bac in Paris. The faithful still place their written petitions on the chair that Catherine said the Virgin Mary had sat on. It is quite a bizarre story which is contained in the many biographies of St. Catherine Labouré (written by Catholics, of course). As a result of hearing stories like this, I began to live in a fantasy world at an early age.

Soon after I started the sixth grade, I found out at church one Sunday that the “new face in the crowd,” the gentleman that I had been introduced to at the end of the previous school year, had been hired as the parish choir director. I also learned that the parish organist (my teacher) had decided to retire. This came as a surprise to me since I had not been taking lessons during the summer. Quite unexpectedly, the job of parish organist was simply handed over to me. I don’t remember the details of how this happened, but I assumed that it had something to do with the new choir director, as I would be accompanying the church choirs. He must have known that I would be able to handle the job. I was so excited about it I didn’t really care how it had happened. My dream had now become a reality!

My new job required hard work. I had to play three Sunday Masses, rehearsals on Saturday morning and Tuesday evening, as well as a service on Monday evenings. In addition, I had to play for all of the weddings and funerals, (sometimes I was excused from class to do this), not to mention First Communion, Confirmation, Christmas Midnight Mass, Holy Week, and Easter services. It was a big responsibility for a sixth grader!

The problems I had with my classmates at the end of the fifth grade picked up exactly where they left off. I no longer felt comfortable joining in with the other boys as they played their

rough and tumble games at recess. Sometimes one of the Sisters would force me to play kickball, but there were always several participants who managed to embarrass me. I have to admit that I was petrified of being humiliated in front of others, and my inadequacies at sports were not allowed to go unnoticed. I had always enjoyed playing games at recess but now I felt like an outsider. The boys who were the real trouble makers in my class labeled me as a "sissy." Whenever I played the organ at school religious functions, they continued to upset me as they passed by the console, calling me nasty names and making distracting noises.

Ironically, at the same time that this was happening, I had become the teacher's pet. I was often excused from class before the end of the day in order to play at various extracurricular activities. Sometimes the school was preparing to put on musical plays, and at other times they just wanted the children to rehearse the Latin hymns that were used for Benediction services. This made matters even worse for me because the other students stared at me as I walked out of the room, and I felt very uncomfortable about this.

The new choir director was a very lively, outgoing man. He didn't act like my father did at all. I had totally forgotten the strange feeling that had come over me when I first met him. I was grateful when he seemed to be interested in finding out more about me. I began to trust him and soon told him about some of my problems. He listened very intently. He eventually started driving me home after we had finished our work at the church, and before long he was holding my hand as I tearfully poured out my heart to him. I was so happy to finally have someone in my life who wanted to help me. He was the sympathetic father figure that I lacked at home, and I found it easy to relate to him. His kind words instantly washed away my misery. No matter what I had to endure during the day at

school, or at home with my family, I now had someone in whom I could confide.

I was an innocent child looking for someone to care about me.

I was a needy child looking for attention.

I was a frustrated child in need of comfort.

I could see nothing of the ultimate price that my relationship with this man was going to cost me.

3

I felt somewhat better about starting the sixth grade now that I had this new man in my life. As we became better acquainted, he began inviting me to his home on Saturday afternoons, after the morning choir rehearsals were over. He introduced me to his wife and their children. His wife seemed to me a bit old fashioned. She was not at all the person I had expected her to be. She wore her blond hair in a braid that was wrapped around in a bun on the back of her head. My mother was more stylish than she was; even I noticed this at my young age. From the first time that I met her, it was obvious to me that she wasn't at all happy with her husband's new found interest in me. I could tell by the way that she looked at me. Her husband acted like he could have cared less whether she liked me or not. I felt like an outsider to their family after that.

The choir director, a tall handsome man in his mid-thirties, was very masculine looking, with blue eyes and a full head of brown hair. His body was in great shape because his job required it. I learned that he worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and that he had been specially trained for his job as an agent. He told me that prior to getting married he had spent five years in the seminary studying to become a Catholic priest. He was the kind of man anyone would naturally admire and respect.

On these Saturday afternoons we spent time alone together. We read through music and I accompanied him on the piano. He was an excellent singer, and in spite of the difference in our ages, we had a lot in common. Even though I was an eleven

year old child, I had the job of an adult and the necessary skills to perform it. My relationship with him was not the usual case scenario, but it was easy for me to relate to him, especially on a musical level.

His knowledge about the Catholic religion complemented the fact that I was taking religion classes in school. He liked to talk about his religious beliefs, and I was curious to hear about them. In addition to Catholic dogma, he talked about saintly visions, trances, stigmata's, miracles, angels, Satan, exorcisms, and even more supernatural phenomena that are incorporated into the Church's teachings, like transubstantiation, the name given to the miraculous process performed by the priest when he changes the bread and wine on the altar into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ. He emphasized to me that he truly believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that our ultimate destiny was in His hands. He laid special emphasis on the idea that Jesus had the power to send anyone to Hell if He found them unworthy of Heaven.

The Catholic religion had always claimed to be the one true religion. Catholics were taught that other religions preached heresy. They were forbidden to enter Protestant churches, synagogues, or any other houses of worship, let alone participate in a service given there.

From now on, I will refer to this new man in my life as Mr. F., the "F" standing for "father substitute", or "friend". I respected him and held him in a position of honor and esteem. In addition to teaching me about religion, he also taught me about many other things including how to play chess, the plots of Shakespeare's plays, the music of the great composers, the opera, etc. He was a charming man, and I enjoyed spending time with him. We had gotten to know one another in a rather short period of time. He had gotten to know my parents soon after I had met him. He appeared to be an excellent father and

husband. In fact, he seemed to be a model citizen. He had never indicated to me that he had even the slightest intention toward me other than being a mentor and friend.

One rather odd thing did happen that fall though. Mr. F. took his sons and me for several hikes in the woods behind his house. We went for these nature walks in search of whatever interesting things that we might discover. However, when we returned to his house Mr. F. insisted that we all go into the bathroom and strip down to our underwear so that we could look for ticks that might have gotten on us. He scared us by telling us that ticks could attach themselves to our bodies and suck our blood. We were only too anxious to get on with this search, but at the same time I felt somewhat violated by these actions. We were all practically naked in very close quarters and we couldn't avoid bumping into one another. His sons seemed somewhat un-comfortable about it too. There we were, groping for ticks, grooming one another in the same way that primates do. During these body checks I once again sensed a strange aura around Mr. F., but I did not know exactly what it was about him that made me feel uncomfortable.

I have always had one recurrent memory about my father from my very early childhood. Once, when we were crossing the street, he had taken hold of my hand. My small fingers felt good inside of his big, strong, warm hand, and I felt safe and secure with him by my side. However, as soon as we had arrived at the other side of the street he abruptly let go of me. It was as if he was glad that he did not have to hold my hand any longer. I took this as instant rejection. I never felt quite the same about him after that.

As far as I could remember, he had never shown me any kind of physical affection. A second generation American, eldest of seven children born to a German immigrant couple, my father was brought up during the Great Depression and served seven

years in the military, including World War II. He was a very hard person to get close to. Interestingly enough...one of his younger brothers became a concert pianist.

On one occasion, before Mr. F. had started to work at the church, I was asked to play for a Saturday morning First Communion service, and I accidentally overslept. One of the nuns phoned to find out where I was. My father uttered a curse word and my mother told him that the nun had probably overheard him over the phone. When I got back after the service was over, I found my mother at home alone. My father had hit her and banged her head against the wall. He had done it in a fit of rage. I was devastated and felt that it had been my fault. I will never forget the feeling of sadness and guilt that I was overcome with that day. It was horrible! He disappeared and stayed away for two weeks. I didn't know whether I wanted him to come home or not.

I became even more mistrustful of him after that. The fact that he had attacked my mother was yet another building block in the grand scheme of things that was causing me to grow even further away from him and more towards Mr. F., who was continuing to exert an increasingly strong magnetic pull on me.

Thanksgiving and the Christmas holidays arrived and along with them all of the usual festivities. Mr. F. and I had worked very hard with the Men's and Boys' Choirs. They sang together for the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. They performed a combination of Christmas carols and liturgical music, including Gregorian Chant, motets from the Renaissance, and a Mass sung in Latin by the French composer Charpentier. I enjoyed every moment of it, even the many hours of practice that were necessary in order to make the program a success. Everyone was happy about it. However, it would be the last Christmas in my childhood that I would experience in this way.

When springtime arrived, Holy Week and Easter services required a lot of preparation from everyone involved. We had to practice more intensely for these services than for the Christmas Masses. The story of the Resurrection of Christ had always provided me with a way to lose myself in deep thought. I often meditated on the fact that no matter how much pain I had to endure in this life, one day I hoped that I would be happy with God in Heaven.

I was working on an organ choral prelude by J.S. Bach entitled "In Thee Is Gladness." I lost myself as I played the soaring chords of this magnificent piece. I left my body behind and became connected to dimensions of consciousness that most twelve-year-olds know nothing about. This was the realm beyond reality that I escaped into as my fingers flew over the organ keys. I rarely shared this type of experience with anyone.

It's no wonder that I had developed a habit of keeping things to myself.

I came to find out that there was a darker side to my personality that I wasn't aware of. I had one male acquaintance in school; we met while walking home one afternoon. Soon after that he suggested that we stop by the school cafeteria on our way out of the building. I had no idea why he wanted to do this but I went along. The next thing I knew, he was cramming bottles of soda pop and lunch size bags of corn chips into his knapsack. I was petrified that someone might see me standing nearby. As we left the school, I could hear the soda bottles in my friend's bag as they clanked away. I could also hear the sounds that the bags of corn chips made as they rubbed against each other. His knapsack was bulging at the seams. I couldn't understand why he wanted these things so much that he would have dared to take such a risky chance to get them. I didn't care about food that much. I seldom ate desserts at home, even though my mother made them. My father wouldn't allow soda pop in our house. I wasn't certain that no one had seen what he had done. My anxiety lasted until we arrived at his house and closed the door behind us. His mother drove the school bus, so we knew she wouldn't be there. Even though I found this robbery quite scary, I was surprised at myself when I noticed that I had gotten very excited about what he had just done. He emptied the contents of his knapsack into a chest in his bedroom. In all truth, this was the first time that I had ever thought about stealing anything.

One day as I was putting things away after daily Mass was finished, I noticed a large key ring in the closet. It was about eight inches wide and had about a hundred keys on it. At the same time, I remembered that I had seen parishioners putting money into the poor boxes or into the coin receptacles when

they lit the votive candles. I just knew that the keys for all of the locks in the church were on this key ring. I snatched it out of the closet when no one was looking. I couldn't believe what I had just done. I stuck the keys into my overcoat which I had put on before leaving the sacristy (the place where Catholic priests and altar boys prepare for Mass). I was careful not to make jingling noises as I put one foot in front of the other until I got outside. I tried to look as innocent as I could.

An intense wave of euphoria had come over me when my friend stole the food from the school. It was like a drug that killed the pain that I was in for a few moments. I knew the difference between right and wrong, but I also knew that I felt wronged every day at home and at school. My classmates knew the difference between right and wrong, so did my father. It wasn't bothering any of them about the wrongs that they were committing against me. The church building had always been a place where I could go to be alone and escape into my reveries at the organ. Now I had found something else that I could do there that would release even more endorphins into my nervous system.

After I told my "chips and soda" friend about the key ring, it was not long afterwards before I stood guard at the church one day during recess while he tried one key after another until he found the one that opened the poor boxes. After he had done that, he emptied the money out of the receptacles and shoved the change and bills into his pockets. He then moved on to the wrought iron candle racks and did the same thing with their coin receptacles. When he stood up, his pants' pockets looked like they had several potatoes in each one of them. After we had finished, we locked everything up and left. Fairly certain that no one had seen us, we went behind a large tree on the outskirts of the playground, and divided up the money between us. We had made quite a little take. Once again I could not

believe what I had just done.

This one time of stealing became the first of many more because I *kept* the key ring. Eventually the priests made announcements about the robberies and wrote about them in the church bulletin. They said that they did not know who was committing these crimes. As we had suspected, it turned out that there were no duplicates to these keys. Not surprisingly, no one suspected me in the least.

The main thing that we spent the money on was junk food. We walked to the candy store after school. He bought things like Sugar Daddies, Red Hots, Barbecued Fritos, Jujubes, Dots, soda pop, potato chips, and other products loaded with fat and sugar. I started eating candy too as a result of just being around him. At other times we went to local lunch counters and ordered several hot dogs or hamburgers with extra large orders of French fries. Sometimes he wanted to play a vulgar game which consisted of who could eat everything first. I had wanted a friend desperately because most of my classmates didn't want to associate with me. He was kind of an outcast too, so this is what had drawn us together. I had money from the weddings and funerals that I played for, so I didn't really need it, nor did I care for sweets before I met him. I think a lot of it was my just wanting to have my own inner circle. I felt better because now I was someone on the inside looking out, for a change. I had a secret now, and I felt more powerful and involved in the world. This was something that allowed me to feel that I had a way of striking back, in a generic way, at everyone who had hurt me. My classmates had wanted to separate themselves from me, so now I had done them the favor of separating myself from *them*. I knew something that they did not know about and I felt more in control of things. All of this could have been avoided if there had been an observant teacher or another interested adult (other than Mr. F.) who

should have noticed that I was in pain and needed help, even if I *had* kept everything covered up.

As the school year was drawing to a close, I was still being teased and taunted on a daily basis. I impatiently watched the clock each day, waiting for three o'clock to strike. Finally, the last day of school arrived and I was set free. I just wanted to forget about my problems and looked forward to losing myself in my piano studies and organ music over the summer.

I waited eagerly for the Fourth of July to arrive that year. When it finally came, that evening my brothers and I lit sparklers in our backyard and raced around waving them in the air, leaving illusory streaks of light behind us. I remember being distracted by the loud booms of larger firework displays going off at another location. It was great fun simply being a child.

I didn't see Mr. F. for most of the summer vacation, but I still had to play the organ at all of the weekend Masses. The other musical activities at church had been suspended until the fall. Something happened though toward the end of the summer that I will never forget. Mr. F. phoned me and asked if I would like to go away with him for the weekend. He told me he knew the rector of a church at the seashore, and that he had been asked to provide the music for the Sunday Masses there. Mr. F. also told me that we would be paid and given a room to stay in. He informed me that he had taken the liberty of making the arrangements with our regular pastor so that I could have the weekend off from my organist job. I told my parents about it right away. My family rarely went on vacation during the summer, so I was happy to have this opportunity to get away from home for a couple of days.

When the time came, Mr. F. picked me up on a Saturday morning and we drove for about three hours to get there. We always had a million things to talk about because he had

entered into my world so completely. We listened to classical music on the radio, and we played a game of trying to guess the composer's name. We often got so carried away that we just barely missed getting into a serious accident. He was a reckless driver, which did make me a little edgy at times.

When we arrived that afternoon, we met with the rector and then spent the rest of the day on the beach. When we got back to our room, we each took a shower. While we were drying off, Mr. F. suddenly turned toward me and shockingly and unabashedly kissed me directly on my lips. I was completely frozen in my tracks. The only thing that I could manage to say to him was, "*Don't be ridiculous.*"

5

That kiss, in an instant, altered my world forever. My childhood had suddenly come to a screeching halt. I was plummeted forward, head over heels, into a dazed state of mind that can not be adequately described by words alone. The consideration of the ramifications of this deceptively simple act on the part of Mr. F. is something that requires an encyclopedic mind. On one level they are sexual, on another level they are psychological, and on yet another level they are moral or religious in nature.

On the first level, the innuendo of “something” more than kissing had now been introduced into our heretofore platonic relationship. I wasn’t quite certain about it, but now not only my life, but possibly my body as well might be in Mr. F.’s hands. Since this element of intrigue had become a part of our relationship, I immediately sensed that we would have to keep it a secret. A tainted component had been added to our previously wholesome relationship. I was in shock over the fact that, even though our kiss had on the surface appeared to be innocent enough, we had broken certain taboo restrictions on adult-child, same-sex, intimate relationships. My trust had been violated by someone whom I had looked up to and

respected. I was in a state of total disbelief!

On the second, or psychological level, havoc had been wreaked as well. My father/son relationship with Mr. F. had

suddenly become distorted. How would I fit into his life now? Without any warning, in that split second, I had been introduced to the possibility of a very unequal romantic relationship with a married man. I was still thinking of him as “Mr. F.,” even though our former relationship had suddenly become a thing of the past. My conscious mind was only allowing bits and pieces of these thoughts to surface. My childish naïve ideas of romance had suddenly been ratcheted up ten notches and I had no healthy role model to draw on.

On the third, or moral level, this kiss had sent the message to me that Mr. F. was willing to cheat on his wife. Therefore, he had involved both of us in committing a serious sin. Not that I hadn’t already sinned in my relatively short life, but he was married; I knew that this was not right. This had happened to me with someone who had been instructing me on my religion. The spiritual bond that I had once had with God, had now been diminished even more so. It wasn’t bad enough that I had become a thief. Now I was encouraged to sin in another way. What was left of my spiritual safety net was now hanging by a string, and even that string had become frayed. I had already lost my ability to lose myself in the arms of God, but now matters had become even worse. Even if delving deeply into religion hadn’t been the best way for me to deal with reality, it had been a coping mechanism that I had found useful at times, in order to bolster my self esteem and my sense of well being.

I didn’t know if I should tell anyone what had happened. I rationalized that maybe the kiss wasn’t such a serious thing after all. Truthfully, a part of me had enjoyed it because it had made me feel special and unique. Mr. F. had deviously timed this encounter with me to perfection. I realized that if I told anyone what had happened, I might get Mr. F. into serious

trouble. I didn't want to do that, especially since he had become such a big part of my life. I was unsure about how to respond. New aspects of excitement and deception had now been unexpectedly added to our relationship. It was oddly intoxicating for me to think about them and a euphoric feeling came over me while I pondered what had just happened. I had no idea of how I was going to deal with this huge change.

As a boy who had just been kissed by his mentor, hundreds of thoughts crossed my mind. They were like sparks shooting off from a pinwheel that was spinning out of control. I thought of the experience that some people have when they think that they are about to die, and they have a sort of instantaneous life review. Yes, a part of me had died, but I wasn't reviewing the past but was considering the future, and what this could ultimately mean to me.

That day, on the way home from the beach, Mr. F. asked me to make a pact with him. He asked me not to tell anyone about the new direction that our relationship had taken. I hesitatingly agreed. He lit a cigarette and handed it to me. It was not my first time to take a drag on one. I partially inhaled the smoke and got high on the nicotine as it surged into my nervous system. He then took the cigarette from me and took a drag on it too. To my juvenile mind it was a kind of a modern day blood-brother, Indian peace pipe experience. It was a moment in my life that would be indelibly etched on my young mind.

Note to the reader:

At this point in my story, the sexual part of my relationship with Mr. F. begins. It is quite graphic. Remember, he had already spent over a year “grooming me,” so that I might hopefully accept his advances toward me. Of course, I had no idea at the time that Mr. F. had been laying out his plans to molest me. I had met him when I was eleven, and I had just turned twelve a month before the first molestation occurred. During that year, Mr. F. had somehow led me to believe that I was in some mysterious way on an equal par with him, as far as our private relationship was concerned. There was no way that I could have been aware of how he had been psychologically manipulating me. I had no first hand knowledge of sex. I did not know anything about sexual intercourse. I recall telling someone at the time that “men and women went into the bathroom together, and when they came out the woman was pregnant.”

It would be very easy for the reader to slip into a judgmental mode of thinking at this point. Hopefully, the reader will try to understand that these things are happening to a child who has been, and is being corrupted, without his full knowledge. You need to know the details of this in order to stop this kind of crime from happening to other children in the future. Unfortunately, it is happening somewhere in the world at this very moment.

6

I was in a deliriously dazed, and conversely, dauntingly distressed state of mind from that day forward. The surrealistic feeling that had now taken hold of me was a shockingly new experience. My fantasies went wild. My life had taken a radical turn, similar to the one that Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* had made when she entered the rabbit hole beside the tree and accelerated downward toward a hopeful bottom. As she sped by the strange things that she saw on the circular walls, she realized that she was in another world, and yet only a heartbeat away from the one that she had just left behind. I too was speeding down a similar kind of tunnel. I was caught up in each new fantasy that entered my consciousness as I descended from one level to another. When I finally hit bottom, it was September again. I was in my old world now, the one that I thought I knew; but it really was not my old world at all.

As the days passed, and the leaves began to change colors, I noticed that migrating birds had begun to fly south for the coming winter. I had just turned twelve, and certain physical aspects about me had begun to change. My body was gradually becoming that of a young man. My voice was getting deeper, and my sexuality as a pubescent teenager was just coming to life. However, this was where the similarities between myself and other teenaged boys came to an end. I now had a man in my life who was twenty three years older than I, and we were in

the process of becoming “lovers” (this was the term that Mr. F. had used), although I did not know what it actually meant.

Now when Mr. F. and I were alone together, it felt different. When we were in the company of others it felt awkward because we had to pretend that there was nothing unusual going on between us. We immediately had to start living double lives, shifting back and forth, from one to the other. As the seventh grade got under-way, that initial kiss from Mr. F. had escalated into our kissing and embracing one another whenever we had the opportunity to do so, although he was the one who initiated it each time. I had felt so isolated and alone before Mr. F. had come into my life. Now I really felt important to someone who truly mattered to me.

Our Saturday afternoon get-togethers continued on a regular basis. It didn't take long, though, before the kissing and embracing progressed into something more. One Saturday afternoon in October, Mr. F. and I were raking leaves in his yard. After we had finished outside, Mr. F. led me to his den inside the house. Mrs. F. was at the grocery store, where she usually went on Saturday afternoons. The younger children were playing outside with their friends. The oldest child, a teenager, was upstairs in her room. Mr. F. began kissing and embracing me. This time, though, one thing led to another and suddenly Mr. F. threw me onto the sofa. Before I knew it, he had yanked my pants and underwear halfway down my legs. He startled me when, for the first time, he began to perform oral sex on me. I was stunned, but it did not stop the exhilaration that had begun to build within me. Mr. F. quickly brought me to a climax and I ejaculated. I was in shock, and in an astonished state of mind. This experience sent the adrenalin pulsing through my veins. At the same time, I was afraid that someone might come into the room and accidentally discover us.

Suddenly, just as I reached my orgasm, Mr. F. tore off his pants. I winced when I saw his totally erect penis, with his

testicles and scrotum tensed up tightly between his legs. He began to ejaculate wildly, shooting droplets of semen everywhere. I could see them in the air as they passed through the sunlight that was streaming through the windows. Mr. F. had become so excited when I had ejaculated that he had reached his climax also. Like Eve in the garden, he had now plucked a juicy piece of fruit from a forbidden tree, and taken a long awaited bite. He told me that day that he was “madly in love” with me. We had loved one another for awhile now, but not in this way. I didn't know what to think!

I usually stayed for dinner with Mr. F.'s family on Saturday evenings. That particular evening, it was exceedingly difficult for me to watch him interact with his wife and children. Where on earth did I fit in? I was drifting in and out of awareness. I could not seem to focus or concentrate on anything. The thought of what had happened that afternoon kept repeating itself over and over again in my mind.

On Tuesday evenings, I had to play the organ at the men's choir rehearsal. Afterwards, Mr. F. no longer took me directly home. Instead, we went over to the parish school. It was always after 10 p.m. and the building was deserted. I could tell that Mr. F. wanted to be certain that no one was there, or had seen us going in. He had the keys to the church and school because sometimes we had to use a classroom for choir practice. He held my hand as we walked through the hallways in the pitch dark, stopping every now and then so that he could kiss and fondle me. When he came upon an out of the way classroom that he thought looked like a good hiding place, he slipped his key into the lock, turned the knob, and slowly opened the door, which sometimes caused the hinges to squeak. My stomach jumped when this happened. In the daytime, these sounds would have been practically inaudible, but at night, in the total silence, the noise that this made sounded like it had been amplified ten thousand times.

Once inside, Mr. F. unbuckled my belt and pulled my pants down. He then performed oral sex on me, intermittently returning to the heavy kissing and groping that had already begun in the hall. Then he pulled his pants down and revealed his erect member to me. When he became sexually aroused, he produced large quantities of pre-seminal ejaculate. He told me that this sticky, clear liquid was called "pre-cum," and that it contained the ingredients that were necessary to protect the sperm as they traveled down the urethra. I did not understand why this was so important, so he explained to me that this was

necessary to keep the sperm alive in order to begin a pregnancy. He also told me that it was a natural lubrication during sexual intercourse and that some men produced more of it than others.

After he had exposed himself to me, he guided my hand onto his erect penis, because he liked for me to masturbate him while we were kissing one another. I trusted him and if he asked me to do something that wasn't exactly to my liking, I did it anyway. Then he guided our bodies towards the classroom floor so that we could lie down in a position with my crotch in his face, and his crotch directly in mine. He told me that this was called the "69" position, and that I could put his penis into my mouth if I wanted to. I was glad that he hadn't insisted on it because I would have had to force myself to do it and possibly have gotten sick. Usually, he brought me to a climax and after I ejaculated into his mouth he swallowed it. He never tried to coerce me into performing oral sex on him.

Then we got dressed and he took me home. When we arrived at my house, Mr. F. didn't want me to get out of the car right away. He pulled farther up the street, parked, and began kissing and groping me all over again. This was an unnecessary chance that we were taking, but it seemed to enhance the overall experience that he was having with me. I hoped that I was imagining it, but it was almost as if he had wanted us to be discovered. If we heard a strange noise, or the sound of footsteps coming out of nowhere, I could see in his face that he became even more excited. Of course, at moments like these, the thought of getting caught scared me. Apparently, Mr. F. actually wanted the elements of danger and anxiety to be an intrinsic part of our sexual activities.

Mr. F., a married man, with a large and still growing family, took an inordinate amount of time and energy to devote his Saturday afternoons to me, while he tried to fit his other children into his life in a secondary way. I noticed that his

children seemed kind of disappointed about this new development in their lives. Mrs. F. let it be known that she wasn't happy about it either. She would drop comments such as, "Maybe Bill would like to go home and have dinner with his *own* family tonight." Or she might say, "Susie needs this," or "Johnny needs that," and then let out a sigh as if to say that these things might have to be delayed because of me.

I had a fairly good idea of the family dynamics that were taking place there. They must have wondered why I wasn't at home with my own father. After all, in their eyes someone must have cared about me, otherwise how could I have become such a prodigiously talented musician? They had no knowledge of my father's strange personality. On the one hand, he had gone out of his way to see to it that I got the music lessons for the piano and organ that I needed to achieve my musical goals. Yet, at the same time there was a lot of negative energy in our relationship. He wanted a son who would submit to him unconditionally; this included putting up with his unbalanced mind. By now I could not do that, I had already advanced much too far into the world of adults.

My pianist uncle added an additional element of negativity to my life by criticizing my playing, telling me that I was a "big fish in a little pond." He said I had to push myself *harder* and move *faster* in order to get completely in front of all my competition. I didn't understand what he was talking about; he never gave me specific details on how I was to accomplish any of his directives. Apparently, my father had not pursued this with him either. Tragically, the one thing that my father had done for me that could have enhanced his feelings about being a good parent just ended up making him jealous of me, which created more distance between us. Even Mr. F., knowing how much the piano and organ meant to me, was not interested in helping me make specific plans on how I was going to reach my full potential as a musician. In fact, he had convinced me

that my life might end up with my running off with him and leaving the rest of my world behind me.

My cohort in crime and I continued to steal from the poor boxes and vigil candle stands. My friend was an angry child who did not get along with his father either. I was an angry child, but I was afraid to vent it openly. I knew that my father had beaten up my mother, and I was afraid that he might do the same thing to me, so I repressed the thought of it.

My friend and I got along fairly well. We hung out on the playground at lunchtime and after school. Some of the boys tried to harass him, but they sized him up all wrong! On one occasion one of them was giving him a hard time and suddenly started chasing after my friend. I could see the two of them darting in and out of the Christmas trees that were set out for the parish sale. Suddenly my friend pinned his tormentor down and was banging his head against the ground. I would never have retaliated like that against anyone! I was afraid that if one of the bullies had ever enticed me to get into a physical fight, he would have made it a point to really hurt me. I didn't have a sense that I could defend myself if I really had to, but this was because of the mindset that I had.

I was usually the lookout when my comrade and I made our heists from the church but sometimes I did it while he watched out for me. Unbelievably, one time I even walked up to the vigil stands while there were lots of people standing around or kneeling there. I knelt down, reached around to the back of the coin receptacle, removed the money and left. No one even

noticed. Oftentimes we left the money receptacles unlocked, but apparently no one had bothered to check on this. We knew that on Sundays the money receptacles would be overflowing with bills and change. The church was empty on Sunday afternoons so this was one of the times that we would take advantage of the fact that no one would be there.

Mr. F. and I continued to sneak around the school in the dark after the evening choir rehearsals were over. It seemed as though the sexual part of my relationship with him had been going on for a long time now. This may have been because of the frequency and repetitiveness of our sexual activities. On Saturday afternoons, we continued to work alone together at his piano. Sometimes we took a break in order to listen to the weekly radio broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera. Mr. F. knew all about the opera, the different characters, the plots, the composers, and so on. In fact, he could sing the parts of the operas that were written for the baritone voice *par excellence*. He was well versed in Italian, German, French, and Latin, which he had learned while he was studying to become a Catholic priest. The Mass was said in Latin at that time, so he used this opportunity to show me the connection between this language and all of the romance languages. As a result, I was less intimidated by the operas that I was learning with him.

The Catholic Church frowned upon a young person, such as myself, studying opera plots because it required reading or hearing about seduction scenes, prostitutes, murderers, and characters who had gone mad, just to mention a few. *Don Giovanni, La Traviata, Tosca, or Lucia di Lammermoor, etc.* were off limits for me as far as the Church was concerned. The story lines were considered to be much too worldly for the mind of a child. I did notice that some of the plots condoned illicit sexual activity. Mr. F. thought nothing of explaining any of these things in great detail to me. Occasionally he even gave me a sip or two of the Manhattan that he was drinking, which

was one of his favorite cocktails. Then after listening to the opera one particular afternoon, Mr. F. led me again into his den. This time, he brazenly suggested to me that we take off all of our clothes, including our underwear. He had a very athletic body because he had to stay in good shape for his day job as an F.B.I. agent. The first time that we had sex together, I had noticed that his penis looked different from mine. He pointed out to me that he was uncircumcised, and then explained exactly what that meant. His penis, in its flaccid state, was deceptively small, but when it was completely erect, it became very large, swollen, and hard as a rock. As we got started that afternoon, Mr. F. threw himself into the experience of sexually engulfing me. His penis became very slippery as the pre-cum came gushing out of it. I had already noticed in our previous encounters that a strange, musky odor emanated from his genital area. I had never smelled anything like this coming from my crotch area. Although I thought that it smelled awful at first, it had now become more familiar to me.

I felt kind of nervous as he rubbed his hands over my body. He performed oral sex on me until I was ready to ejaculate. He normally swallowed it, but this time he asked me to tell him when I was ready to reach my orgasm, so that I could shoot my semen onto his chest. He had taught me that when a person reached a climax, it was called “cumming.”

While we were still naked, we heard a car pulling up into the driveway. We weren't expecting anyone, so we were surprised by this. We could hear the car doors slamming, so Mr. F. looked out of the window, and exclaimed, “Oh my God, she's home!” Mrs. F. had un-expectedly arrived home early from the grocery store. All hell broke loose as we tried to get cleaned up and dressed in a matter of seconds. When she finally got into the house, with several bags of groceries in her arms, we had barely avoided getting caught. I could tell that she could sense that something strange had been going on. She looked angry as we

struggled to keep from appearing too disheveled. I could tell that she wanted to say something, but she didn't. She wasn't absolutely certain, as far as I could tell, as to what her husband had said, or done, to me. As time went on, her suspicions were becoming more well-founded.

I was caught in the middle of their relationship, and she sometimes looked at me as though she wanted me dead. If anything similar to this had ever happened before in their lives, Mr. F. had not told me about it. He had me convinced that I was even more important to him than his own wife and children. As a child who was going through this distorted and bizarre rite of passage, I had nothing to compare it with. If I ever expressed any of the apprehensions that I had about his wife and children being harmed by our relationship, he assured me that he would take care of it, whatever that meant.

9

As Christmas approached, I began to think of the Midnight Mass, the candles, the incense, and the music that we were preparing. The adult male choristers and the boys' choir sang together at this festive service. (At that time, the late 1950s, the Catholic Church did not allow women to sing in the choir). Mr. F. reminded me that I would have to go to confession if I wanted to receive Communion. I had not been thinking that far ahead, but I was startled by his admonition that I had to do this. He told me that even though our relationship was sinful in the eyes of the church hierarchy, in our case there might be a different way of looking at it. I became even more confused. I really didn't want to think about it. It would be bad enough to confess stealing from the church, but now I had to add my sexual sins as well. I began to get really scared. I did not know how I would be able to tell a priest about what had been going on in my life. I told Mr. F. about my misgivings.

I wondered if the priest would be able to recognize me through the grate. I would be so embarrassed and humiliated if that happened. Mr. F. told me that when I confessed my sins to the priest, I should say that I had "allowed someone to commit oral sodomy on me 'x' number of times"; "x" being the exact number. I had never heard the word "sodomy" before, and I had no idea what it meant. Mr. F. told me about the background for the term in the Bible story of *Sodom and Gomorrah*. He said that the only time the Catholic Church allowed oral sodomy was when it was between "a man and a woman and in the

context of marriage”; and only then if this would finally lead to sexual intercourse, and only then if the primary purpose of the sex act was to have children.”

I was still in the process of learning about the birds and the bees, and now Mr. F. had informed me that we were committing a sin that, according to the Catholic Church, “cried to heaven for vengeance.” He had already told me that what we were doing might be described as *natural* in our case. Now he had told me two opposing things, and I didn’t know what to make of it. I knew that the Church taught that if anyone had committed a serious sin, then they had to confess it, and promise never to do it again, or they could not receive Communion. I decided that if I had to go to Confession, I would go to a neighboring parish about three miles away, where the priest would not recognize me. I wondered if he had heard anything about the boy organist who played the organ at a nearby parish. He would have possibly known who I was because our parishes were in close proximity with one another, and the priestly community shared interests like this with one another. By the time that it had come for me to screw up my courage and go, I had lapsed into a complete mental frenzy. I prayed that I would get sick so that I would not have to deal with it.

I arrived at the church in the evening, and had to wait in line with all of the other penitents. Hundreds of people were lined up to confess their sins. (The Catholic Church wielded tremendous power over its members at that time.) The clergy had instilled the “Wrath of God” into those who had committed serious sins, or what were called “mortal” or “deadly” sins. My heart was beating so fast that it felt like it was going to pound its way right out of my chest. I knew that my conscience would bother me afterwards, as my confession would be invalid if I was not sincerely planning to discontinue the sexual part of my

relationship with Mr. F. In fact, I had asked Mr. F. about this and he told me that if I wanted to, we could stop the sex since both of us wanted to go to Communion at Midnight Mass. I became upset at the thought of this because I was afraid that I would not be as special to him any more, and that I would have to go back to my former place in the world where I felt like a lost soul and misfit. This was a very real dilemma for me at twelve years of age.

When the red light on the confessional box changed to green, I pulled back the heavy black velvet curtain, and entered. It was pitch dark. I guided myself onto the kneeler. After awhile, the priest opened the slat in the grille. I could see his silhouette, his head cocked slightly toward me with his ear turned in my direction. I could hardly get the words out. My mouth went dry. I began to stammer and stutter. I was petrified. I had to tell him exactly what I had done, with whom, and the exact number of times that I had done it. I began to recite the usual grocery list of sins that were loosely based on the Ten Commandments:

- 1) Cursing
- 2) Failure to honor my mother and father
(Dysfunction in the home was no excuse)
- 3) Lying and gossiping about others
- 4) Stealing from poor boxes & vigil candle stands

and *finally* about...

- 5) Mr. F. and me

Shockingly, when I had finished speaking, the priest fell back into his chair and said nothing. I had just told him that I was only twelve years old, and that I was having a sexual relationship with a married man who was the choir director of my church. I had described all of our sexual activities to him in

great detail. When he finally spoke, he was very matter of fact about it. I was both stunned, and surprised. Since the priest had not reacted strongly to what I had just told him, now I didn't know what to think. As he began to instruct me, he told me in rather vague non-compelling terms, to somehow get out of my relationship with Mr. F. He gave me no idea of exactly how to do this. It was impossible for me, as a child, to carry on a conversation about this topic with him; I was too humiliated and embarrassed. I just wanted to get out of there. He had barely touched on the sin of thievery. He told me to watch out for the friends that I had been associating with. He never even asked me how my relationship with Mr. F. had gotten started, and appeared to be disinterested in any of the details surrounding it. He gave me a penance (several prayers to say), and I said my act of contrition (a prayer that Catholics say in confession). As I left the confessional box, I was still in a high state of anxiety. This had been a really horrible experience for me, and I was now even more confused about my relationship with Mr. F. than I had ever been before.

The Christmas holidays had always been a time of happiness for me. Even though my parents didn't have a lot of money, each year we had a nice Christmas with lots of presents. My uncle used to visit us and he gave my parents money to take care of the expenses. The house was usually peaceful when we had company, for obvious reasons. We also enjoyed a couple of weeks off from school. I could finally relax, away from my classmates. On this particular Christmas though, I had been put through the mill psychologically.

After the religious services were over with, Mr. F. and I didn't see one another for a week, because he had given the choir a much needed break. It felt strange for me to be celebrating the post Christmas holidays with-out him. He had to be with his family, and I had to be with mine. Both of us had

to pretend that everything was going along in a very natural way. I knew that my sex partner had marital obligations to his wife, but it was still an unsettling thought for me. There had been a few times when I had actually felt like he belonged to me, and I to him. When we finally saw one another again, he told me that he had really missed me, but that he was “trapped in a situation” in which he had to cater to his spouse and family. I had known Mr. F. for over a year, but it was only now that I had begun to realize that, even though we had only been having a physical relationship for about three months, I was becoming more and more dependent on him.

I knew that Mr. F. had gone to Confession too (at least he told me he had), and that we had both received Communion at Midnight Mass. Within one week of our choir practices commencing again, he grabbed me after one of the rehearsals and passionately kissed me, forcing his tongue into my mouth and down my throat. I was stunned. I instantly felt remorse because I had betrayed my agreement with the priest in the confessional. Yet the priest had not told me exactly how I was supposed to end my “affair.” I was incapable of ending this sexual relationship by myself. He had not made any effort to clarify the situation for me. Nevertheless, I knew that I would not be able to return to the Communion rail until I had gone to Confession again. Catholics were well aware that even if they promised God to make every effort to stop committing a certain sin, it was not necessarily going to happen instantly. They were used to repeating the same sin to the priest in confession. In fact, they were encouraged to keep going to Confession because this would give them the grace from God to eventually stop certain sinful acts that may have become habitual, such as masturbation. In Catholic teaching, masturbation had always been seen as worthy of punishment to hell, if one made no attempt to stop it.

I didn't want to have to put myself through the same

miserable experience every time Christmas and Easter rolled around. Mr. F. had originally told me that even though our behavior clashed severely with the teachings of our religion, we were somehow exempt from the repercussions of this. On the other hand, he had insisted that I go to confession and tell the priest what was happening. I trusted him and did not question his reasoning as he was a lot older than I was, and he had studied to be a priest.

It had never occurred to me to ask myself how I might have reacted to Mr. F.'s first overture towards me (yes, that first kiss) if my life had been different, both at school and at home. I had known him for over a year before he had made his first physical advance on me. In spite of the complete surprise that he had given me at the beach that day, and all of the reservations that immediately came crowding into my mind in a very confused way, I still depended on the fact that that he was an adult and I was a child. I felt certain that he must have had both of our interests at heart. He had become my savior, at least on the earthly plane. I worshiped him for having made my life bearable.

It had not occurred to me, either, to ask myself why I had not done very much soul searching with regards to my criminal activities of stealing. I knew that this was jeopardizing my career as the parish organist; that I would be in serious trouble if I ever got found out and possibly lose my job as well. The stealing had taken on such an instant fascination for me. The rush that I felt when my friend had stolen the "goodies" from the school cafeteria had served as a psychological pain killer. I experienced euphoria each time that I stole after that. My sense of morals had become twisted, and my conscience had been clouded over for various reasons.

With no role models to draw on, I had been looking for someone to help me to navigate my ship on a virtual sea of confusion, but I had never imagined that someone like Mr. F. would ever become a part of my universe. I had no idea that

there were adults in this world who wanted to have sex with children. Conversely, in my own mind, if I ever lost him I was afraid that I would have no one to turn to.

The priest in the confessional had seemed unconcerned about what was happening in my life and spoke to me on the level of an adult; therefore I began to think that what I was doing might not be all that bad. I had been taught to trust the men in the priesthood.

I had been having sexual relations with Mr. F. for about four months now. As a result of the psychological mayhem that I had gone through during the holidays, just thinking about them had become a source of mental anguish for me. At a time when I should have been experiencing a sense of awe and wonder in the good things of life, I had become even more enmeshed in this man/boy relationship that I was in. When I was with Mr. F., I experienced the bizarre combination of a fascination with the forbidden along with a sense of well being, even though I knew, on some level, that “all was not well.” When I was by myself, I was dealing with a lot of stress and guilt.

I could no longer think of church or God without the thought of Mr. F. entering my mind. It was hard for me to believe that all of my efforts to be a church organist had come to this. My relationship with God was becoming strangely twisted. I was no longer the child I was meant to be. Whatever sense of security I had gotten from my belief in the supernatural had now become diluted with even more “questioning” about it on my part. My salvation, and my damnation, had become two sides of the same coin.

I had learned how to cover up any part of my life that I did not want to reveal. I had to avoid close scrutiny at all costs, in the event that Mr. F. and I might be found out. I was afraid to issue a cry for help for any legitimate reason. I had become so

dependent on him that I could not turn to anyone else for attention. I desperately needed love but I was being deprived the joy of unconditional love and I didn't even know it. From my perspective, nothing had changed in my relationship with Mr. F. when I moved from childhood to adolescence. I was still a minor. I had progressed in my age from eleven to now being twelve years old. The only thing that had changed was that I was even more emotionally dependent on him. I felt quite grown up, but at the same time I felt like a child; I knew, deep down inside, that I was a long way from being an adult.

That year, my mother suffered a miscarriage. On a Saturday morning, while I was getting ready for choir practice, she started hemorrhaging severely. The ambulance came and she was taken away. I didn't know if I would ever see her again. I really didn't want to go to choir practice, and yet I had to so I could be consoled by Mr. F.; in my mind he was the only person I could turn to. This was another realization for me that he had become connected to every aspect of my life. When I got home, I found out that my mother had almost died because she had lost so much blood. After that, she had to have a hysterectomy. Eventually she got her health back, but I could not shake the conviction that this had all happened as a result of God's anger with me.

I had never liked my yearly school photographs: one large, four medium, and several wallet sized...but that year I especially disliked them. I hated myself, and it must have affected the way that I felt about my photos. I looked much older than I really was. My smile looked so wholesome. I appeared to be so happy. I had become a master at covering up who I really was and in presenting a false image to the world. Even so, I was not totally miserable every single moment. I watched Dick Clark on *American Bandstand* every day after school and I had the same likes and dislikes of most typical children my age. My artist friend and I continued to make our heists at the church whenever we needed money. There was no way that I could justify what I was doing but at the same time, I was doing a lot of work at the church for no pay. Many parishioners did things for nothing, but at least they had the luxury of volunteering their own time and contributing their service on their own terms; I did not. So things were not totally on the “up and up” on the church’s part either. (Mr. F. did not have the least suspicion of what my friend and I were doing.)

The bullies at school had been doubling their efforts to make me as miserable as possible. They made fun of my mannerisms, and I had to be on the look out for feet and legs that suddenly came jutting out of nowhere. I tripped and stumbled more than once because of this.

As Easter got closer, once again Mr. F. stopped initiating our sexual encounters. We still made out, but we didn’t go any further than that. He reiterated to me that we could end the

sexual part of our relationship, if we wanted to, in order to make our confessions valid. I was skeptical about his true intentions because of what had happened at Christmastime. Conversely, I *needed* to believe that we might stop the physical involvement with one another, or I might have gone insane with guilt. The mind-boggling thing was that last year the priest had left it up to me to end this relationship all by myself.

At that time, most Catholics took going to Confession very seriously. It was prior to Vatican II. The Church still taught that if a Catholic ate meat on Friday, he had committed a mortal sin, and would go to hell forever if he didn't confess it and promise not to do it again...with God's help, of course. When I finally got up enough nerve, I headed for the church that I had gone to before. Once again, I had to hike there alone, and after dark. The long lines there for Confession didn't surprise me. Most people waited until the last minute to get there, and if they hadn't gone to Confession for awhile, it took them a long time to confess their sins. This added to the time that everyone else had to wait in line. Some people entered the confessional, and were in there for such a long time, that it seemed like they would never come out. Even though I had gone through this once before, it didn't make it any easier this time. I was petrified to tell yet another priest about my relationship with Mr. F.

From time to time, priests are rotated from one parish to another. This priest was not the same one that I had confessed to when I was there before; a different name was on the confessional door. I had no idea how this particular priest was going to react when I told him my age and that I was receiving oral sodomy on a regular basis at my church from the choir director who was a married man with six children! When I finally got into the confessional my heart was racing. It was pitch dark, the grille was closed, and the only thing that I was

aware of was the muffled words of the penitent on the other side. Even though the priest could barely see through the grille, I was still worried that he could see me. That year the thought had occurred to me that the priest might think that I was a pervert, even though I was only a teenager.

When the priest finally pulled the slat back, the sound that this made, which is all too familiar to practicing Catholics, caused me to come close to passing out. I intoned the ritual announcement that all Catholics use in Confession, "Bless me Father, for I have sinned," and then I began to recite my grocery list of sins, saving the most horrible ones until the end. Mr. F. had continued to remind me that I had to tell the priest, in detail, what we had been doing sexually, and how many times that we had done it. I did not know how he could have thought for a moment that I had forgotten this unpleasant fact. Just as before, the whole time that I was telling the priest about myself and Mr. F., there was complete silence on the other side of the grille. When I finished, I suddenly realized that I had to tell him about the money that I had stolen. I told him all of the details about the poor boxes, and candle racks, but he didn't seem at all phased by it. After a moment of silence he said, "Is that all?" and I said, "Yes" with a sigh of relief.

In Confession, according to the Catholic Church, the priest represents Christ, and speaks on His behalf. After the penitents admit their sins, the priest usually advises them on how to avoid repeating them in the future. After I had made such a serious revelation about my life, this priest was just as blasé about it as the one that I had previously confessed to. He told me that I was to be praised for my honesty, but that I had to end this sinful relationship. Once again another priest hadn't given me any advice on how I might do this, nor did he question me about the situation that I was in. He simply gave me my absolution by saying in Latin:

Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis, in nomine

Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.

I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

For my penance he told me to say ten “Hail Marys.” This was hardly a penance for a serious sin. It was the kind of penance that one got for saying *damn* or *hell* as curse words.

As the slat slammed shut, I was exhausted. He was finished with me. I had lived through this once again, and I couldn't wait to get out of that claustrophobic confessional box; in the darkness, I couldn't tell which way was out. I had no idea of how long I had been in there, and I had an awful fear that someone waiting in the line outside might have heard me. I could not even remember whether I had whispered or not. Once I was back into the church, I was embarrassed to look in the eyes of any of the people who were waiting in line. I knelt down, recited my penance, and left. I felt like I had just been caught in the whirlwind of a hurricane and swept out to sea. I could barely catch my breath. Boy, was I relieved! My walk home that night gave me plenty of time to play the whole experience over again in my mind. I knew one thing for sure, for the moment I wouldn't go to hell if I died—at least until the next time that I had sex with Mr. F. again.

At one time, only *adult* Catholics were allowed to receive Holy Communion, and then only several times a year. Pope Pius X, in the 19th century, issued a proclamation which stated that adults and children, who had reached the age of seven, “the age of reason,” could receive Communion whenever they wanted to, as long as they were in the state of grace, i.e. had gone to Confession if they had committed a serious sin. The Church had gone from one extreme to the other without stopping to think of all of the different outcomes that might take place around this change.

The next time that I saw Mr. F., he repeated the admonition to

me that we were going to “try to eliminate the sexual part” of our relationship. He had told me this the *last* time that I had gone to Confession. We both had gone to Confession and told two different priests about a case of child abuse that was going on in a Catholic church somewhere in the Archdiocese, and neither of them could tell anyone about it because of their priestly vows of silence. Mr. F. had used this fact to reassure me that no one would ever find out through the priest in confession what we had been doing. No one had dared to challenge the church’s teaching on this because a priest had to promise that he would die before he broke his vow of complete secrecy while he was hearing confessions. I had never heard of any priest who had risked losing his priesthood for reporting a crime to the authorities. Catholic priests had known about criminal activities for centuries but had not been able to do anything about them. The priests had been conditioned to keep these matters to themselves. Sometimes they might not have been able to remember whether they had heard about them in the confessional or some place else. The “seal of the confessional” allowed my sexual relationship with an adult male to go unreported. By not telling anyone about it, the priests reinforced to me the idea that, as a child, I would be sent to hell for all eternity because of the sinful relationship with Mr. F. that I was unable to end on my own.

As the end of the seventh grade approached, Mr. F. told me that we had been asked to provide the music for the entire summer of weekend services at the same seaside church where he had first kissed me. He said that the rector there had a pool of musicians to draw on, so we didn't have to promise to be there every weekend. He had already made arrangements with our pastor so I could have the weekends off for the summer. He usually picked me up on Friday evening, or Saturday morning if I had a funeral to play or he had something he had to attend to first. It took us about three hours to get there. How he managed to pull this off with Mrs. F., I don't know. He probably claimed that the family needed the money. I was very glad to get away from my family for the weekend, as most teenagers would have been, and also happy that we were going to get paid for our work.

Once again we had a free place to stay. If we left on Friday evening, we arrived there around 11:00 p.m. Although our quarters had more than one bed available, Mr. F. and I slept together... that is, if we actually slept at all. On Friday evenings we went right to bed after unpacking and plunged into a gluttony of lustful behavior. This would last literally all night. When we got up on Saturday mornings, we visited with the rector of the church for a little while and then went to the beach for the day. I loved the sand and surf. After a day in the sun, we brought carry-out food back to our room. This would be followed by a trip to the boardwalk. We had to be back by 11:00 p.m., because at that particular church there was a

Saturday Midnight Mass at which we also had to provide the singing and organ accompaniment. The rector wanted to catch all of the people who would not make it to Mass on Sunday morning; assuming they would “sleep in” since they were on vacation. A lot of people arrived at this Mass in an inebriated state because there was a night club right across the street from the church. In those days, all of the night clubs closed sharply at midnight. It was during a period in which they had “blue laws”; that is, laws that required a ban on liquor sales on Sundays.

After the Mass we would return to our room for round two, a repeat of Friday night; an all night marathon of unbridled passion. As I have stated, Mr. F. had an insatiable appetite for sex. Unfortunately, the first service began at 7:00 A.M. We had to be up before dawn, since that’s when the pastor arrived at the church. Somehow we were able to get up on time, although I don’t know how we did it without any sleep. There were several more services after the early one. Sometimes another organist showed up, in which case I went to the beach alone and waited for Mr. F. to get there. I was thankful for this because I had a chance to get a little more rest.

On one occasion the rector offered us the use of his car so that we could drive to the other church located near the boardwalk, in order to provide music at the last Mass of the weekend on Sunday afternoon. We took him up on this. His car was marked “clergy member,” which meant that we could park right in front of the church legally without having to look for a parking place. Mr. F. asked me if I would like to try driving the car...it wouldn’t be my first experience with an automobile. Once, when I was younger, I had climbed into a car that was double parked, and released the brake. Luckily an onlooker had seen what I had done and jumped into the car before it had a chance to roll out in front of oncoming traffic. Another time I

climbed into my father's car and released the emergency brake. I was shocked to see that the car had started to roll backward. I slammed on the brake, and started screaming at the top of my lungs. My father came out of the house, dressed in his underwear, and rescued me from that frightening situation. Surprisingly, he didn't chastise me, or try to make me feel bad about it.

I decided to try my luck. I started the car, with Mr. F. sitting on the passenger's side. Then I released the brake, and stepped on the gas pedal. Lo and behold, the car moved forward and I was actually driving down the street. The idea that I was in complete control of the car freaked me out and I panicked, causing the car to go careening into a ditch by the side of the road. Despite this, Mr. F. asked if I wanted to try *his* car, a Volkswagen, for the drive home. I figured it would be a lot easier since his car was much smaller than the rector's limousine. I'm sure it was a shocker for people to see a thirteen-year-old driving down the road.

A large part of the trip home was on country roads where there wasn't much traffic. This meant that I could drive for long stretches of time without having to be concerned about oncoming traffic. This made it easy for me to concentrate on my steering, and also to keep an eye on the rear-view mirror. I wasn't surprised that Mr. F. was taking such a big chance by allowing me to drive his car. I knew that he loved to take dangerous chances. I felt so cool driving along the highway, taking a drag on his cigarette with the music from the radio blasting away. It made me feel older than I was, and it allowed me to feel that I was his equal, to some extent. Maybe he thought that I wouldn't question the exact nature of our relationship as much if I felt that he and I were on the same level.

On the trip home, after I got tired of driving, we exchanged places. Then, at his insistence, we slipped our pants down and

fooled around while we were driving along. That day Mr. F. stopped the car by the side of the road, threw an old blanket on the ground, and we went at it even more. I don't know how he always managed to drive home safely, because he was easily distracted, and as a result we had some very close calls. It was amazing that after all of those hours of love making, working, and driving, Mr. F. was completely energized. He seemed to be euphoric, or high on something. He had gotten what he wanted and now he was having a chance to get plenty of it.

Every now, and then, we had to bring Mr. F.'s family to the beach with us. His wife was resentful enough as it was, not to mention the fact that she had been left at home with the children on most of the summer weekends. Her difficulties with her family had gotten worse as time went by. Obviously when Mrs. F. was there, Mr. F. and I had to be absolutely certain that she didn't notice anything unusual going on between us. It was very hard for me to sleep with the other children when I knew that I would be in bed with their father if the family wasn't there. On some of the other week-ends, when only the children came along, Mr. F. and I took dangerous chances by having sex right in front of them. We pretended to fall asleep when they did, and when he thought it was safe to do so, Mr. F. slipped me into his bed, and we had sex without knowing whether anyone had seen us or not. This was the typical kind of risk taking that he seemed to thrive on. Apparently, he didn't care how his children would have been affected by it if they had seen us having sex together.

I was paid very well for playing the organ at the summer services. I was thirteen years old and already making a lot of money for just a few hours' work. It made up, in a small way, for the work that I had done at my own parish church without remuneration. With Mr. F. there were so many different levels to our relationship that it was difficult to process them all at

once. I felt like a criminal who was committing a serious crime and getting away with it. These feelings fed into my fantasizing about committing other crimes. I started to enjoy the “acting out” process, the sick thrill of possibly getting caught. The more that we got away with it, the more addictive it became.

That autumn, I was caught up in a myriad of thoughts and feelings. Nature was cycling through its seasonal changes, but I was oblivious to them. At last I was in my final year of grammar school. When the eighth grade commenced, the troubles with my classmates continued to disrupt my school days. I wasn't surprised; by now I was anticipating trouble before it even happened. Mr. F. quoted me the Latin phrase, "illegitimi non carborundum," which he translated as, "Don't let the bastards wear you down." Easier said than done. As the days moved into weeks and then months, I yearned for the day I would finally be able to leave that school behind me.

It was fall and I was wading through leaves up to my knees. The first frost arrived sometime near the end of October. Mr. F. kept a jug of apple cider in his carport outside of his house. After awhile it had bubbles in it. We drank it together, but I had no idea that there was fermented alcohol in it. He may have mentioned it to me in passing, but I didn't pay any particular attention to it. I ate or drank anything that he did, and I felt more on a par with him whenever we had these kinds of bonding experiences together.

Along with the gray days of November, Thanks-giving had arrived. My mother was an excellent cook, and our house smelled of roasting turkey. She always made a delicious bread

stuffing with raisins in it. She had learned to cook by observing her grandmother in the kitchen. Her grandparents raised her because she was born out of wedlock. They did her a great disservice though by holding her back from school for several years. They didn't want her to be in the same class with her aunts and uncles, several of whom were around the same age that she was.

One time I discovered her graduation certificate from grammar school. It was written in French because she was of French Canadian descent. At the bottom of the diploma it stated that the year she graduated from the eighth grade she was 17 years old! I asked her about it and she said that there must have been a mistake made. However, I found a duplicate certificate, written in English, and it said the same thing. I don't think that she had even realized it.

Her mother had married by that time, and eventually she and her new husband had six more children. She sent them all to public school. (This would have made it more difficult to figure out that my mother was really part of that family). This had to have affected my mother in a negative way, but she denied that it did. She told me that she started high school, but by the time she was a sophomore, she had dropped out. I'm certain that her age was one of the reasons that she dropped out of school, but she would never have admitted it to me.

After Thanksgiving the football season continued in full swing on the television, and every time I saw a game being played I realized we were getting that much closer to Christmas. As the days of December slipped by, I had to face the fact that I had to once again go to confession because Mr. F. had insisted on it. I went through the same anguish that I had gone through before. This time I decided to go to Confession at the church in town where I took my organ lessons. (I would

continue to go there each year after that, whenever the Christmas holidays or the Easter season came around). It was no less traumatic for me to confess my sins at this church, even though I was unknown to the priests there. No matter what priest I confessed to, I always got the same kind of generic advice. Nothing specific—no questions asked—they were never shocked nor perturbed in any way about the things that I had done. I wondered why they never asked me any questions about my sexual relationship with an adult, or stealing money from the church. I thought that they would have been more curious about my life than that. They probably didn't want to make an issue out of anything for fear of a scandal erupting if the parishioners at my church found out what was going on there. They simply told me that I was blessed for being honest, or some variation thereof, and to do what I had to do in order to break off my relationship with Mr. F. They never told me how to do this—EVER!!

I was surviving the eighth grade as best I could. As the year progressed, I kept focused on graduation day, which I thought would bring an end to my misery. I had to take an entrance exam to be admitted to Catholic High School that year. It was an all boys' school, but I hadn't thought of the ramifications of this. The pastor of my church had agreed to pay the tuition, as my parents couldn't afford it. The Mother Superior of my grammar school had strongly suggested that I go there. She must have been oblivious to the trauma that I was going through on a daily basis with the other boys in my class.

The entrance exam included an IQ test, the kind I could never take seriously. Most of the questions were of the multiple choice variety, and if I didn't instantly know the answers, I guessed at them. Consequently I had a history of doing poorly on tests like these. When I had finished the exam, I called Mr. F. from a pay phone. I was exhausted, and frozen since the phone booth was outside in the snow. I was looking for some

supportive encouragement from him. What a mistake I made about that! He chastised me severely! We had been working on a Mass that he was composing and he had wanted me to write out the musical notation for it. When he asked me about it, I told him that I hadn't had a chance to work on it yet. Then he really let me have it! The one person whom I thought would always be there for me, and who would offer me understanding and compassion had let me down. I was speechless. I will never forget the humiliation that I felt in that moment.

It was happening to me once again. I was being yanked like a yo-yo from childhood to adulthood and then back to childhood again. Only another sexually abused child could ever know exactly how disorienting this was to me. I will always remember the pain that I felt that day. Surprisingly, I could hear *Mrs. F's* voice over the receiver in the background chiding her husband for being so hard on me. I had felt up until then that Mr. F. would treat me respectfully at all times, especially since we were having a sexual relationship. Now I found out that this was not the case and I was devastated.

I had my first inkling on that day that I was being used and manipulated. Mr. F. had now added something negative to our relationship and I did not like it. I was completely surprised when Mrs. F. spoke up on my behalf. Up until then, I had always felt negative vibes coming from her. It was no wonder though...some-times when I was at their house, Mr. F. would position me in a certain spot in his den and proceed to kiss and fondle me in such a way that our shadows would be projected onto the wall, which Mrs. F. could see if she accidentally walked by. By the time she had a chance to confirm what she thought she had seen we would have quickly pulled apart. She would be extremely angry and upset by this. She was continuing to put two and two together. She was in a state of shock for part of the time, and for the other part, she must have

been in denial. Unbelievably, she was pregnant again. If Mr. F. was manipulating me, then he was doing a number on her head as well. Even when we got in their family car together, if I was sitting in the middle of the front seat, Mrs. F. would ask me to get out so she could sit there. Then they would argue about it. I was being drawn into this perverted melodrama, but I could not say anything about it because I didn't think that it was my place as a child to do so.

I continued with my usual hectic pace of school and work. I rarely had a day off just for myself. The sex with Mr. F continued several times a week, either at the school at night or at his house or in his car. One time we even had sex in one of the rest rooms in the old F.B.I. building. When we had sex in his car we parked in all sorts of places. Sometimes we had to drive around for quite a while before Mr. F. could find a place where he hoped we wouldn't be discovered. He continued to reassure me that he was in love with me. He said he had had other loves in his life, but that I was the greatest. I believed him.

My graduation day finally arrived, but the only thing that I can remember about it is that someone else had to provide the music for the occasion. I was so happy to be getting away from that school for good. Mr. F. gave me two thick books of music for a graduation present. One was the *Preludes and Fugues*, and the other the *Organ Concertos and Sonatas*, both by J.S. Bach. He had inscribed a message on the inside of one of the front cover pages; it was quite innocuous. Unbelievably, he

also gave me something called a “Liber Brevior.” It was a book written in Latin and filled with Gregorian Chant notation. He had inscribed this one also:

“This book contains the history of the past,
and may contain the key to your future,” Mr. F.

I knew that he was implying that I might become a priest someday. I had occasionally thought about this, and when I read this message, my self-esteem rose, but it didn’t last for long.

The summer went along in much the same way the previous one had. We worked all summer at the church at the seashore. Sun, surf, and sex were the key words for the activities that went on from June until September. During this time I found out that I had been placed on the “F” track of the freshmen students arriving at the Catholic high school that fall. It didn’t surprise me since I knew that I hadn’t done very well on the entrance exam. The classes in this school were labeled “A”, “B”, “C”, etc., and I was to be in the lowest one. This meant that the classmates that I would have to be with every day probably had not done very well in grammar school. I didn’t belong in that class at all. (The track system has since been abandoned).

On my first few days in school that fall, everything seemed to be going quite well. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, some of the boys in the class began to turn on me. I was in a state of shock...I couldn’t believe that this was beginning to happen to me all over again, and I could already tell that it was going to be worse than ever! Gradually, as the school year progressed, a lot of the boys began calling me by girls’ names. It was both mortifying and offensive. In between classes some of the bolder students took to knocking over my desk and throwing my textbooks out the window. The *Brothers*, as the teachers were called in Catholic school, did nothing. Eventually one of

the teachers became disgusted with the situation. He told our homeroom class chairman that he would hold him fully responsible if these outbreaks between classes continued. This made matters even worse because the others still taunted me and then laughed about it when the student in charge tried to stop it. Somehow I managed to hold my own, but I was weary of being singled out. I had to accept it as part and parcel of my school day.

At this time my photo appeared in a city newspaper. I am seated at the organ with a caption stating that I had taken over the job as organist of my church when I was only 11 years old. My history teacher displayed the article to the class that day, showing little interest in my success. I was hurt and embarrassed by his response. Plus I knew that I would now have to deal with even more ridicule from my new classmates.

I managed to make one friend at this school, but he had to be careful not to let anyone know that he knew me very well. Any friend of mine had to blend into the background because just being with me made him a target as well; it was an impossible situation. Luckily I was acquainted with some of the class members on the higher tracks, and they never bothered me. I waited for the bus with some of them after school and they always treated me with respect. It was just my misfortune to have been placed in a freshman class with the wrong set of boys. My classmates confirmed the fact that cruelty can begin at a very early age. Many of them must have had serious problems in their upbringings; as a result, they were looking for someone to take it out on and I was an easy mark. Since this situation was getting worse, and not better, I needed Mr. F. in my life now more than ever, especially since my parents knew nothing about what was going on at school.

At church while playing the organ I felt as if I was on top of the world. Then at school when I was called *fag* or *queer*, it caused me to plummet instantly. Yes, I was on an emotional

roller coaster, and every day it was becoming more hellish to live with these extremes in my life. I had emotional whiplash all of the time. It was bliss one moment, a nightmare the next.

Mr. F. continued to perform oral sex on me, but I still didn't want to reciprocate with him. I was sure that if I had placed my mouth, or even just my lips on his penis, that he would have climaxed instantly. I knew that eventually he was going to expect me to allow him to ejaculate into my mouth, and then he would probably want me to swallow it too. I didn't know what it would taste like, and the prospect of doing this was not appetizing to me. I was so glad he had told me that he wasn't in any rush about it. He continued to assure me that he was willing to wait for as long as it would take for me to feel comfortable about doing this. I knew that semen had little sperms in it that were swimming around. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to swallow them and to have them swimming helter-skelter inside of me. I didn't realize that they were microscopic. I had a very limited knowledge about this. Sex education classes were unheard of at that time. Since Mr. F. was having sex with me and also with his wife, I wondered if he really was a "pervert." I felt like I was being made into one, and that I would surely go to hell when I died. Even if I did have a predisposition to be a homosexual, no one had a right to push me in that direction. I liked the company of girls too. My sexuality might have turned out differently if Mr. F. hadn't been tampering with it.

As time went on, we began taking ever more daring chances, practically inviting disaster. There was a small storage room directly off of the choir loft. Mr. F. had hidden a bottle of wine

there. It was called “Vin d’Or,” which means “Golden Wine.” He made a big thing out of this. He must have decided that it was time for me to be formally introduced to alcohol. I had tasted his alcoholic beverages before, but not on a regular basis. He was always looking for ways to add new levels of excitement to our secret encounters.

After the choir rehearsals we went into this storage room to make out. Mr. F. would take a mouthful of wine and while we were kissing squirt some of it into my mouth. At first I just swallowed it, but then he taught me how to pass the wine back and forth between his mouth and mine. On each return it stung my lips and mouth even more. Then we alternated swallowing it. On Sundays, while the priest was giving the sermon, Mr. F. and I casually slipped into the storage room and closed the door behind us. We would make out with the door unlocked; someone could have come in on us and we would have been instantly caught. Sometimes we even drank some of the wine that he had hidden there. We never knew how long the sermon would last so we had to listen very carefully for the priest to stop talking. Occasionally there would be a long pause and we made a mad dash back into the choir loft, only to find out that the priest had not finished his homily after all. Oftentimes Mr. F. walked right in front of the choir with a bulging erection inside of his pants. Once I even noticed that he had a damp spot near his crotch. The odd thing is that no one in the choir ever noticed anything or, if they did, they never showed it.

I couldn’t attend Mass any more without an element of sex thrown in with it. I continued to feel like I was getting away with something, but at the same time I felt rotten about myself. The mixture of God, religion, and sex was becoming absolutely disgusting to me. I could not keep these things separate in my mind anymore. My psyche was becoming even more misshapen, but I figured that if Mr. F. was able to handle these

things, then I should be able to handle them too.

I thought of myself as Mr. F.'s "lover," even though I was unsure of what the word actually meant. At that time, movies from the 1930s and '40s were on T.V. every day. I especially identified with a movie where the plot involved a handsome man who fell in love with a beautiful woman, only to find out that she had been a prostitute in her former life. Or a love story in which a third person entered the picture and the marriage was destroyed. I saw myself in that movie too, and got a glimpse of the damage that I was doing to Mr. and Mrs. F.'s life together. I had to do a lot of rationalizing to avoid thinking about the reality of my relationship with him, and the fact that there was a large element of evil in it. On the other hand, I had done a great job of making myself feel guilty. I couldn't help wonder about Mrs. F., and what she must have been going through. Nevertheless, I found myself becoming hardened to the suffering that she was enduring. Thus, my ability to empathize with others was being affected in a negative way. I could see it on her face and in her eyes that she was experiencing extreme feelings of torture. Nevertheless, here I was wondering what she was going through, when actually it should have been the other way around.

Unbelievably she was constantly pregnant, which verified the fact to me that Mr. F. was still having sexual relations with her. He went into graphic details describing their sex life to me. I had no idea of what sexual intercourse was like, so he explained it to me by using the analogy that it was like "dipping your penis into a vat of honey." His voracious sexual appetite

enabled him to reach multiple climaxes whenever he wanted to. Naturally, it was no problem for me to do likewise. One of the results of my being turned on sexually at such an early age was that everything became sexualized. It is impossible to completely describe this phenomenon to someone who has not experienced it. I looked at my classmates and fanta-sized about their imaginary sex lives all of the time. I spent an inordinate amount of time wondering about things like that, when I should have had my mind on my studies. One time I saw a classmate unconsciously rubbing his erection (inside of his clothes) against the bottom of his desk. The teacher, seated at the front of the room, must have noticed what was going on because he told my classmate to “get up and adjust the venetian blinds.” I was always on the alert for this type of thing. So many actions that I might have otherwise ignored took on exaggerated sexual overtones. I had begun to associate sex with almost every element of my existence.

Mr. F. continued to be the initiator of all of our “romantic” encounters. The routine was always the same: we made out for a while and then Mr. F. unbuckled my belt and grabbed at my underwear. Next he yanked my pants down to my ankles and began to unbuckle his belt. Before I knew it, both of us had our pants down. He patiently continued to reassure me that he was not putting any pressure on me to perform oral sex on him (more commonly known as a “blow job,” as he told me), but while he was performing oral sex, he continued to maneuver us into a “69” position, placing his erect penis right in my face, throbbing and exuding pre-cum. His bare crotch, as always, gave off that distinctive musky odor. It was a potent smell...very heady. Even though I had smelled it many times before, it continued to remind me of the scent of wet fur. I was sure that he bathed every day, so I assumed that this odor was natural. When he sucked on my erect penis, he did so until I

ejaculated into his mouth, and then he swallowed it with great gusto. He must have been waiting excitedly for the day when I would do the same thing for him.

During his many visits to our house, Mr. F. made a point of getting close to my parents. I suspected that this was to deceive them about the true nature of our relationship, but I never said anything to him about it. He played such an innocent role with them, especially over the holidays. He hugged my mother and kissed her on the cheek. He put on such a convincing act, that even I somewhat believed it. He was slick, conniving, and influencing me to be that way too. He continued to insist that the true reason we had to conceal the real nature of our relationship was that “no one would understand” how we really felt about each other.

Mr. F. must have been getting tired of lying down on the tile classroom floors, as we now went to my house after the evening choir rehearsals. We slipped down-stairs to our family recreation room with the excuse that we were going to watch the evening news on T.V. My parents had to have been in such deep denial that nothing had ever raised their antennae about this odd situation. Why would a thirty-six year old man want to hang out with a fourteen-year-old boy late at night, especially when they both had to get up early the next morning?

As far as I knew, Mr. F. and I had not aroused the least suspicion in anyone but his wife. There were probably some people who unconsciously saw me as an adult because I had the job of parish organist. This might have been another reason that Mr. F. and I got away with murder without anyone realizing what was going on. Mrs. F. was now almost positive about her

husband and me. She couldn't prove it, but she was aware that there was a third party in her marriage.

One time they got into a heated argument about it in front on me. She yanked off her wedding ring and threw it to the floor. This display of drama was as far as she ever went to show her anger in my presence. Mr. F. knew her well enough to know that she wouldn't do anything drastic. She knew (although *I* had no idea) that her husband would go to prison and that she might be sent there too for being an accomplice, since she had never told anyone about it. If she *had* told, she would have suffered the stigma and embarrassment of everyone finding out about her husband. It would also have been obvious that she was not exactly a poster wife for mental health herself, since she had covered up for him.

Mrs. F. was now working part time as a receptionist in a doctor's office. At that time, doctors handed out samples of amphetamines, barbiturates, and other drugs on a liberal basis. Mrs. F. brought some of these home with her and Mr. F. told me that she had given some to him. I didn't question this, but I should have. In turn, he gave most of them to me. He had already turned me on to alcohol, and now he had decided to introduce me to drugs, too. I carried them around in the brief case that the choir had given to me as a Christmas present. I was afraid to take any of them, and I was anxious about carrying them around, so I decided to get rid of them. Mr. F. had not been able to corrupt me to the degree that he apparently wanted to. I didn't get it at the time, but he must have thought that it might be fun for both of us to get stoned on drugs. Maybe he thought that I would do things of a sexual nature that I wouldn't do otherwise. One day, when I was carrying the briefcase (full of pills) around with me, I stopped at a creek near our house, opened it, and dropped its potentially dangerous contents into the water. Who knows what might have happened to me if I had taken any of them? I might have died by trying

to mix and match some of them, not knowing exactly what each one was. I'm sure that I repressed the idea that both of the "F.s" had an element of evil in them.

The school year was winding down. Easter was coming again, and along with it the usual scenario of Confession and Communion. By now I was fully aware of this, but I continued to be terrified of telling the priest what had been happening in my life, even though I knew that he could not, and would not, do anything about it. I felt like such a hypocrite, posing as a "goody-two-shoes" organist and having an illicit affair at the same time. Who would have ever guessed it? I knew by now that Mr. F. and I had no real intention of ending the sexual part of our relationship, which meant that my Confession would be invalid anyway, and that if I received Communion, I would be committing a sacrilege. I was still under the impression that *I was responsible* for this, and that I was headed to Hell because of it. As I have stated repeatedly, Mr. F. had never said anything to me that might have led me to believe that he was any more responsible for our sexual relationship than I was. The priests to whom I had confessed my sins to had not clarified this fact for me either.

One day, after school, the telephone rang. My mother answered it, and by the look on her face, something terrible had happened. Mrs. F. had delivered her baby; that much I had gotten out of listening to her end of the conversation. My mother looked very sad as she handed the receiver to me. I asked Mr. F. to tell me what was wrong. He said the baby had been born, but there was something about a lack of oxygen. I didn't grasp it all. He told me that he would call me back later. In a superstitious way, I thought that maybe Mr. F. and his wife were being punished by God. I couldn't put all of my thoughts together, but somehow I felt implicated in this bad news. I hoped the baby would be all right. I prayed to the God who had let me down on so many occasions, at the same time feeling that my prayers would not do any good. I went to the piano and played something melancholy. I was lost in my dazed consciousness and couldn't believe what I had just heard. The next day we had another call. It was one of Mr. F.'s daughters this time; the baby had rallied. I was so relieved, but at the same time, I felt left out. This seemed, to my way of reckoning, to give Mrs. F. more of a claim on Mr. F. than I had on him. I felt angry and at the same time thankful; I was a mess. I was too young to be going through this kind of soap opera in my head.

Later that week, when I got home from school, my mother was waiting for me at the front door. I could tell that something was wrong by the way that she was looking at me. I thought, “I hope no one has discovered anything about Mr. F., and me!” Then she proceeded to give me the horrible news. Mr. F. had called...the baby had died. There was no adequate explanation for it. Now I felt like we *all* were being punished. What a horrible thing to have happened. My mother was almost in tears. I didn’t cry, I felt paralyzed, and didn’t have Mr. F. to turn to. He was not available to me at this time. He hadn’t even personally told me about it; he had told my mother.

I played the organ at the funeral. The little white casket was sickening and frightening to me. It was a family affair, and I was the only outsider in attendance. I felt that I really didn’t belong there. Mrs. F. was beside herself with grief. After the funeral she stayed in her room, crying. Mr. F. was crying too. This tragedy seemed to bring them together in a new bond of sadness and pain. After witnessing this, I didn’t know if I was in such a hurry to enter the world of adulthood after all.

Not surprisingly, I don't remember exactly when I began to perform oral sex on Mr. F. I probably blocked it out of my consciousness because I had not wanted to do it. My sexual activities with him had become a blur in my mind by now. Mr. F. and I had already had innumerable sexual encounters by the time that I allowed him to put his penis into my mouth. We'd been seeing one another at least three times a week and this had been going on for a long time. I knew that I would eventually have to perform oral sex on him because he stuck his crotch in my face every chance he got. It took me a while to get used to having Mr. F.'s "jism" in my mouth, let alone swallowing it. It tasted nasty. It felt like a big wad of warm phlegm in my mouth. I really did not care if he swallowed my semen or not, but since he did, I felt obligated to do the same thing for him.

In school I sat there trying to pretend that nothing out of the ordinary was going on in my life. My classmates had gotten a little older now, and the focus on me started to diminish. They were becoming more self conscious about their blossoming pubescence, and consequently they were beginning to give up some of their immature ways. If any of them had known the details about Mr. F. and me, I was sure that we would have been labeled as perverts. Even though the words "homo" and "faggot" had been hurled at me many times, my classmates only used them because they had heard someone else say them.

They couldn't have known that there was a whole subculture of homosexuals, both male and female, around the world

Even if I was destined to become a homosexual, it would not have lessened the seriousness of my sexual abuse. I had been manipulated into performing homosexual acts on Mr. F. If I did act effeminate at times, I was not conscious of it. I had four brothers, and none of them had ever said anything about it to me. It had been pointed out to me by my peers though, and in very painful ways. It was understandable that I might have had gender identification problems. My father had distanced himself from me, and I had no role model for the situation that I was in.

I asked myself why others had inflicted such torture on me. I constantly wondered about the darker side of humanity: *Pain was pain!*

Evil was evil!

Torture was torture!!

I hadn't asked for this to happen in my life; it just *had*. I felt that I would have been lucky if I had died at birth. I didn't feel sorry for babies that were aborted; I wished I had been. The Catholic Church taught that babies who died without receiving the sacrament of baptism went to a place called *limbo*. Even limbo sounded better than this life.

As the end of sophomore year finally loomed on the horizon, there was a new development in my relationship with Mr. F. He was becoming more forceful about having sex with me. I occasionally wanted to go out to play the pinball machines in an arcade near my home. I could tell that Mr. F. didn't like the fact that I was no longer as available to him as I used to be. I had mixed feelings each time I had to change my plans in order to run off with him. The few friends that I did have in my life began to wonder about it too, although I had never told them anything about the real nature of my relationship with Mr. F.

Mr. F. was now becoming more insistent for me to perform oral sex on him, especially when he could tell that I didn't feel like it. Occasionally I did it even when I didn't want to, because he became angry with me if I resisted him. He had become accustomed to my total acquiescence to any of his requests. I found out that he did not like being told "not right now."

The stealing had become a very serious issue by now, and finally my luck ran out when another friend and I were caught in the act. One of the parish priests had been hiding in the choir loft, waiting and watching to see who was taking the money. He didn't try to stop us on the day he found out who it was. We didn't even know he had seen us. I had always wondered why the priests in the confessional had not made a bigger deal about the stealing that I had been involved in. It did not occur to me until much later that if it got out that a teenaged organist had been having sex with the choir director of his church for several years, sometimes even during the services, that it would have caused a scandal, and the priests would not have wanted this to happen. It would have been very bad for the parish's reputation. After all, it was an all boys choir that had been meeting every Saturday morning for rehearsal. The group had gone on numerous field trips, lots of times unchaperoned.

Eventually, I was called to the rectory one evening, and there was a big scene there with police detectives, the pastor, my friend, and Mr. F, not to mention other people that I might not have noticed. In the end, the amount of money that had been stolen was estimated to be a certain amount by the pastor, and my father agreed to arrange for me to pay it back. He took out a loan from the bank, gave the money to the Monsignor, and

then gave me the payment book. I took care of it at the bank every month until it was paid off. I don't remember how they dealt with my friend. Mr. F. told me later that he had heard one of the detectives say that he thought that I would be the one who would most likely end up involved in a life of crime. Mr. F. had been standing silently in the corner for most of the meeting. Whenever I glanced over at him, he appeared to be holding his breath. I'm sure that he was afraid that we might be discovered because of all of the questioning that was going on. I could tell that he was truly relieved when the session came to an end.

I had not been looking forward to the coming summer that year. I liked the money and getting away from my family for the weekend, but going to the beach with Mr. F. had lost a lot of its appeal. I had gone there with him almost every weekend for the past several summers. I had enjoyed enough sun and salt air to last me for a lifetime. The part that I had really come to dislike, though, was that I was expected to have non-stop sex with him without getting any sleep. I was sick and tired of it. I was overwhelmed by the surrealistic feeling that came over me after so much sexual activity. Life seemed like nothing more than events, punctuated by one sexual act after another. Sometimes my tongue would be raw, and my genitals sore. At that young and virile age, I could ejaculate five or six times in a row. Even if I was tired of it, I could always get a rock hard erection, and Mr. F. probably thought that I wanted even more sex because of this.

Once again, Mrs. F. was pregnant. This was child number seven coming along. I figured she wouldn't go to the beach that summer. She had her hands full when all of her children were there with her, and she had to keep a strict eye on the younger ones. Mr. F. and I did go to the beach, but not as often as we

had in the past. As usual, he was very daring, wading and swimming out beyond the sand bars. He loved to tempt fate by trying to see just how much he could get away with before disaster struck. I was learning to copy this kind of behavior, which was obviously not a good thing.

I continued to play for weddings and funerals, and I was banking most of the money that I was making. I knew that if I wanted to go to college, I would have to buy a car. I wouldn't have to learn how to drive it though, because I had driven Mr. F.'s car to the beach so often. Once again, I had been encouraged to behave as though I was above the law.

It was now well into September, and the length of daylight each day was decreasing once again. Mrs. F. continued to insist that she sit in the middle when the three of us were in the front seat of the car. This was often difficult because she was usually pregnant and quite large. Now when I was alone with her and Mr. F. she showed her anger. I don't remember what finally caused her to blow her stack, but by now she was like a fuse able to ignite at the slightest spark. She lashed out at him right in front of me. I think she was trying to make both Mr. F. and me feel guilty; however, I felt numb during these episodes. Mr. F. was not discernibly bothered when Mrs. F. would fly off the handle. She was a basket case by now and could have cracked up at any moment. She had been an unwilling accomplice to my relationship with her husband. She knew that I was not responsible for it since I was only a child, and yet she couldn't bring herself to go to anyone for help. She saw her life dissolving right before her eyes. How she could continue to have one baby after another was beyond me. Maybe she thought that a new, healthy baby might help heal the pain of losing the baby that died, and that it might help to bring her husband's sexual relationship with me to an end.

I was now in my third year of high school. One Wednesday afternoon (after Mr. F. and I had had our evening tryst in the family room of my house the night before) I arrived home following a hard day at school. My mother told me that she wanted to speak to me about something. She said that my eleven year old brother had come to her that day and told her that he had seen Mr. F. on top of me, on the sofa in the recreation room. My heart stopped in mid beat. I hoped that maybe my brother was unsure about what he had seen. No such luck however. She told me that my little brother was very shaken up about this. I guess she was hoping against hope that he might have been mistaken. She was about to have that hope dashed to the ground. She marched me over to the wall where the crucifix hung. She ordered me to look directly at it. Then she proceeded to accuse me of “doing something” with Mr. F. the night before. I couldn’t deny it. She told me that my brother wouldn’t lie about such a thing, that he was too young to even know about such things, and that he would have been afraid to say such a thing if it were not true.

I had some extremely quick thinking to do. I don’t remember the full extent of the conversation, but I do remember the state of shock that I was in. My mother looked at me in such a disappointed way. She repeated, “Look at the crucifix on the wall, and tell me the truth, and no lying!” It was as big a guilt trip that she could have ever laid on me, somehow tying my behavior in with Christ’s death on the cross. It bore down on the guilt complex which had already invaded my psyche and

had planted itself in a dark corner of my mind. It had been residing there as a mental form of latent virus and eroding my self confidence. At the same time it was spreading out tentacles which had started a psychic spiral in me going out of control, beyond my comprehension of the long range damage that I would experience for the rest of my life.

I completely *zoned out* after that sickening moment when I fully realized what had happened. I had not noticed my brother that morning. We had been buzzing around the house getting ready for school. He must have seen everything that Mr. F. and I had done; otherwise he would have asked me about it before telling my mother. I wondered what exactly had he told her? I didn't have the nerve to ask. I just walked around in a daze, unable to focus or concentrate on anything. "Dear God," I thought, "what am I going to do now!?"

I can't remember how Mr. F. found out what had happened. The remarkable thing was that he didn't appear to be unduly upset about it when he talked to me. I'm certain that he was, but I don't think that he wanted me to realize the depth of the dilemma that we were both now in. I'm convinced that he still wanted me to think that, in some strange way, what we had been doing together was intrinsically good for me. In a perverted sort of way he was right, at least as far as I was concerned. It was a classic example of someone trying to hide a bad motive under a good one. I think that he was actually most upset about the fact that we could not get away with our affair any longer, at least not in the way that we had been able to up until now.

Within the next few days, my father approached me. He had talked to Mr. F. before coming to me about it. I was afraid to talk to my father about this. I couldn't imagine what his reaction was going to be. One of the first questions that he asked me was, "Why didn't you just take a poke at him?" Astonishingly, Mr. F. had told him that this was the one, and

only, time that this had happened. I couldn't believe that anyone would fall for that, but my father did. Talk about *denial!*

I knew, but only in a vague sort of way, that my father could have had Mr. F. turned over to the law. I had no idea that my father could also have filed a law suit against the Catholic Church. As it turned out, he did neither of these things. At the time I was glad about it. My father told me that since Mr. F. was married, and since he had such a large family, he had decided to leave matters as they were. In fact, my mother told me that when my father talked with Mr. F., everything had been resolved between them. Mr. F. promised my father that this would never happen again.

My father didn't want to raise a big stink about what had happened. He would have been too proud and embarrassed to have raised any publicity about this, especially since one of his sisters was a Franciscan nun. In fact, everyone was taken into account except for me. Granted, I had not admitted the exact specifics about what had been going on between Mr. F. and me, nor had I told anyone how long it had been going on. But no one interrogated me any further after this.

Mr. F. quit his job at the church. Nothing was done about the sexual abuse; it had been swept under the rug, just like the domestic violence that had gone on in our home. Everything was supposed to appear fine, whether it was or not. This was one more time in my life when adults had failed to come to my aid, or to help me when I needed it. Perhaps they were not totally to blame because I had been devious, and I had always wanted to handle things on my own. Strong forces had converged on my childhood and adolescence that had caused things to happen in this way. In the end, I didn't feel secure or protected by any of the adults in my life. How could I have known what to do? I was still too young to fully understand it all.

PART II

When my sexual abuse had come to an end, there was no way that I could have known, or understood, all of the ways in which I had been damaged by my relationship with Mr. F. They began to manifest themselves gradually over a long period of time. The judicial system has always been wrong to conclude that victims of childhood sexual abuse should be able to recognize all of the damage done to them by the time they reach adulthood, or before the legal statute of limitations has run out. This attitude by society has allowed pedophiles to escape unpunished for their sexual escapades with children, and left their victims unable to address their abuse in a court of law. In other words, the law has always fallen on the side of the pedophile, rather than that of the victim.

No one should ever have to deal with homophobia (fear of one's own homosexuality), especially a child whose participation in homosexual behavior is at the behest of an adult. It is bad enough that teenagers who are experiencing gay tendencies are forced to confront this in themselves, but at least it has happened as a result of a natural unfolding in their lives. In attempting to deal with internalized homophobia some teenagers have committed suicide because of the guilt and pain that they have experienced as a result of it. This is the kind of pain that I had to deal with, only mine was worse because I had been led into it by Mr. F. By now my homophobia had become a full blown issue for me. The Catholic religion, indeed the entire Judeo-Christian-Muslim community had placed such explicit bans on homosexuality that I was filled with unbearable shame to think I might be gay. The stigma that religion has

handed down from generation to generation about this has been the main source of homophobia in the world. The result was mockery, burning at the stake, or dying a violent death in one of today's "hate crimes."

Many of my friends and acquaintances were messed up by the damage done to them by society because of the negative attitude that was held by many. When AIDS came along, some of the public felt that it was a *good* thing because it would get rid of the gay population; how heartless can people be? I cared for AIDS patients in hospice. The early death and suffering were something that the aforementioned "public" could not stomach if they had to deal with it personally themselves, as I did.

Human beings sometimes seem to thrive on having some group to look down upon. There is no limit to the harm that society can inflict on others when it wants to, as long as the majority goes along with it. It is a sad fact that when one segment of society finally makes strides in overcoming prejudice against themselves, some members of these same groups have failed to take an unbiased, hard look around as another segment of society is struggling onward in the same way, hoping to obtain similar results for themselves. Catholics were at one time severely looked down upon, Jews have been persecuted, and African-Americans have had to fight mightily for their civil rights, but it has been every group for themselves in the fight for justice. Justice should be a universal thing—desired for all—by all.

At the end of my junior year in high school, I transferred from Catholic school to public school. What a relief! What a huge difference! I finally made some new friends, and for the first time in many years, I was not singled out or ridiculed. I had heard the propaganda which stated that Catholic schools were so much better than public schools, but I had not found this to be the case. My new school offered many more subjects than the Catholic schools had in their curriculums. The public school was not as biased in their teaching either. In the Catholic schools little was made of the Crusades, the Reformation, or the full story on the past corruption of the papacy. In fact, we were taught that Islam was a pagan religion, and that Martin Luther was a heretic! For the record, 99% of all Catholics have never studied papal history.

My new school was co-educational and it was there that I realized that I was attracted to girls. I went after a girl whom I didn't think I had a chance with, but after she broke up with her boyfriend, we ended up doing such things as taking long walks, holding hands, making out, that sort of thing. In a way, I think I fell in love with her. We were in the same physics class and she was brilliant. I noticed that she hid her test marks from our classmates. I knew she didn't want to arouse any jealousy from anyone. From my sad experience, I totally understood this.

Despite my now having a girlfriend, I still had rocks being thrown at me accompanied by the ringing taunts of "queer" and "fag". I don't know if I walked in a strange way, or talked funny, or what, but something must have aroused this response.

I was not aware that males often “butched” it up by taking long strides when they walked, looking straight ahead while they rigidly controlled their mannerisms. I would have copied this behavior if I had known that it might serve as a protective device for me. The whole business of *machismo* was alien to me. I hated the thought of fist fights or bullying. I felt that if a guy wanted to prove that he was a male, all that he had to do was to look in the mirror.

I continued to be the parish organist, but after Mr. F. left, the choir disbanded. It didn't really matter because the Catholic Church was transferring from Latin to English at that time, and there was a lot of confusion about it. Many Catholics fell away from their faith, especially because of the continued ban on artificial birth control. (Hundreds of priests and nuns walked out around this time too.) I thought it was strange that there had been such a fierce desire by the Church hierarchy to force people to have children, even when they didn't want them. (These children have suffered for it too, in the same way that homosexuals have suffered because of the Church's teachings.)

During my last year in high school, I was finally paid a small stipend for my organist position. I believe a lot of people thought I was so advanced as an organist that I didn't need any further help in advancing my musical career; nothing could have been further from the truth! I needed all of the support and encouragement I could get in order to continue my musical studies at a conservatory, but this never happened. I became very discouraged when the dream that I had gone after so hard seemed to be dissipating.

My father informed me that I had better learn how to type if I wanted to survive in this world. So I bought a used a typewriter, borrowed a book on typing from the library, and did just that! When I realized that I was not going to be receiving

any further moral or financial support for my career, I decided I had better place my efforts on my school work instead.

When I enrolled in college I didn't sign up for any music courses. I decided that I wanted to major in physics. I think that I was looking for something extremely difficult to major in so that I could feel superior to others and raise my self-esteem, but in an unhealthy way.

As a child I had to bear a lot of responsibility, so it was nothing new for me to be responsible for my own college tuition, for a car to get to school, and for the insurance to drive it. I had already been paying for my dress clothes, dental visits, etc., from my wedding and funeral money. I had been working for seven years and I was exhausted. I had been constantly on the run, seven days a week. I did not know that there might have been another way to live; I had nothing to compare it to.

Campus life changed drastically when the U.S. went to war in Vietnam. Unfortunately, there was a draft in place at the time and I got called up. I took the bus to Fort Hollabird with all of the other fellows, but when it was my turn in line, they looked at the form they had given me to fill out and saw that I had checked "the box." This was a colloquialism in gay life, which meant that I had put an "x" in the blank next to "homosexual." They pulled me aside, questioned about this, and then told me to get back on the bus and wait for the others. This was a horribly humiliating experience.

I ran into the fellow from my Catholic high school who had been caught stealing with me. It turned out that he had been introduced to the gay bars in the city and wanted me to go with him and check them out. This was how I got introduced to gay life, which included lots of alcohol, marijuana, LSD, and amphetamines. The first time I took amphetamines, I felt like a million dollars. I had not been fully aware of the constant depression that I had developed, and the “speed,” as the amphetamines were called on the street, lifted it immediately. For a person who is depressed, amphetamines tend to reverse the symptoms. No one knew how really dangerous these drugs were until years later. They were readily available everywhere, including the doctor’s office. I used them every chance I got. I started smoking a lot of dope too. Eventually I began to feel paranoid. As it turned out, alcohol seemed to reverse *these* symptoms, and the more the better. This interfered heavily with my college life, but somehow I managed to stay enrolled.

What had originally started out as one visit to the gay bars had turned into one night a week, then two, then three, etc. This happened over a period of several years, so I wasn't fully conscious of the ongoing escalation of partying that was taking place in my life. The drugs, alcohol, and sex conveniently served as an emotional pain killer. I was in terrible need of psychotherapy, but I didn't know it. During that time, I met many gay men and I became extremely promiscuous. I was used to a very active sex life; I had been programmed for it.

In my senior year in college, in the middle of my midterms, I dropped out of school. I had all passing grades so there was no good reason for doing this. Looking back, the oblivion that I was experiencing in the drugs, alcohol, and sex, had contributed to it. I had no idea why I craved these things; I still was not aware of the psychological damage incurred by the sexual abuse.

During all of this time I continued to hold onto my job as the organist at our church. Some Sunday mornings I arrived at the church after partying all night, stoned, and still drunk. I don't know how I managed to perform, but I did. Anyway, I was accustomed to this sort of thing since Mr. F. and I used to make out and have sex during the Mass in the back room. Because of his influence on me, I had a difficult time distinguishing between conventional and unconventional behavior. Living "outside of the box" had become deeply entrenched in me, and the results were devastating. All of my potential was being squandered in such a negative way, but I pretended that I was perfectly fine; showing up for work when I was supposed to, and nobody seemed to notice the difference. This was exactly what I had been doing with Mr. F. for all of the years that I was with him. I was so conditioned to it that it did not seem that strange to me. My character had been damaged and it was continuing to take its toll on me.

My relationship with God had become very strained. I felt abandoned by Him. I didn't think that God cared for me since He had allowed this to happen in my life, and in church of all places! I started wondering about my religion even more so when the Church declared that it was O.K. to eat meat on Fridays, even though up until that time it had been a mortal sin to do so; one would go to Hell for doing it! Suddenly, they had gone from one extreme to the other, not stopping to think about how this was going to affect their credibility, especially in the

eyes of young people. If the church had allowed something like this to happen, then maybe they were wrong about other things too.

The combination of negative forces that had continued to converge in my life was working against me. I had been carrying a huge burden of guilt, which fed directly into my sense of low self-worth. I had been powerfully sexualized by Mr. F., which had led me into a life of promiscuity. I had no healthy psychological boundaries, so I didn't know how to stand up for myself. The support for my musical career had all but collapsed as I felt it going right out from under me. My failure to live up to the Church's teachings and the dictates of society caused me to feel worthless. I was deeply buried under a mountain of guilt.

One time I was playing at mass, and I had a sudden spell of erratic heart beat, and it wouldn't stop. I had a sharp pain in my chest too, so an ambulance was called. I felt like such a fool; I could not endure showing vulnerability in any way. I was so conditioned to covering up the sex abuse that I began to cover up any unwanted aspect of my life. When I got to the hospital, they could not find anything wrong with me. In retrospect it was the beginning of a recurrent problem that I had with "panic attacks." The doctors gave me some Valium, and sent me home. I felt even more f because of this. I had no idea what had caused it, but I'm sure that it was related to my building neurosis. It could also have been a result of the massive amount of drugs and alcohol that I had been using. My electrochemical system was becoming stressed, and I'm sure that my heart muscle was being affected.

One Sunday morning, I had taken so much speed that my heart started racing, which is called "tachycardia." I got out of my car and started running around the block in order to make my body keep up with my speeding heartbeat. I stood on the street corner and stuck my fingers down my throat so that I would gag, hoping that I could force up whatever drugs were still in my stomach. What had started out as a little boy wanting to become a church organist had come to this; it was unbelievable!

As time went on, I had quite a few jobs in addition to my job at church. I worked at a stock exchange in the "cage" doing boring office work. I drove a school bus. I was a chauffeur for

an ex-cabinet member. Then I decided that I wanted to try and pick up again on my musical career. I got a job as the piano accompanist at a ballet school. I enjoyed this for awhile, but it became very monotonous because of repetitiveness involved. I also took a course in order to be certified to teach group piano lessons with the public schools, and I did give lessons for several years. All of this time though, I was drinking very heavily and doing drugs.

One night when I was out on the town and very high on drugs and alcohol, I was approached by two men who asked for a light. I made the foolish mistake of putting my hands into my pockets to see if I had any matches. The next thing I knew, I was flat on the ground and my jaw had been broken on both sides. A woman hearing the commotion opened her front door and shouted; soon a crowd formed around me. Some people came by and said that as the thugs ran away from the crime scene, they had snatched a lady's purse. My wallet was gone; I only had twenty dollars in it. I lay there on the ground in a state of complete shock. I couldn't believe that after everything else in my life, *this* had happened.

I had to wait in the hospital for a week before the swelling went down so they could operate on me. My mouth was wired shut for six weeks in order for the bones to heal. The pain was indescribable for weeks afterward. I remember staggering around the house in the middle of the night in a dazed state, trying to get some ice out of the freezer to put in my ice bag. It was horrendous! Wire cutters had been taped up next to my bed in the event that I might throw up and gag, in which case the wires would have to be cut. When the doctors finally tried to remove them, I had to be put to sleep because the muscles had atrophied and I couldn't open or close my mouth once the wires were clipped.

My father was somewhat nicer to me for awhile, but when

the crisis was over with, he couldn't wait to get rid of me. After that, I spent very little time at home; I had a lot of other places where I could stay in town. I was very alienated from my father at this point, and the more I avoided him the better.

Soon after, I quit my job at the church. I had no health insurance, and my long time pastor there did not offer to give me any financial help for the plastic surgery that I had to have. This was my church, and I had been working there for fifteen years! I told him that I was going to have to go to the State for help and he said, "Great!" He did say that he would give me my paycheck "under the table" so that I would be eligible for financial assistance from the government. I felt worthless once again.

I left my job as accompanist at the ballet school and became part of a cabaret act with a singer that I had met. She got drunk while we were performing and picked up men in between the sets. She would disappear for awhile and return all disheveled. Of course I was drinking too, but it didn't show as much because I was sitting behind the piano. When she stood up to sing, members of the audience sometimes had to catch her in order to keep her from hitting the floor.

I had several more rush trips to the emergency room with my heart palpitations and irregular heart beat. In the course of one of these trips I was given the drug Stelazine, which is an anti-psychotic medication. I had never taken anything like this before. Something had to have been very wrong with me for this to have been happening! I went home feeling like a zombie. A few days later, I received a phone call from the local city mental health center. My name had been given to them by the hospital and I was asked to come in. This was the beginning of my getting help, but I had no idea of the struggles ahead of me.

I made an appointment to see one of the therapists. When I

arrived for my initial consultation they arranged for me to take the I.Q., Rorschach, and personality profile tests, and there was even a doctor there who prescribed medication. Unfortunately, my sexual abuse was not given priority billing; they wanted to focus on the difficulties with my family. They had a certain interest in the *Murray Bowen* theory which was in vogue at the time. This stated that generational problems in families are the cause for things like schizophrenia. The therapists told me that if I could patch up my relationship with my father, then everything else in my life would straighten itself out. I spent two years working on this in session once a week, and was supposedly healed. The doctor placed me on Valium for awhile for the bouts with anxiety that I was still having. So much for sex abuse! The therapist had no concept that the sexual abuse was the main origin of my problems. I did not know that either, so I didn't focus on it. But the gaping, invisible wound that I was carrying around with me remained open, raw, and untreated.

I decided I wanted to stop drinking, so I went to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. I didn't know where the motivation to stay stoned and drunk had been coming from. At A.A.'s behest I was begging a God that I didn't trust to please help me. I kept myself busy to the point that I only had time to go to work, meetings, or church. I had always been able to use Catholic dogma about life after death as something that I could revel about. My life had ended up in such a disastrous way that I consoled myself with the thought that if I could just survive somehow until the end of it, that things would be better on the other side. This was a horrible way of looking at life, and a good example of how religious dogma had influenced my thinking in a fanatical way. (Some of my friends noticed that I would swing from some degree of belief in God, to absolutely none at all, and then back again).

I left my job as a waiter in a hotel coffee shop and moved on to an office job with a dental education association, in charge of membership records. I attended computer training classes at night for three years, getting straight A's. Nevertheless I felt like I had lost myself and any sense of self respect I might have had in the past. At A.A., low self esteem is labeled as a character defect. The A.A. text book suggested that I should ask God to remove it. Simple prayers could not have released me from the bad feelings I was having about myself. Five years of sexual abuse and a clueless father could not be banished to the trash heap all that easily. Unfortunately, after six years of sobriety, which included *Narcotics Anonymous* meetings as well, I fell

off the wagon. I was one of the failures (of which there are many) of the twelve-step programs. My sexual abuse problem had not yet been addressed. If I mentioned it at A.A. meetings everyone ignored it, which dumb-founded me!

The Christmas holidays were especially painful for me. A virtual dagger pierced my heart when I saw two people in love, walking down the street holding hands, staring into one another's eyes. I was searching for someone to love, and I fell in love with one after another after another; but it was always unrequited. It was so devastatingly painful.

One Christmas I checked myself into a hospital after experiencing heart irregularities once again. I was put on Inderal, a beta blocker, and it seemed to help. But what could be wrong with my heart? One time I had to wear a Holter Monitor, which was a portable instrument that was connected to my chest to record my heart activity. They could not find anything wrong with me. I took stress tests on treadmills. I did everything to try to figure it out, but I could not find an answer to this problem. I started taking anti-depressants which helped, but I was finally put on Mellaril, which acted as a heavy tranquilizer, making me very lethargic. It did seem to straighten out my heartbeat for awhile, but I found myself drained by all this.

After consulting with a psychiatrist, I went to the mood disorder clinic at Georgetown University. I enrolled in group therapy there. Eventually I quit my job and cashed out my retirement and took a year off from work. It turned out to be the best year I ever had! I still had all of my problems, but I didn't have the stress of a job to deal with. I had struggled with bouts of insomnia while I was working, but now I could sleep in; what a relief!

Society has no idea how difficult it is for a person with problems similar to mine to keep functioning. I had to pretend

that everything was great, when it wasn't. I had to plaster a smile on my face when I felt like crying. I had to push, push, push, when the depression got the best of me. They just wanted me to show up and shut up...Don't complain...Don't rock the boat...Keep a stiff upper lip...Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!! It has always been a crime the way that mentally ill people have been treated by society.

In recent years I have been diagnosed as manic-depressive (or *bi-polar*, as it is now called). Unlike the average person, bipolar individuals are unable to tolerate stress well. Stress intensifies the symptoms of anxiety and anger; one can become a pressure cooker, eventually exploding and pushing away friend and foe alike. This bio-chemical mishap of the brain obviously contributed considerably to the misery in my life. Nevertheless, that does not let the sordid man/boy relationship off the hook...not by a long shot!

I returned to A. A. and got involved with a younger guy who was a manipulator; apparently this was the only way that I knew how to relate to someone. He and his friends made comments saying that they thought I should do something about my sexual abuse problems. They saw behavior in me that I didn't see in myself because I was in so much denial about it. I had already been to *Overeaters Anonymous*, *Al-Anon*, *Debtors Anonymous*, *Sexaholics Anonymous*, and *Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous*. The main reason that I had gone to *Sexaholics Anonymous* was that I wanted to deal with my promiscuity. I had not been able to sustain a normal relationship which included sex. No one could fill my emotional needs because I equated sex with love and attention, approval and security. I had spent an inordinate amount of time trying to fill these needs in the wrong way. This became very dangerous because AIDS had come along. I was trying to adhere to Sexaholics Anonymous request to single persons: *no sex of any kind!* (including masturbation), and I succeeded in doing this for nine months. It was very difficult. I

thought that it was unhealthy to stifle my sex drive, but the people in Sexaholics Anonymous insisted on it.

One of my friends suggested that I go to *Incest Anonymous* meetings. He pointed out to me that I had experienced a form of incest; i.e. the definition of incest includes extended family members—like Mr. F. When I went to my first meeting, I was the only man in the room. I was in so much *denial* about it that when the women complained about being molested by their fathers, I laughed! When it came my turn to speak, I told everyone that what I was hearing sounded like a lot of whining over nothing. They were mad as hell! They wanted me out of there—I could tell!

After I had attended a few more meetings though, a little light started flickering in my head, and I began to relate when they talked about the damage that had been done to them. I heard all kinds of horror stories. One man had come from a family in which both parents got into bed with all of the children, and they all had sex together. I could not believe my ears! And he was so nonchalant about it! I came across some other men who had been molested by their mothers. These extreme forms of behavior were incomprehensible to me. I wanted to believe that Mr. F. had loved me. In fact, every so often I ran into him. Once we even had sex again. It was many years before I learned to despise him for what he had done to me.

Eventually I began to understand:

- ... The lies
- ... The deception
- ... The betrayal
- ... The manipulation
- ... The encounter with evil itself

I had lost out on many of the good things in life because of what Mr. F. had done to me.

Near the end of the year that I wasn't working, a friend of mine called and said that the local restaurant at which he was employed was seeking a pianist. I hesitantly said that I would go and audition for them. I hadn't played in public for awhile now and didn't really know if I wanted to do it or not. I passed the audition. They eventually hired some opera singers and we put together a show. I would go there early in the morning, in the dead of winter, to make sure that the piano was tuned for the evening hour; I doubt anyone appreciated my extra efforts. I found myself playing at several other places during that time as well.

Eventually I got a job playing for a prominent voice teacher. I loved accompanying his students on the piano and got to learn a lot more about opera. Unfortunately, I had a big falling out with him. He was bitter about his failed opera career and he took it out on me. Ironically his career took a dramatic turn shortly thereafter when he became a regular soloist with the Metropolitan Opera! But back then at the studio...let us just say that two volatile people do not a placid mix make!

One Sunday afternoon I walked into my apartment and noticed the light on my answering machine blinking without stopping. I knew that something had happened. When I listened to the messages, it was bad news. My next younger brother had unexpectedly died of a massive heart attack at the age of 44. My whole family was devastated. I participated in

the wake and funeral. I had been suddenly reintroduced into my family's life by this tragedy.

Soon after that my father, whom I was still quite alienated from, had to have open heart surgery. While he was in the hospital, I got a call one day from my former church, of all places. They wanted me to return there as their organist. Not even in my worst nightmares had I the remotest thought of going back to work there. My whole life had been destroyed at that church. They had a new church building now, but it was still the same place where I had been abused for all of those years. My mother wanted me to return to work there, basically because of my father's ill health. In A. A., they have this thing about turning your will and life over to the care of God. I had been sober again for quite awhile, so I thought that maybe, on a wild hunch, there might be some reason that I was supposed to go back to work there. I could never have been more wrong about anything in my life, but there was no way that I could have possibly known it at the time.

After weighing the pros and cons very heavily, I decided to proceed with caution. I looked around for an apartment and found one that was not too far from my parent's house and the church. The choir still had a few members that I knew or recognized, although they were a lot older, grey haired and wrinkled. They remembered me too. There was a young man there who was the choir director, and when I met him to talk about the job everything seemed just fine. However, when I went to my first rehearsal, I was quite taken aback when I found him standoffish and uncomplimentary, especially after he had heard me play.

As time went on, I noticed that he was the kind of person who got no gratification from accomplishing something. He had a mean disposition and would brow beat the all-volunteer choir members. He screamed and hollered at the top of his

lungs, and repeated difficult musical phrases ad nauseam. He banged his foot on the floor while he was conducting; I almost went insane. Not until I insisted on it did he allow us any breaks during the two hour rehearsals (*three* hours before concerts and High Holy days). He was a novice, and I had been playing the piano and organ for over 40 years by that time. I had to put up with this, and I was very unhappy about it.

In spite of this, the choir grew from its small number of twelve to a group of almost fifty. The director became very ambitious and desperate to give musical concerts. We had concerts at Christmas time and at the end of the year. This was not in my contract, and I wasn't up for it, at all. At rehearsal each week we spent only ten minutes on the music for the coming Sunday; the rest of the time was spent pounding out difficult parts of concert numbers that were far too advanced for the amateur singers. The concert dates arrived each year and hardly anyone came to them, mostly family members of the choir.

I let him know how I felt about it and he started paying me back in very unpleasant ways. When I got up from my seat at the piano, he sat down, and wouldn't get up when I returned. He started talking about me behind my back and tried to turn others against me. As time went on, our relationship went from bad to worse. I didn't say anything to the pastor about it, although I wanted to.

My father's health deteriorated. Cancer had now spread throughout his body and he was very sick. He was heavily addicted to pain killers and was a monster to take care of. He hurled insults at me, and even though he was demented, it still hurt. Our relationship from my childhood had never been repaired. Some of my friends wondered why I wanted to have anything to do with him, but they didn't understand how I felt. In spite of everything, I still cared about him.

I was in psychotherapy again; being back at the church had

brought up a lot of old issues. It was difficult because I had to repeat my story all over again to yet another therapist. It was very tiresome to have to rehash it every time I moved from one therapist to another. I don't really know if the therapy did me much good at that point, but it helped to keep my depression under control. I was placed on additional medication at this time which also helped. My medicine cabinet looked like a small pharmacy with all of the medication bottles for psychiatric drugs that I had accumulated over the years. Any time I could not afford a psychiatrist, I went to regular medical doctors to get refills. It was a juggling act trying to find the ones that worked well together. I've spent most of my adult life living with the side effects of these powerful drugs.

After I had been back at the church for awhile, we celebrated the fiftieth birthday of the parish. It was a huge success, but my father was doing even worse by then and I desperately needed help! I went to the choir director, and asked if he could help me over the summer (normally he would be off while I still continued to play the Sunday Masses.) One Sunday he told me he that would play for me, but he never showed up! When I called him, he didn't answer his phone. I finally left several angry messages which he never returned. It was very hard for me at this point because, before I could leave the house on Sunday morning, I had to get my father out of bed, into a chair, serve him breakfast, and make sure that he was settled. I had known for a long time that I had made a bad mistake in going back to work at that church. The pastor showed no compassion about the fact that my father was dying, or about my problems in trying to take care of him. My mother was legally blind by now, and she was losing her hearing as well. She was depending on me for help.

Later that fall, when the choir returned, I tried to contact the director on the telephone. He refused to call me back. Instead, he went to the pastor and told him that I was not behaving in a

professional way. He neglected to tell him about his own shortcomings. The next thing I knew, the pastor called me and said that he wanted to see me about something. I made an appointment with him, and dropped by the rectory one evening. It just happened to be my birthday—it was a birthday that I would never forget! He called me on the carpet, listing all of the complaints that the choir director had made about me. Here I was, struggling with the care of my ailing parents, and trying to continue to work at the same time. All of this stress had taken its toll on me, and instead of getting the help that I needed, I had been dressed down instead. I decided to write a letter to him, explaining my circumstances even further. I also decided to disclose to him that I had been sexually abused at that particular church. I was shocked at his response—he refused to talk to me about it.

The day after I had written him about my childhood pain and suffering in the letter, which I had left in his mailbox, the devastating tragedy of 9/11 occurred. Despite the nationally shared sorrow, I waited each day after that for him to call me. Several days later, I ran into him at Mass on Saturday evening. He made a passing comment, and walked on. No reaching out, no compassion for what I had disclosed, no words of comfort, no wanting to somehow make it up to me, no *nothing*. I was totally devastated.

This was the worst example of priestly behavior that I had ever seen in my whole life. His reaction spoke volumes to me about him. He had completely torn open all of the unhealed wounds from my abuse by his uncaring reaction. This was an encounter with evil that was even worse than the abuse itself. I wondered how he could not see what had happened to me as being important or painful. I wondered how a man of faith could be filled with so much fear. I wondered about someone who didn't see childhood sexual abuse as something that deserved his immediate attention.

Of course I realize he had *many* people to comfort during that first week after our nation was attacked, but after unleashing my pain in the letter, I too was one of those people. On the day following the attacks I talked to a friend who was dealing with depression and anxiety problems; we agreed that the sorrow, fear, and anger being felt by every American that day was similar to the way we felt every single day of our lives.

A few days later, after a funeral that I had played, the pastor came over to me and said that he was going away on retreat and would talk to me when he got back. Nothing more than that. I could not believe it. My father's health continued to worsen. To make matters worse, he had fallen and broken both hips and a shoulder. I was totally exhausted. I didn't know who to turn to.

I heard through the grapevine that the choir director had resigned right after I had written my letter to the pastor. One Saturday evening I arrived for Mass and read in the parish bulletin that a new director had been hired. I had worked there for thirty years, and no one had bothered to inform me about it. I was *so* hurt! I was never even introduced to him; I met him at the first choir practice that he attended. I knew nothing about him, save for the fact that the parish bulletin had been chock full of accolades about him; accolades that had never been written about me. A special point had been made that he played the organ. I should have seen the handwriting on the wall.

The Christmas holidays came along and I received a card from the pastor, with my bonus in it, stating what a great job I had been doing. He had contacted me just before that, over two months after I told him about the abuse. He said that he was shaking in his boots when he finally talked to me over the phone. He wanted me to come to his office, but by then I had lost all confidence in him. I was too uncomfortable to discuss such a delicate matter with someone that I no longer trusted.

The pastor called me and the new music director in for a

meeting. He said that he wanted to discuss what was happening with the choir, etc. I could tell by the conversation that they were in some kind of mode where it was the two of them vs. me; I couldn't prove it, but I sensed it. The meeting ended up in a shouting match and the pastor told us to get out. I looked back as I left, but the new director was not following me. Now I knew that something was up.

All of this could just be a boring discussion of a bad personal situation that I had to go through except for one thing—I had been sexually abused at that church for five years and the pastor *didn't care. He didn't care. He didn't care. He didn't care.* The silent words rang in my mind with a deafening clarity.

Not long after that I was called to the rectory on a Sunday afternoon, after working all day at the church. The assistant pastor answered the door. He invited me into a side office. He sat there looking off into space. He knew what was about to happen. The pastor must have had him there for protection in case I reacted violently. When he got there, he fired me. Just like that!! He told me that I was being terminated because I had difficulty cooperating with others. *Meanwhile my father was at home dying!* In our last phone conversation, after I had asked the pastor if there was any way that we could bring the emotional level of our discourse down a few notches, he offered to give me some money for therapy, but I could tell that he resented it. The publicity concerning the wave of priestly pedophile abuse had not started at this point, so there was no reason, that I knew of, for why he had reacted to me in the way that he had. He didn't need a bishop to tell him how to treat me; he knew. Any decent person would have known. Not only did he fire me, but he did it in front of someone else, and I was doubly disgraced. These two men were supposed to be apostles of Christ. I daresay that Satan was the only supernatural being in the room that day.

I left the rectory in a suicidal rage. I went home and called

several members of the choir to tell them what had happened. One hung up on me. One yelled at me. I left messages, and the calls were never returned. I couldn't believe it. My whole world was turning on me. I called the convent. I spoke to one of the nuns that I knew. She said that she was glad that it hadn't been a *priest* that had molested me. I called another nun whom I had known for years. She hung up on me. *This* was the reaction that I got from the Catholic Church when I told them what had happened to me in my childhood.

Even as I was suffering through this debasing period of my life, I had to look for a new job. I answered an ad in a Catholic newspaper and was hired as the music director at another Catholic Church. Strangely, my former pastor gave me an excellent reference. I couldn't get over it. What the hell was going on? I had also held onto a part time job at another Catholic Church that I had been playing at for a short while. Now I was working for two Catholic churches, but I was so upset about what had happened that I decided to file a law suit for breach of contract, wrongful termination, and intentional infliction of severe emotional distress. My lawyer, whom I had a very hard time obtaining, wrote a letter to the Cardinal, asking him for compensation for me. He *never* responded.

The Cardinal's lawyers were playing hard ball. They had no intention of trying to help me. I would have dropped the law suit if they had. No, they wanted to fight. The Cardinal wanted to fight...to fight with a wounded animal. The pastor had figuratively kicked me to the curb, stepping on top of my body as he walked over me. Now the Cardinal had come along, spit on me, turned his back and walked away; or at least it felt that way. What kind of ghouls was I dealing with here? What kinds of devils were capable of such madness?

I eventually had a nervous breakdown.

No one tried to contact me to see how I was.

While I did get a couple of cards in the mail, there was no reference to the abuse.

The thing is, by now I had finally confessed my abuse to everyone...

AND NOBODY CARED...

*NOBODY
CARED!!*

