



Snapshots from a Broken Camera (black and white version): A Collection of Short Stories About my Life

Ms Jeanne Barkemeijer de Wit

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I started writing this book in 1991, a year or so after my Dad died. Life was brutally hard back then. Mom was still suffering from the effects of her stroke. For a while I tried holding on to my job while also caring for my Mom.

My physical health nose dived and I crashed and burned. I've been struggling to regain my health ever since. (Multiple small strokes and a pulmonary embolism later, I'm still chugging along hoping for the best.)

F. Michael Trevitt, PhD (my therapist in 1991) suggested I write everything down, more for myself than anyone else. So I journaled and wrote a couple of newspaper articles on life with Multiple Personality Disorder. I was surprised at how popular my stories were.

People who knew I had MPD (I didn't keep it secret back in the day) would ask me what it was like to be a multiple, what it felt like to "Switch", and all sorts of invasive and private questions.

Invariably, some idiot asked me to go in great detail about the sexual abuse. Then I'd stress and vanish into some dark place within myself.

A lot of people's questions stressed the hell out of me, so much so I ended up losing time and other personalities would step in and take over.

I was taking care of my still abusive Mom and trying to get my head straight. I didn't understand people's fascination with my pain. (Still don't) I half joked to the doctor that I felt as if I were writing psychological porn. Mostly I worried about people's reasons for needing to know so much about the sexual details of my life.

Every time I got close to finishing I either burned what I'd written or toss my pages in the trash. When I started writing by computer, I'd only get so far before I deleted everything I'd written from the computer.

So here I am 22 years and almost 100,000 words later, wondering about the reasons I started writing this in the first place, and still worrying about what people will think of me after they read it.

There's a part of me which aches to leave the past behind. But so far I haven't been able to do that. Just when I think I'm clear of the pain that memories bring, I'll hear a song, or the sky turns the same color as the day I was raped, and suddenly I'm flooded with memories so real they take my breath away.

Remembering wouldn't be so bad if the memories didn't feel so God damned real. It's as if I'm stuck inside a broken time machine, one moment I'm living in real time, the next I'm lost somewhere long ago. When I return, I'm forced to remember that everyone I loved is dead.

I have a new therapist now, Mary Chambers, who believes my story will help survivors like myself. I cried

the day she told me that. The idea that some other child was forced to endure the things I had, is almost more than I can comprehend. The idea that my journey to find a life beyond all the pain could help someone else propels me forward.

In my humble opinion, "Adult Survivor" is a deeply personal and extremely subjective term. Every day I fight to survive my past, suicide is ALWAYS in the back of my mind.

While I used to believe otherwise, the truth is there are NO survivors of child abuse. Anyone who tells you otherwise is delusional or has been grossly misinformed. The best you can hope for is to grow beyond the pain.

I am more than my past, and hopefully stronger than the pain that comes with my memories. I long for grace, pray for salvation, and hope peace eventually finds its way into my soul.

I thank God I beat the statistical odds and didn't become a carbon copy of my abusers. God willing my body will heal, along with my heart, soul and mind.

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