

### **From the 3.7.15 Pagoda Writers Workshop:**

I sang along, whole heartily. My nasally voice no longer holds me back. A liberation, fully in the moment.

It's getting late. I'm preparing to leave.  
He glances my way – again. Damn, I love his smile.  
Of course you can walk me to my car.  
We sit inside, kissing. I smile, again.  
He looks past me – a face peers in my car window – Go – Now!!  
I say

My driver's door opens. My keys, wallet, phone apprehended and in a moment The feel of the concrete of the parking garage under me, as I'm dragged by my hair. It hurts-sort of-Now-it hurts no more. I feel my head shaking forward & backwards –over & over. I feel the concrete pole. I feel nothing, but I see the foot coming in contact with my side, ribs, legs. I see it-blurry-Gone. I wake, alone.

The day I came undone  
No it cannot be true  
To not be accepted  
To not be good enough  
Who are they to tell me that  
To affect not only my work but  
my heart  
my mind  
my being  
my life

I was filling your tea  
cup while drinking from  
my ginger ale glass.

I took everything from you  
and didn't know how to give anything back.

I watched you suffer and  
stood there frozen.

The roof crashing down  
on you I crawled into  
the storm and only  
rescued my own belongings.

I didn't know how  
to love you.  
And you didn't know how to  
take my love.

The phone call came on a Saturday morning  
“We have a liver for you,” they said.  
It was a cold day in February so I asked,  
“Will it fit in my body?” We think so, they said.  
I started dressing with so many thoughts in my head.  
What will happen to my children if I am dead?  
I asked God for His help to make it through.  
I received a peace and I knew what I had to do.

I was very young, maybe eight  
When it started wasn't early, wasn't late.  
Existence was only the inside of my head.  
The pressure kept expanding, the pain,  
the dread.  
I could hear my screams bounce off the walls.  
Continually splitting my cranium  
from within, like 12 story falls.  
The pain would not leave  
when my mouth purged green.  
Emerald slop everywhere a  
substance so mean.  
Release came with a five day death  
Never thought again I'd experience  
a breath.  
This was only the beginning, it would  
happen again.  
Grew up to be another of the  
broken men.

### The Eyes I will never forget

I thought the day would be normal  
A day in the woods with nature  
From somewhere a young bear approached  
And then from behind came the sow  
In its mind I was after the cub  
And that led to her hatefulness  
The sow came to protect her cub  
Slowly at first, with ear flattened  
I tried to withdraw, but it followed  
It was after me, I realized  
The fear came slowly at first  
It would be a terrible way to die  
At several yards, it was the eyes  
The eyes were full of hate, eyes to remember  
I thought the end was near  
But I found a way to escape, to live

## Growing up With a Stepfather

I was a boy, vulnerable and  
without means of escape.  
His rage would rise,  
be relieved by pummeling me,  
then recede, until triggered again  
The cycle took about 3 days to repeat  
The rage rose in his eyes,  
What I saw behind those eyes  
One wouldn't want to meet on  
a dark night.

THE LOSS IS SO INTENSE  
IT'S LIKE A HUGE ABYSS  
THE COUCH IS SO SOFT  
...SO COMFORTING  
I LIVE HERE  
I MAY DIE HERE  
THINGS SURROUND ME  
SO MANY MEMORIES  
HEARTBREAKS & JOY  
COMBINE  
MY ENERGY HAS LEFT ME  
THE DAYS COME AND GO  
AND I AM LEFT ALONE  
IN MY SORROW  
...THEN I REMEMBER  
WHAT IT WAS LIKE  
SOME GLIMMER OF HOPE  
OF HAPPINESS  
AND I STRUGGLE TO  
FIND MYSELF  
ONCE AGAIN  
AND HERE I AM

The walk down the middle  
my legs shaking  
my eyes tearing  
my throat tightening  
heart pounding  
hands sweating  
lips biting  
Finally the end of the walk down  
    the middle  
A peck on the cheek  
    my legs calming  
    my eye drying  
    my throat loosening  
    heart tapping  
    hands smooth  
    lips still  
I see him  
    I say, "I Do."

I left that room with imprints on my thighs  
like ink spots that could not be  
removed no matter how hot the water.  
I left that bed with invisible  
fingerprints that I still feel when  
I hear a voice like his, smell  
his scent, pungent and vulgar.  
The scars still rise on my  
skin when I think of him  
Any him that fits his  
profile. Defiled I was, on  
that night, where the sun  
fell from the sky like  
it would never rise again.  
And it didn't.

They were going to come for me  
I knew it  
I could tell  
They would come to the door and  
    haul me off to jail  
Damn that Franky  
I should have stopped  
I should have left a note  
That poor car  
When the driver came out and saw it  
I imagined the look on his face

They were going to come for me  
I knew it  
I could tell  
They would come to the door and  
    haul me off to jail