

POETRY FOR WOMB TWIN SURVIVORS



Written by
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Poetry For Womb Twin Survivors

Written and published by

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All proceeds from sales of this book go to Womb Twin, a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing information and support to womb twin survivors around the world.



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These writings arose in me over many years, as I began to learn about womb twin survivors and how they feel. The story began in February 2002 when I realised I was a womb twin survivor. There was no proof, so I had to explore my feelings very carefully and in many ways before making up my mind. Writing was one of the ways.

FINDING MY OWN WOMB TWIN

As I underwent training as a counsellor in the late 1990s, I became acutely aware of how much pain I was experiencing every day. Sometimes it was physical but mostly it was emotional. I did not understand it at first but I knew the wounds were very old - in fact, they had been there all my life.



Old Wounds

I wear my heart beneath my sleeve.
I may lift my sleeve and show my scars.
One day, when I get to know you,
I may decide to share my pain.
I wear my heart around my neck for all to see
Yet it is hidden just beneath the neckline.
Do not dare to enquire why my heart is broken
For I do not know.

It seems to be an ancient wound that lies inside my mind;
It lies in the pain of others handed down to me.
It is the pain of love known and lost.

Oh how gladly I accept the pain!

I am a vessel for the pain of the world;
I bleed for you, for many and for the pain I feel
Within me and without you.

What blessed touch can stop this wound
From leaching life away from me?
How may I staunch the flow and let the scab begin to form?
Only hope and complete surrender to the pain of simply
being;
Only love and self-forgiveness poured into a well of wounds;
Only time and rest and the company of angels.

Only silence and the power of soft tranquillity;
Only simple faith that healing can come - will come,
And in my heart all things will come to good.



In the early months of 2002 I began to realise that I was the sole survivor of an abortion attempt made at about 14 weeks and with a sharp object. This killed my twin brother. I named him Ben, because in French the *benjamin* is the younger son, and Ben would have been the younger son if he had lived.



Ben

Mysterious friend, I knew you always
Yet there was something that parted us:
A terrible pain and hate that destroyed us both.
I was left weeping for I knew not what.
In the times of my life when joy was most beautiful,
your death drowned me
In the times in my life when I was most despairing, your
hope sustained me

How can I live without you, now I have come to the place
where we must part?

Strongly and desperately I cling to you, to your memory,
Which is locked into my own pain,
inextricably bound as we are.

If I open the pain and look into it I see you;
If I close my mind to the pain
is it easier but you are not there;
I am searching for you as I walk
the mourning path towards peaceful acceptance.
I yearn for you, for with you I am completed
yet always whole in myself.

Ben, I never knew you and yet must let you go
You were destroyed and I hate the destroyer!
If I forgive your destroyer,
then I must let you go as of God's will.....
Somewhere in the dark recesses of creation
is the meaning of this pain,
The meaninglessness of hatred
that leaves such a terrible scar!

Ben, I will set you free to live wherever you wish,
For I know that you were never meant to be here with me.
By keeping you near me, to help me in my own despair,
I keep you from the eternal happiness
which should be yours.

Ben, I let go of you now, and feel the screaming space
between us growing in the dark -
Yet there is something that remains, a gossamer memory.
This is eternal, until we meet again.



AN UNTOLD STORY

Now I had found the reason for my pain, I realised that here was an untold story. I made it my mission to do what I could to discover the other womb twin survivors around the world and help them, as I had been helped, by this new knowledge. I realised this during a drama therapy session, where I imagined been pregnant with ideas...



My children

Across a vast and barren landscape
I turned stones in a long search for ideas
And scorpions scuttled into the shade as I passed.

Then the burning within me grew unbearable
And in the pale light of a new moon
The pain came, dragging and enormous...

My children arrived, through shouts of terror and resentment
And when peace and silence fell they lay around me,
sleeping.

There was beauty and joy and grief and dreams.
And as I leaned over them I breathed into them
My energy and loyalty and memories and spirit,

First by a smile
And then a twitch
Then a shy giggle and a blink...

Slowly, as the music in my heart grew louder
I could hear them singing.

SEARCHING

In my life there had always been a sense of painful yearning for Something or Someone, and I never knew what that was. It was like an endless search. I soon discovered that many womb twin survivors feel the same. This poem was my attempt to describe the lifelong search for the lost womb twin, in the hope that it may help to put words to the mysterious sense of something missing.



Wanderer

In a journey of endless footsteps I gather momentum
Until the journey is myself and I the journey:
The paths proliferate before me, beckoning-
Such wonder lies beyond where every road must bend!

And in the speculation of a misty corner-
Where trees dip and bend in unseen breezes-
Lies the yearning in my heart
That drives my endless footsteps, searching....

The scene is clear: the journey is the meaning
And the footsteps make the road
Yet in the linear movement lies a certain circularity;
I come back each morning
To a place of long ago and far away-
Lost to memory and on the other side of time.

In the echo of that fleeting vision there is longing,
Abandonment and a screeching loneliness,

In my endless footsteps is the expiation of the shame I feel

For something I have never done, could never do!
The bag I carry burdens me: there is fear in there, but
sometimes laughter and the touch of friends.

Yet each step I take forwards is just one step away
And thus I greet and part from friends I dare not truly know.
For in the morning mist, when distant trees dip
And bow against invisible forces of the air,
Then into my mind creeps a tiny memory of mystery....
A creature calling to me through the years.

Who are you, creature of my will?
What do you want of me?
Must carry this burden for you, and walk this road
To find and lose you in endless repetitions?

The burden is a pain that is mine and yet not mine;
The sorrow will overwhelm me if I stay!
Yet I know the one I seek is part of me.
Without you I cannot be whole.
I carry you, burdened with your life, your pain.

Your eternal parting is enacted in my endless leaving
Your longings breed my journeying
Your restless spirit drives my footsteps on this via dolorosa..

Will I stay a while and dare to know you?
If I look deep into the mist behind my eyes
I see my heart break with yearning
And know the force of your life.
I long for you and need you, but I don't know who you are.



DEATH

As a result of my womb twin survivors research project, I found that many womb twin survivors feel only half alive - or rather, that they know they are alive but somehow they feel dead inside. I understood this as a way to keep their dead twin alive in their mind. This prenatal memory may include a vague sense of a dead body remaining nearby and gradually disintegrating. This seems to be more characteristic of a sole survivor of a one-egg (monozygotic) twin pregnancy.



Dead and Undead

In the dead heart of a small part
That lies somewhere in the back of my mind
There is a hurricane that roars endlessly, silently screaming -

In the still centre of the rage that does not speak
In the sharp cutting edge of unfeeling coldness
In the clamped, fettered silence
In the empty, desperate, jolly laughter
There is a body lying somewhere offstage

The people walk past it unseeing;
The birds peck at the eyes, uncaring.
I dare not look - for it is myself.
My eyes are blinded by crows,
My flesh falls raggedly crumbling - I am dead

My silent voice is screaming for compassion!
Rescue me and love me back to life!
Soothe my sore eyes with soft caresses
Teach me to live! I cannot live
Without you.

Many womb twin survivors are preoccupied with death and may contemplate suicide as a way to avoid the pain of being alive. The lost and inaccessible memory of the death of one's womb twin is like a Black Hole - the worst that ever was.



On being dead

I shall never escape
My head is burning with unapproachable light
I dream longingly of flames that burn elsewhere;
I am cold as death here waiting for you.

I long with all my being to be in the place of death with you
For in that death is my healing, wholeness and refreshment.
I will dive and swim through the cold, pure waters of death!
I must endure, I can endure, I will endure.

Death and pain live on, eternal friends and lovers
Entangled, intertwined, lonely people both:
Separate lives joined by the tender, so tender, so tender,
thread of pain

I am waiting to be filled but you do not return:
Where did you go, lost spirit of the dead?
I sensed your ghost once, near me,
A reassuring presence in the dark-

Yet I never knew you
And you died not knowing me:
A tragedy of immense proportion,
An eternal pain too great to grasp!

A disappointed yearning;
An endless howl of longing;
A space never to be filled;
A pain never to be healed.

I will pretend you were not there;
I will say you were never there
I will not feel desire!
My pain will go down into Hades with my desire attached
I will never feel pain again!

Now I am purified in death. I feel nothing.
I am free of pain, I do not feel
Now I am dead too.



As I began to heal, I was able to begin building a healing path for womb twin survivors. Bit by bit, over many years and after much consultation with hundreds of womb twin survivors, I tried to reinterpret the concept of the Black Hole in such a way as to give hope to womb twin survivors that they do not have to inhabit their own black hole for the whole of their lives - there is a way out. The first step is to make friends with the Black Hole and recognise it as a real prebirth memory. There is still much to learn.....



The Black Hole

The black hole is death and dissolution,
entropy and ecstatic union with emptiness.

The black hole is pain and terror
and the darkness of non-being.

The black hole is power, essence
and the majesty of God-in-me.

The black hole is energy and creativity
centred into a split-second of life giving.

POETRY FOR WOMB TWIN SURVIVORS

The black hole is a teacher:-
to fear and yet live; to live and not to fear to die.

On the far side, after the maelstrom
there is power and purity and the pain
of absolute unselfish love.

Let us not fear the black hole or attempt to understand.
Let us be open to the goodness and the power
that can be ours if we give it way, let it go,
and surrender to the breath of life
that blows in gales from out of it!

Blown by the breath of God that pours from the black hole,
we can live according to the will of the wind;
and in our last hours feel the suction draw us down
into that place of origin and creation
It is the cloud of unknowing:
filled with ageless mystery.
It is the gate to paradise.

If we wait in this holy space and listen to the silent
and mysterious loving power within;
then truly we will have
a taste of paradise
this side of
death



For some womb twin survivors, their twin vanished and was resorbed as if it had never really existed. The sole survivor can be left with a strange and paradoxical feeling of “not existing.”



The Terror of Annihilation

To combat the terror,
I must make things concrete and certain.
I constantly screech out a definition of myself - “I AM!”

I am something, valuable, certain and true!
I exist - I insist that I exist!

Yet I fear that I do not in fact exist....
I fear annihilation yet I am annihilated -
I am here but I am not here.

In this dreadful uncertainty I live my life in a prison of safety.
I build walls against the dark where everything is a dream
and I am not here...

Yet I am here to think these thoughts,
They are proof that I do exist!
How can I exist and not exist?

Yet the truth remains -
Half of me is not here
and half of me is here

I am half dead and half alive....
I am half.
Therefore I am.

The womb twin hypothesis

Womb Twin survivors seem to spend their lives reenacting the life and death of their womb twin. Nothing is more important than that - even life itself. Once the real prebirth scene, which is being constantly re-enacted, is made clear, then the re-enactment tends to diminish or ceases altogether, greatly to the benefit of the individual. The healing is quite simple - to begin to accept that the prebirth memory is real, and is about real events. But first, some work must be done. There can be great resistance to the idea of healing being at all possible.



Butterflies encaged

The roar of butterfly footsteps down corridors of time;
The rigid strength of gossamer bars, imprisoning; the straight
stamp of authoritative thought;
The grind of days, the nebulous overhanging cloud...
Oh! I wish I could be free to deafen my ear to the roar and
submit willingly to those prison bars!

Here in submission I can feel the illusion of freedom to live
my constrained existence.

It is all I have, like a butterfly cage, but it is mine!
Don't talk to me about that place of peace and silence!
Don't tell me that my gossamer bars may break!
I will stay here. I dare not leave, lest my insubstantial prison
may dissolve
And I will fall into nothingness.

I will not look out, for I fear the abyss.
The monster is very near but I am safe in nonexistence.

Do not lead me out into the open; do not tell me stories of a feast,
Lest I see open plains and my heart will break with longing;
Lest I know at last my hunger for your empathetic touch!

No! Leave me here where I do not know my pain;
Leave me alone here where I do not know my desolation!
Oh what is this cruelty that you are doing in the name of love?
What damage are you doing as the knife of your words slices through my precious bars!

Please stop and let me stay, for I am fearful of the journey:
I cannot walk without my king, the butterfly, who rules my empty days.
Do not lead me, do not touch me. I must remain and not go away, grow away.
The butterflies need me and I need them : See! I am a butterfly too!
But you tell me in your cruelty that soon my tiny wings will perish and my tiny feet are made so sore by stamping.
Please do not open wide the door! Do not point me to the sun! I am afraid of space and don't know how to fly!
It's so big out here in emptiness, as I am dissolving into myself.....

And now I can look back on those gossamer walls
And laugh that I could ever be imprisoned by them!
My tiny prison is no bigger than my thumb!
For surely, I am no butterfly but a human person.

With my loving net of words, reaching to the stars,
I will hunt for butterflies and know then in their filigree colours.
I will love them and set them free to fly!

Womb twin survivors who had a brainless womb twin have a sense of remaining loyal to Someone who is silent and does not relate in any way but to whom they are bonded for life. The only way to keep the Dream of the Womb alive is for the womb twin survivor to remain stuck in their prebirth memories, feeling very reluctant to let them go.



Phantoms

I need to know you; yet I am not seen;
I see you there but you do not know I exist;
I ache for you in compassion that you cannot know my love.
I ache for me in self pity, that I can never know your love-

We are innocent, you and I,
Caught like phantoms in a web of something alien
Too familiar and ever-present:
Eternity in a matrix and in a world-wide web.
Desolation.

Yet here in this desert there are two of us waiting:
Here in desolation, we each wait in our own bubble of
loneliness.
Who will be the first to grow so, so large
That the bubble will break and the new and alien world will
gush in?

Never! For if to grow is to leave you then I will not grow!
I will stay true to you and remain here at your side
I will be with you always;
In you I can come to be.....
To leave you now, to grow into something new
Is to leave you here alone.

A voice is calling me to wholeness but I will not hear it!
Love is pouring over me but I will not drink!
There is a light; I can see it but I will not leave this safe and
perfect darkness.
For you are there, my strength; my rock.

Do not be afraid - I will be here always,
Ever faithful in the darkness with you,
Even until the end of time.



A womb twin survivor who had a womb twin who never really
developed into full human form, can feel as if, as the sole
survivor, he or she must not grow either.



You

You are my inner voice, with me always:
A command to do what I do not wish
Yet my wish is to be faithful always, until the end of life.

I attend to your tiny voice while others shout and rage
I hear nothing but your imperatives on how not to be myself.
In obedience to your command
I live out my life in obedience and silent hate.

How I resent your voice!
You rule my life and bind me with ties of obligation!
How dearly I desire to rage and rebel against those
commands that constrict and drag me down!
Yet I cannot be free, for I am bound forever
To You, my silent presence, holding me back.

Then through a screen of willow leaves I saw the river of life:
Two boats were skimming on the silver stream; one fast, one
slow.

I was in the fast boat, my energy raging, but You were
stranded in the shallows.

I felt the pull of obligation, and I knew that I must slow
down, go back.

As usual I turned by back on the exhilaration of the race
And came into the shallows with you.

(Wearily, for it was a great burden to stand and watch that
silver stream rush by.....)

But then in my mind you thanked me and you smiled at me
You told me to go, get on with my life.

You told me that life in the shallows was all the life you
would ever know.

You told me to take up my life and drink deep of every
moment.

With a loving smile and a farewell kiss,
You set me free.



RESISTANCE

Healing can often seem to be a fearful prospect because
it can overturn long-held beliefs such as: 'I am evil.'

Once the realisation is made that the unborn child is totally
innocent, this negative belief can be overturned - but it can
be remarkably difficult.

Black egg

My shell is black and invisible in blackness
I lurk in disguise and move stealthily
You see - I do not exist.

Tread gently on my eggshell lest you break me open
For inside there is a terrible truth that no one must see.
I dare not look within.

Do not break me! I will fight and bleed to the end,
For I will not let the Thing within me have life!
The unseen Thing must not be released!

But see! My shell is breaking and with it breaks my heart.
They looked inside while I averted my eyes in fear-
If I look, then I must die!

They told me that the shell is white within
And filled with loss and love and longing:
I did not believe them.

But they insisted and they told me to believe
That within the egg was joy and life.
But I would not see.

But the shell cracked wide open and in it was life
And joy and creativity, locked away for a thousand years!
I began to see.....

My shell, my heart, my life was black,
But only on the surface -
Inside, where my innocent origins lay
Was always perfectly pure.

THE HEALING PATH BEGINS

Come with me, sole survivor

Come with me, sole survivor
Come to where the healing lies amidst the pain
Come to the darkest place where a tiny light shines
Come with a million others who are search for the one
Who will heal the screaming emptiness inside

Bring a taste for paradox, for the healing comes through pain
and in your loneliness you will find a new friend once again

Bring the worst that ever was - your Black hole will give
the hardest lesson in how you could live

Bring your non-existent, vacant self that mirrors cannot see
for dissolution forms solidity

Bring that empty space of pain within your soul
and it will fill itself with hope and make you whole.

Come with me, sole survivor
I walked the same path long ago
I knew again the darkness of the womb
In pain I found the one I always missed
I learned to love him and to let him go

Then
Into darkness came new birth
Into loneliness came the touch of friends
Into emptiness came new life
Into weakness came the power to heal

So

Here I am, your teacher, servant, friend
I'll walk with you until you heal and mend;
Come with me sole survivor, and we two
Will find the healing and our lives renew.
Come with me.



Eventually, sometimes after many years and several attempts to do so, the time comes to say a final farewell to the womb twin. This allows the womb twin to die and to pass from this life, so that the sole survivor can awaken from their Dream of the Womb. Free at last to live a full life, connected to this world in the present and no longer lost in the Dream of the Womb, every womb twin survivor can find a way forward to a richer and more fulfilling life. It takes courage, determination and a great deal of love, but it can be done.



Moiety

Half-ness is a divided soul:
I walk on a one-legged limp;
I see one-eyed with no depth of vision.
I cannot tell how near you are to me.

One side is emptiness and death;
An un-slaked thirst; a mirage of completion:
A cracked box, empty and crumbling into dust-
What was there was something: nothing now.

The other side is yearning and pain
Tears for two, and anguish for more than myself
An empty chair at the feast of life.
My voice is stilled by the sheer silence of you.

How can I ever find you if I let you go?
Will we both be forever dying
Hung in a hammock over the abyss
Clinging to our half-life to be together?

Come to me now and we will say farewell:
Be with me for one last, brief moment!
Let us say how much we love;
Let us share just once, just once - now go!

The treasure chest stands between us
My life, my voice, my strength, is there
Locked away for you for many years:
I want: I may:- and now I will.



Paper Brother (*a fetus papyraceous*)

You are thinly shielded, my brother, from the world's
embrace
You are drained dry of fear, no longer any feelings in you
Lucky you! No painful moments will you know
You lie there, dried out as a paper bag
Lucky you! You know no tears, for you are tearless, fearless,
cheerless.

I will create new words to make you visible!
I will weave patchwork words into a cloak of substance
I will name you, claim you, tame you
How can such a dry leaf be so weighty
Grief is dry, a desert sandstorm with no river to puddle it

I need to love in wetness, sloshing in my tears of joy
I need to see you grow soggy as you swell into a person!
Grow greater my brother! That we may embrace one last
time
Before the paper that is you breaks into a million threads
The river will break you take you make you wash away.

You are out there my brother in another place
Where we once lived in pairing sharing caring-
My heart is dry with crying for you without knowing you at
all
You must cry your own dry tears in the desert where you live
For here, where I stand by the blue lake among the tall trees
There is luscious fruit for the gathering, for the feast that you
can't share.

Farewell paper brother! In your shreds and threads with
weary treads you bend in the wind
I will place you on my palm, so. (You are so small, so
insubstantial)
I cannot lend you any substance of my own
You are destined for a light flight into the height

I will tenderly, gently, blow just a little
And watch you fly into the high hills
Where paper trees prepare for autumn's richness.

OTHER WRITING BY ALTHEA HAYTON

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