



INKED *for* ETERNITY

LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

ROXANNE WERMUTH WITH PETER LUNDELL

ENDORSEMENTS

Inked for Eternity took my faith to a new level! It is an inspiring story of strength, healing, and perseverance. I couldn't put it down. I can honestly say this book has helped me to embrace and live the life God has planned for me.

ASHLEE TALASKI

Roxanne takes us on a journey of heartache, depression, and renewal ending in a miracle of love and faith restored. I am honored to be a part of her story.

STEPHEN ROBERTS

This book will totally transform and inspire anyone who reads it. This is a must read for everyone from all walks of life.

DR. JAMES AND JOY NASH
First Church of the Nazarene
Fort Walton Beach, Florida

I became a prisoner of hope, captivated by this book. It was full of hope, healing, and heaven. Writings like this help put perspective to a myopically challenged generation. It's one of those books I want to read over and over to keep my focus as it should be—heaven bound.

REBECCA KELLEY

Inked for Eternity meant a lot to me. I am 15 years old and was going through some tough things before I read this book. I questioned everything about myself, especially my faith. Roxanne's story helped me figure out who I am, and it answered so many questions about God and heaven. After reading this, I have become confident in who I am as a Christian and a person.

LYDIA GIVENS

I would highly recommend this book. It reminded me of God's faithfulness in all areas of my life physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When things look their bleakest and we're ready to give up, God is there, waiting patiently to pick up the shattered pieces to create something beautiful in the midst of the pain. He only asks that we trust Him.

DEBRA PAHL

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DESTINY IMAGE® PUBLISHERS, INC.

P.O. Box 310, Shippensburg, PA 17257-0310

“Promoting Inspired Lives.”

This book and all other Destiny Image and Destiny Image Fiction books are available at Christian bookstores and distributors worldwide.

Cover design by: Christian Rafetto

Published in association with the literary agency of
Credo Communications, LLC, Grand Rapids, Michigan,
www.credocommunications.net.

For more information on foreign distributors, call 717-532-3040.

Reach us on the Internet: www.destinyimage.com.

ISBN 13 TP: 978-0-7684-0741-9

ISBN 13 eBook: 978-0-7684-0742-6

For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 / 19 18 17 16 15

DEDICATION

To the memory of my father and the tumultuous journey our lives traveled to a final destination of love and reconciliation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to so many people:

- The staff at Destiny Image, for having faith in me.
- Daniel V. Wermuth, for cover portraits.
- Rev. David E. Wermuth, you are the very first person I had the courage to share my experience with. You listened and encouraged me to write my story. Thank you, Dad.
- Rev. James Franklin, for insisting I write my story.
- My entire family, for your ongoing support and encouragement.
- Karen Neumair, our agent at Credo Communications who worked long hours on this project.
- Gayle Anderson, my new friend in Minnesota who helped us so much by reading and critiquing the manuscript.
- Muriel Lundell, for insisting that your son write this book.
- Peter Lundell, for writing my story so beautifully. It is nearly impossible for me to express my gratitude for what Peter has done. He worked patiently with me, getting to know me so well as to write my life's story in *my* voice with *his* words. I am truly amazed with his talent and the effort he made. Thank you, Peter.

- David, my devoted husband. Thank you for loving me unconditionally, taking me for better or worse, in sickness and health and supporting me all the way through this journey. I will love you forever...and a day!
- Stephanie Wermuth, my wonderful daughter. If it had not been for you, this book never would have happened. I love you—Mom.

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PREFACE

Come with me on a journey filled with the lowest of lows and the highest of highs. Each chapter will take you in unexpected directions. While reading my story, I ask that you substitute my situations with your own personal struggles. Everyone has adversities to face. I have definitely had my share and come very close to letting them defeat me. However, I learned to become a fighter and somewhat of a rebel in the process. The sheer will to fight saved my life many times because I made a choice.

This book travels through childhood abuse, a heartwarming love story, deep depression followed by suicide attempts, the onset of a horrible disease at the height of a lucrative career, losing everything to gain everything, an out-of-body experience, a glimpse of heaven, and finally, my life after being in the light of heaven. You will experience how it is possible to find the positive when faced with any negative. You will learn that *you* have a purpose to fulfill in your own life. Most important, you will realize, as I did, that you have a choice.

Chapter 1

WHAT AM I DOING?

Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? (Psalm 42:5)

Stepping through the door was like entering a freak arena. Two guys slouched around, apparently waiting for customers (victims). Metal and ink covered their bodies, even their faces. Two others, hunched over their desks, looked up at me. Their wide eyes said they were as curious about me as I was about them. They all seemed like aliens. Scary. I turned to leave.

“Hi there!” one of them said. “How can we help you?”

Nothing. But that was a lie because I’d entered their domain. I should have run when I had the chance. When I stood at the door. Before it shut behind me. Before I got too nervous to do anything but giggle like an idiot.

What am I doing?

David’s voice echoed in my mind, *Please don’t do this, Roxie. It’s just a phase. It will pass.* Now I was going behind his back.

What will my kids think? I was so angry when my daughter did this. Good thing my parents were deceased.

As far as I knew, three types of people got tattoos. Hoodlums wore skulls and tribal images. Sentimentalists wore reminders of people or the past. And bad Christians wore Bible verses and religious symbols.

Middle-aged and still a rebel, I no longer knew what to think. With my low self-esteem and my baldness, just stepping out the door was a battle with embarrassment—like those dreams where you find yourself half naked in public. And I was sick of wigs.

I came here to get covered in a new way. But it felt wrong.

Yet two anxious days later I was back, face down on a massage table with a hole for my face, watching Ed the tattoo artist's tennis shoes under his bouncing knee.

"Are you ready?" he gently asked.

"As I'll ever be." *What will people at church think? Will I catch a horrible disease?*

"Okay, here we go. Let me know if you need me to stop at any time."

Last chance to back out.

But I stayed.

The tattoo gun whirred, and the needle vibrated against my scalp, jabbing like a tiny machine gun. With much of the left side of my body already numb for years, I hardly felt the needle on some of the spots. Other places were hypersensitive and hurt so bad I thought I'd pass out—if I didn't throw up first.

Whenever Ed turned away to reload the gun, I peeked up and watched. I took note of smelling salts taped to one wall and a sink along another wall, just in case.

The needle seemed to vibrate right into the skull bone. Ed asked how I was doing, and I surprised him and the others: "It's a breeze," I lied.

"Wow, you must have a high pain tolerance."

How impressive I was. A lifetime of it had trained me well.

My mind traveled to the only time there was no pain—floating above my body, the glistening tunnel, and the infinite yellow field of God’s waiting room. Heaven. The flowers under that deep blue eternity bloomed, colorful and vivid, beyond human description.

How close could Ed come to what they looked like? His work might look more like a cartoon. *I’m afraid I’ll regret this, and it’ll be too late.*

My nerves ran wild.

Then, “Owww!” *Can I stand this?* “Aieee!” *Buck up, Rox, and take it! You can do this...No, I can’t!*

After about a half hour of teeth-clenching pain, I was sure my head was getting pulverized into hamburger. My scalp burned and my brain throbbed with a raging pulse. Occasionally Ed soaked a paper towel in a cool liquid and whisked it across my head. Oh, that felt good. “Why do you wipe my head so often?” I asked.

“To clean off the extra ink and blood.”

“Blood?”

From my road out of childhood abuse to topping the corporate ladder to crawling away from suicide, I was still stubborn enough to endure anything to reach my goal.

I didn’t know that my life would change yet again and find an open stage I’d never dreamed of.

Chapter 2

STICKS AND STONES

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17:22).

The roller coaster called my life started in the eastern Michigan town of Lapeer.

When I was a toddler, I adored my father. Every morning when he left for work, I ran to the door and watched him get into his car. “Daddy, please don’t go,” I cried. I raised my little arms hoping he would come back to give me a hug or kiss and tell me he’d come home later to spend time with me. I waved goodbye until his car disappeared.

My mother held me and rocked me in her arms, which were like shields of armor made of love and understanding. I didn’t yet know that her quiet consolation and encouragement would enable me to survive the coming years.

I just knew I wanted my daddy.

Emptiness invaded my heart as he casually drove away, not even aware that his little girl needed him and loved him so much. I just wanted a hug or a kiss or to hear him say he would miss me too and be home soon.

That never happened. He never came back to the door to say he'd be home soon or that he loved me. Never a kiss. Never a hug. Never a father-and-daughter time after work.

I often cried in my heart. *Please, Daddy, show me you care. Pick me up. Hug me. Tell me you love me.* My cry remained silent and hopeless.

As years passed, I figured this was normal. The father's job was not to show love or emotion; only the mother did that. So I thought.

And it went further.

Dad never gave me a kind word. Ever. He never even called me by name. Not once. *Speak my name, Dad, just once. Say it. Roxanne. My name is Roxanne. I'm not invisible. I'm standing right here. I'm your daughter. At least acknowledge me.* I may as well have been a ghost. He never had a single conversation with me, except to complain or yell. When he wanted me to do something, he told my mother, not me. He'd say, "Tell your daughter...."

As if I didn't exist.

Dad was raised in a spic-and-span world. Perfection was all he knew. To be anything else meant complete failure. He carried this tradition into our family. The house had to remain spotless and meticulously arranged at all times, not just because of him but also his mother, who habitually popped in unannounced to conduct the "white glove test." She always wore white gloves. I can't remember ever seeing her outside her own home without them. She would come and randomly test furniture to see if Ma was living up to her expectations of a housewife. Grandma targeted three areas of the house—the ledge of the china cabinet, the knick-knack shelf, and the top of the TV. Ma often reminded Steve and me to see that there was never any dust in those three spots.

Throughout our childhood, my brother, Steve, and I often got "the tour," in which Dad ushered us around the house to point out any imperfection we may have caused. If we hung the hand towel

crooked, Dad yelled at us. One time, I made a little mark on the wall with my gold crayon. Why? Because I was a normal kid. Besides, the color was pretty, and I liked to see it on the wall. Hey, it was just a small spot, and I thought it added a bit of flair to the house. I paid for that with a belt lashing, a sentence with which I became very familiar. Another time while developing my interior design skills, I accidentally put a mark on the dining room table. *Oops*. This also got me the belt lashing. *Oh, come on, Dad. It's just a small scratch*. But that wasn't punishment enough, so it was off to the musty basement, where he tied me to a chair for hours with spiders my only companions. I was so afraid of that basement. Maybe that's why he tied me up there. He wanted to terrify me. Everything down there was creepy. The furnace creaked, clanged, and moaned. The coal room was full of big nests of spiders under their webs. Spider condominiums. The longer I had to stay there, the more my mind played tricks on me. *What's that noise under the stairs? Oh gosh, how long will he make me stay down here? I'd prefer the belt over this*—even though the belt would often miss my little butt and smack my back, leaving raised, bleeding welts.

I got the belt more than my brother did because I tended to be impish, and Steve tended to be quiet and thus favored. When Dad came after me, Steve escaped to his room in the attic. I can still picture him running upstairs and turning on his record player to drown out Dad's angry voice. He was a sweet boy and suffered in many ways similar to mine.

Despite being immaculate, our house—not home—was filled with the sounds of a blaring TV set competing with the loud frequencies of a non-stop police scanner, itself outdone by Dad's yelling. Dad *had* to know what was going on in Lapeer County at all times, so he purchased the scanner, which we couldn't afford, to hear every conversation between police on their beats and the station. It was on every single minute of every single day Dad was home. My bedroom unfortunately shared a wall with that horrid scanner. As

it constantly blared, the call number permanently seared itself into my brain—KBH349. Sleep was nearly impossible, and if I dared ask Dad to turn the thing down, I got yelled at. This was one case where Ma stuck up for me and lowered the volume. She knew I needed my sleep, but that really irritated Dad.

Though the house had to remain perfect at all times, Dad's garage was always a huge mess, packed with stuff and more stuff on top of that. Whenever Mom asked Dad to clean it up, he went into a rage and screamed obscenities at her. I cried for her every time. And I never understood why the garage could be a continual mess.

His cars, which he bought one after another even though the family didn't have enough money, were his prized possessions. He took impeccable care of them, and no one else dared touch them.

One sunny day I wanted to get out of my prison-home and enjoy the freedom of a bike ride. I was proud of my bright blue Schwinn, which I had purchased with my own babysitting money. I set out to ride around the two blocks I was allowed to go at that time. Those two blocks became another world where my imagination could run free. Just two small neighborhood blocks were enough for refreshing and peaceful release. As my mind pranced, I wondered about the homes I rode past. Were they clean and sterile like ours? Or were they beautifully decorated with paintings and porcelain? Were these homes cozy and full of laughter? Did the families who lived there play games, go places, and actually eat meals together the way we did when I was little? I made up stories about each of them and imagined the peace, love, and fun those houses held within their walls. If only it could be that way at our house. If only.

But one particular bike-riding event is permanently branded into my mind. I went into the garage to get my bike and discovered Dad's car in the way. Heaps of stuff blocked every space between the car and the walls. The only way I could get my bike out was to climb on the hood of Dad's car and lift the bike handlebars up as I pulled it out. *That's right, Roxanne. Be veeeery careful. Gently now. He'll never*

know I was here. I knew this would be a major infraction should he find out, but I tiptoed lightly over the hood anyway, ever so careful not to cause damage. I wanted to ride my bike—it was my “get out of jail free” pass.

I succeeded in getting my bike, and I whizzed, carefree, down the streets, the wind blowing through my long, reddish brown hair.

After returning home, I felt happy and refreshed. I loved my bedroom. It was painted my favorite color—pink. I had wanted to paint it myself, but Dad thought I would mess it up. However, when it was finished, I decorated it with pictures I painted myself. My stuffed animal collection was meticulously placed on my great-grandmother’s hand-me-down bed, covered with a pink bedspread, of course. On the hardwood floor two shag rugs, also pink, lay beside my bed. All dime store stuff. One wall hosted a metal desk and shelves for studying, another wall my dresser and prized cosmetics and girlie items. Though not spectacular, I was proud that my room was picture perfect. It was my world, my happy haven.

Until Dad discovered muddy footprints on the hood of his car.

The house door opened and slammed the wall. Dad screamed, “WHERE IS SHE?” His feet stomped throughout the entire house and made their way to my bedroom. “She walked on the hood of my car!”

My peaceful mood slid into terror. Oh, how I wished I had a lock on my door, but what good would that have done against him? I needed to hide, and fast. But where could I hide in this tiny room? Under my bed would be the first place he’d look, so I crawled into the far corner of my closet and cowered behind my clothes.

The bedroom door burst open. “WHERE ARE YOU?”

Shuddering uncontrollably, I watched the shadows of his feet in the crack of light under the closet door. His footsteps scraped on the wood floor. *Maybe he won’t find me in here.*

No such luck. The closet door flung open. My clothing whipped aside.

He looked ten feet tall. His eyes lit with fury. His face disfigured in pure anger. “I’m going to *kill* you! Do you know what you’ve *done*? You walked on my car! You stupid, stupid girl.”

I quivered and cried, thinking this was it, my life was over.

But he just stared and didn’t hit me. I think he was shocked at *himself* for saying he would kill me. Perhaps to him, that was punishment enough, because he left me there. I stayed in that closet for what must have been hours. It was one of the worst times he scared me, but it wouldn’t be the last.

And the shadow of potential frights always loomed over me.

Like any other kid, I loved the sound of the school bell at the end of the day. Walk home, change my clothes, and enjoy playing with the neighbor kids. But the word “enjoy” never quite fit. I always had to be aware of the time. On my carefree bike rides, I still had to check, *What time is it?* Hopscotch? *Check the time.* Climbing trees in the park, *don’t forget the time...I have to go!* Dad came home from work every day around 3:30 p.m., usually in a bad mood. And I needed to be home before him and out of his way. At all costs I avoided crossing his path and made sure to hide in my room, out of his sight.

But I occasionally forgot the time and was still outside when he came home. *Panic mode!* I would crawl into the house, running through my mental checklist: Did I leave a toy out or a towel crooked? Had I fed the dog, tracked anything in on my shoes, or left the TV on? Yes, Dad even checked the top of the TV to see if it was warm. If it was, he’d yell at Steve and me for using up electricity. The two of us felt as if we lived in an insane asylum. Even if the house was perfect, we still got the brunt of his bad day, hearing every sordid detail about how he hated his boss. And I didn’t dare say anything about school in front of Dad. As the school’s head janitor, his children had to be perfect at school too.

Mother's love for my brother and me wrapped us like a warm blanket in the cold of winter. Her dream to be a wife and mother had come true, but now that we were old enough to go to school, financial needs required her to return to work. She hated not being home when we came back from school and felt guilty whenever she had to hire a babysitter. Yet after each long workday, she tirelessly prepared a mouth-watering supper while listening to Dad's hollering.

Hearing him from the confines of my bedroom, my heart felt like a sinking rock. But I wiped away my tears and put on a smile when Mom called us for supper. We had to be good, quiet, and perfect. We ate on TV trays in front of the television set in the living room and did our best not to irritate Dad, who sat on the porch watching his own TV shows. Most kids don't like cleaning dishes, but for me, helping Mom do the dishes after supper was a privilege. She'd wash and I'd dry. We chatted the whole time, cherishing every minute we could talk freely with each other.

The quaint, old downtown of Lapeer lay walking distance from our home, and as I got a little older, I often walked there and peeked into store windows to see and dream about the things I thought I'd never have. Have them or not, strolling and skipping up and down the sidewalks, I felt like a bird released from a cage. My favorite stop was McCrory's Dime Store, where I bought penny candy. The little ringing bell on the front door, the creaky wooden floor, and the sweet smells of the store always perked my senses.

Every Friday night teens from miles around cruised the streets of Lapeer to meet each other and show off their cars. As I grew older, I joined them. Everyone meticulously followed the understood cruise route, as we drove around the town honking horns and having fun. Dad didn't care if I was home or gone. But Mom told me, "Stay away from cruising the streets. Bombing town is inappropriate for a young lady because it gives the appearance you're looking for boys, and a proper young lady wouldn't do that."

I grew skilled at lying.

Mom trusted me with the preacher's daughter, who was my best friend. But she was the one who taught me how to make excuses and get away with all kinds of mischief. Each Friday evening she picked me up for a night of fun and freedom. We prepared by stocking up on bags of penny candy, a tank of gas for her old junker, and a mouthful of giggles. And each time we made a different excuse. She rescued me so many times from my hellish life at home with Dad and replaced it with nights of so much laughter, I thought my sides would split.

But I always had to go back home. I hated the saying that all good things must come to an end. Why did I have to return to a home where Dad made sure I understood that I was a nuisance? Why did I have to be an unnecessary financial expenditure? Why did I have to hear him say, "I would have had a lot more money if you hadn't been born"?

He might as well have stabbed me.

Most of us grew up with the lie we were taught to say when other kids taunted us: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." His verbal abuse was worse than the physical. I would have rather gotten the belt every day than hear the things he said to me. Being told I was ugly, worthless, and stupid got engrained in my mind and become my sole identity. Yet something in me, a desperate spite, chose to fight back.

Once he provoked me to the point where, without thinking, I blurted, "I hate you!"

He glared at me.

Oh no. What did I just do?

He chased me until he caught me. Then came the belt. But again his words hurt more than the bleeding welts. The cursing and put-downs were like hammers that would follow me throughout my lifetime, beating me into the ground and crushing my self-esteem. How much lower could my self-esteem go? I quickly found out.

Dad found other ways to humiliate me that I won't even describe. I became distressed with the things he said to me, the ways he touched me, the times he wanted me to change clothes in front of him. Just the way he looked at me gave me the creeps.

One day when I was in eighth grade, I made the mistake of telling my mom within earshot of Dad, "My teacher got angry at me during class for throwing a piece of paper in the wastebasket without asking for permission."

Most people would have considered it no big deal, or that the teacher had a problem. But not Dad. He came in and screamed, "*You think you're the queen bee!*" Then he went too far and grabbed me where he shouldn't have.

That was it. Something clicked in my mind and switched to autopilot. I turned into someone I'd never known before. Rage welled up from my gut. Hatred flowed out like lava from an erupting volcano. I didn't care what he did any more. This would be the *last* time I'd let him do that. I squeezed my fist, cocked my arm, and swung as hard as I could. That fist of mine smacked him square in the jaw. I could hardly believe it. I really did it. Finally.

The look on his face was priceless—wide-eyed and shocked.

With a resolve I didn't know I had, I bellowed, "That's the last time you'll ever lay a hand on me!"

And after that he never did.

As far as I knew, he didn't hit my mother, but he screamed and swore at her and called her all sorts of names. The early years were the worst. His yelling vibrated the walls. It hurt so much to hear him abuse a mom who didn't provoke it in any way. She worked a difficult job, provided for us kids, kept a clean house, cooked wonderful meals *every day*, and was a faithful wife to an impossible husband. I never saw her cry nor did I ever hear her talk back. Maybe she should have stood up to him. But even though she never did, in my eyes she was a saint, always kind and giving. She silently endured

everything and kept our home life a secret. No one else, not even her own mother or best friend, knew how she suffered.

The weird thing is that on the outside we really did look like a perfect family. We could have posed for a Norman Rockwell painting—Dad, Mom, first-born son, and a daughter two years younger. But the happy painting would not carry labels of the son as Dad's prize and the daughter as Dad's burden. Dad loved hearing his son practice his squeaky saxophone but yelled at his daughter to stop practicing her squeaky clarinet. Noise from Steve's attic bedroom must have been more tolerable than noise from my room, which was right off the living room where the coveted TV and police scanner blared.

I looked up to my brother. He never stepped out of line by getting angry. He just accepted what he was given—or should I say not given. Because Dad was so meticulous about his cars that Steve was rarely given an opportunity to drive them. This was particularly frustrating to him once he got his driver's license and wanted to begin dating. I felt so sorry for him, yet he never complained.

I learned that Dad himself had been raised in cruelty, and now that I'm an adult, I can understand his behavior. His own childhood was defined by his mother's continual physical and verbal abuse, and his life seems to have been worse than ours. Grandma often locked Dad into a hope chest as a punishment, which made him claustrophobic his entire life. The saddest part is how she felt about him right after giving birth. When the nurse tried to place my father in her arms, she yelled, "Take that bastard away, I don't want him." That characterized her life-long treatment of him. He was an unwanted commodity, mistreated physically and verbally in ways I will never know.

He passed on to my brother and me what was done to him.

From my youth into adulthood I grew to habitually cheat in order to look good or gain recognition, and I lied more than ever.

Greed and hatred ran rampant through me. I later learned that my attitude and behavior were reactions to my father's abuse. It pushed me down the wrong path many times because I never felt worthy or loved.

Though I had abysmal self-esteem, I was stubborn. I learned to fight for survival. And I determined to rise above my father's janitor status. I would show him and everyone I could be successful on my own. I would rise high. I would become *the Roxinator!*

From childhood all the way through adulthood, I harbored the commitment that when my father died, I would *not* shed a tear. I made a plan: After he was buried I would go back to the cemetery and dance—yes, dance—on his grave. I hated that man.



Mom, I called her “Ma,” was raised on a farm with five brothers and a sister. They were poor. Her father pastored many small Nazarene churches during her life on the farm. Two of her brothers became Nazarene pastors and her sister married one. Why Ma ever married a man like my father defies explanation, yet she endured more than fifty years with him. And she was my mentor, spiritual teacher, and best friend. She was a godly, wonderful mother, who loved me unconditionally. And I loved her. We shared our pain. And in that sharing I learned how to live and thrive, even when life felt hopeless.

She did her best to make my brother and me feel special. Every holiday became a great event, especially Christmas. She wrapped everything, even if it was a pencil. One year I got twelve pencils, each individually wrapped. Each pair of socks was individually wrapped. Though Dad didn't want to spend any money on us, at Christmas Ma made us feel like millionaires.

She spent hours and hours making Barbie doll clothes and sewed in my bedroom in the dark so as not to wake me; I was always proud

whenever I saw Barbie doll clothes in a store, because what Ma created was far better. She made roast beef dinners that I'll never forget; I can still smell the steam rising from the meat and taste the dark brown gravy on the mashed potatoes. She taught me to be respectful and thankful, to be a proper young lady, and to always use correct grammar and manners. More than that, she guided and counseled me through my awkward growing up years as best as she could.

Many Sunday evenings, Ma's girlfriends would come over to our house after Sunday evening service and play games, eat snacks Ma had prepared, and talk for hours. I loved to see her happy and hear her laugh. She always looked forward to these times, and she needed them. But after her friends went home, Dad would yell at her and ask why she always had to have them over after church. It robbed all the evening's joy. Ma loved our little church and was a volunteer secretary there for many years. But Dad berated her about that too, because her spare time was to be spent taking care of him and keeping the house spotless. Ma was a beautiful woman, but her beauty seemed to die with her sinking self-esteem and fading smiles.

Poor Ma always had to wear a wig. She inherited thin hair, and it thinned further as she got older. Dad wouldn't allow her to be seen that way. So even at home on the hottest days, she always wore a wig and only removed it to bathe or sleep.

Ma neutralized Dad's negative words with positive words. Her sweetness for his bitterness made life almost palatable. She and I had tender conversations in the bathroom, where we could lock the door and be safe from Dad's criticism. I would tell her everything, how the kids teased me at school or that I was having a hard time with some of my classes.

Ma couldn't bear to see Dad abuse me, so she would retreat to another room until it was over. When the time was right and safe, she came to my room to comfort me. She didn't stop Dad from hitting me because the situation only escalated if she tried to intervene. And she didn't have it in her to fight or leave. She felt it was best

to let him get his rage out of his system because things soon settled down afterward.

Her love and kindness saved me from self-destruction many times. But her love could never fully overcome Dad's torment. So I counted down the years, then the months, weeks, and days until I would graduate from high school and leave home, my prison.

Years later after I married, Ma looked at me with tears in her eyes.

I asked her what was wrong.

She choked out the words, "I'm so sorry."

"What on earth for, Ma? You're the best!"

"I'm sorry I didn't protect you when you needed me."

That was hard for both of us. She had done what to her was her best, but it rarely shielded me. Still we loved each other and felt each other's heartache.

I always feared losing her.

But it was she who lost me.

On the steps of Williams Hall, my dormitory at Olivet Nazarene University, I wept and held her tightly. I didn't want to let go of her. I worried about what life would be like for her without me there to buffer Dad's temper. With my brother having gone to Olivet two years before me, I could visualize Dad taking his frustrations out entirely on her. I felt happy to leave him but guilty to leave her. We parted, and I watched their car drive out of sight.

I could almost hear Ma crying as hard as I was. I could vicariously sense her loneliness, feeling that her job as my mother was now over. My heart physically hurt.

But I had to look ahead. Walking across campus, surrounded by red brick buildings and green grass, I thought, *Now my life will begin!*

It did and it didn't.

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ABOUT ROXANNE WERMUTH

Roxanne speaks all over the United States at churches, revival services, women's events, retirement centers, and multiple sclerosis groups. She also engages in print media, radio, television, and the simple-yet-important message of hope as she talks with people one-on-one every single time she leaves home. She gets stopped every time and asked about her tattooed head, which opens the door to talk about Jesus and heaven.

She focuses her message on:

- Making poor life choices and their negative consequences
- Facing impossible, life-altering adversities
- Severe depression and the desire to give up on life
- Losing everything to gain everything
- Her out-of-body experience
- Her glimpse of heaven
- Life after heaven
- The choice to overcome and find positives in any negative situation

**To contact Roxanne Wermuth,
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