

Ebenezer's

When I turned 31, I found myself sitting in a therapist's office, divorcing my first husband, who left me with two kids and a stack of bills. I had finally reached the point that I desperately wanted to get out of this marriage and, at the same time, knew I was unable to leave this person no matter how abusive the relationship was. I walked into the therapist's office and announced I would retain her services if she could resolve two issues for me. First, I needed to know if I was crazy, and second, if she could break the chain of emotional bondage that had tied me to this man since high school. She assured me she could handle these two requests and scheduled my first appointment. Sitting in her office on what seemed to be a very dark night (although in Los Angeles, the evenings were anything but dark in a city overflowing with ambient light), a heaviness climbed down from my head and permeated through every fiber inside my chest. I could not breathe without feeling a constricting pressure against my lungs. My stomach ached... constant stomach ache, the white chalky flavor of Mylanta topped off with a pink mint Pepto Bismol aperitif, these were the go-to beverages kept in the bottom right-hand drawer of my office desk. I could always rationalize the need for the antidote due to a stressful job, difficult divorce, and the sole support of my family.

I don't remember how the "thing" came out of me, what question she raised that evoked such a long-ago memory. Still, when she casually mentioned the word molestation, sitting upright in my black Brooks Brothers business suit, I matter-of-factly vomited out the statement that our neighbor touched me when I was young and then described what had happened. I watched her body fall backward as though my words had pushed her with her face cringing in horror. What did I say? She's a therapist. Why did this information upset her? I don't seem to be bothered. Ok, now I'm getting worried. I came here for help with my divorce, and now we are

stepping into something that has nothing to do with my focus. I don't have time for this detour, and I certainly don't have the energy for it. Soothing myself, I began to tuck the "thing" back inside the box with my businesslike rationalization that had served me well...I was very young when it started, and he was a good friend of our family. I am fine; I lived through it and took care of myself. What is fellatio?



He holds her tiny hand as they walk across the street. She is skipping with delight to make something incredible with grown-up tools and wood. He walks swiftly; she looks back at her house. No one is there—no time to find her mother. The sun is shining brightly; its yellow light fills the clear royal blue sky and warm sensations from the air tingle against her skin. She feels special, chosen, and excited to play arts and crafts. He has big ears and a smile that almost touches each one simultaneously. He walks swiftly, pressing one hand into her back and holding her tiny hand with the other. Crunch, crunch, walking across gray, bluish-white little rocks wearing her new black Sunday school shoes.

She mumbled to herself, "I never liked this driveway, with all those rocks getting stuck inside my shoes."

He lifts her high onto the shiny white surface of an old wooden workbench. She stands against a whiteboard that hangs on the wall with tiny holes punched out all over. Staring at the holes, she draws pictures with her eyes, connecting each one; dot-to-dot. Shiny metal tools hanging from gray wires are stuffed into those dots. Too many to try to remember all at once. The smell of oil, sweat, and metal in the air. At first, she feels happy he wants to play, but

something is wrong; his big hands are shaky moist with sweat. Shh, Shh quiet. Confused, she hears a clicking sound and a deep humming noise as the gray garage door slowly closes. She can still see the silver streaks in his hair that match the color of his pants until the rectangle of sunlight peeking in from the door becomes narrower and narrower, and the room becomes darker and darker until the light is completely gone. Finally, her eyes begin to adjust, and the blackness turns to hazy gray smoke. Across the cold cement floor, she can see a window on a door; covered with a light green cloth curtain. I hope someone will open the door. I hope someone will not.



There are many different ways that parent birds keep their baby birds safe and fed. Parents diligently seek the most optimum locations to build their family's nests. Some work together to create elaborate homes made with varieties of materials keeping their babies protected from harm. Many species continue to feed and protect their young even after leaving the nest, such as the Great Horned Owl. Parents instinctively understand how to care, provide and protect their young from harsh outdoor elements and use strategic tactics to ward off intruders and participate equally with the feeding and nesting of their little ones. Hummingbirds do not share the responsibility of raising their young. The females prefer to handle all of the duties themselves as single parents. These little female birds work tirelessly to build the family's nest, incubate the eggs, raise their babies, defend their territory, and even chase the male away after mating all on their own.



Walking across the lawn, she passes her candy red tricycle left under the apple tree. She puts her hands in the pockets of the corduroy jumper her mother bought for Christmas and feels the smooth round coins he placed in the pocket. She tells herself that she needs to tell her mother. Then, she will know what to do. She is a nurse and will take care of this terrible situation. She found her ironing the white nurse's cap with the black stripe across its top that would sit pertly on her dark brown hair; A beautiful midnight blue thick wool cape hangs from the laundry door jam almost to the wooden floor. Two gold pins are displayed to the right of the collar made with the American Red Cross logo. The pins were awards given to nurses in recognition of their education, training, and experience in the field of caring. I hoped one day to wear this beautiful cape.

"Hi honey, what do you need? You need to hurry; I am getting ready for work." Her mother greeted. She took a deep breath feeling her lungs expand and chest rise. Years later, she remembered having the same feeling in the hot summer days just before she jumped off the old construction bridge into the American River on a hot summer day. The sun beating down while the neighborhood kids lined up along the bridge, hanging their toes over the edge, get ready; then closing her eyes, she held her breath and jumped into the cool, clear water below. Finally, she mustered up the nerve and told her mother everything she could understand, all of the words she knew to describe the awful "thing" he did to her in that garage.

"Don't you dare ever say such horrible things about Rudy ever again. He is our friend. You are a terrible little girl for saying such nasty things about him." She said to her little girl.



Ebenezer is a Hebrew word that means "Stone of Help." Theologians and archaeologists believe that Ebenezer was a place located near the city of Aphek. The scene where the Israelites

conquered the Philistines in battle. 1 Samuel 7:2 states, "Afterward, Samuel took a stone and set it upright between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, and announced 'God has helped us to this point'. The Ebenezer stone was placed as an altar in remembrance of Spiritual protection and guidance during a time of trouble.



The golden tan baby quail zipped past and landed in the bathroom. My daughters placed this tiny, soft, frightened chick into a shoebox, and together we researched the best way to care for the lost baby. Later that day, we heard loud screeching coming from the front yard. I jetted outside to see an adult quail running up and down our street, frantically searching under cars and bushes, racing through the neighborhood at warp speed. My daughter's and I brought the shoebox outside, placed the baby next to our tulip garden, and within seconds, the rich, creamy gray and brown quail with a black topknot, shaped like a comma, raced over to greet his little one announcing his success to the rest of his clan. The adult female and siblings made their entrance scooting across our cul de sac and celebrated with my tribe. We were ecstatic to participate and share the joy of this marvelous reunion. That spring, I began building a sanctuary, a safe place of refuge, for these beautiful birds in my backyard, creating another thread of goodness.



She walked across the hot pavement from the empty brown house for several years, passing the majestic oak trees with solid branches filled with decorative leaves that provide

shelter and an uncorrupted character. Then, stepping onto the green grass, she approached the small white house with the dark green trim, hidden from view by the pink and white oleander bushes perfectly lined along the street, gracefully swaying, dancing, as the soft breeze pushed through its branches. Standing next to the apple tree, he waves to her; maybe we will make something today. There were no words, something about his smile, a desire, was this love? He wants her to go with him across the gray and bluish-white rocks; his hands are rough and gentle; she can't see his face, the big ears and broad smile are gone; her mind fills with the sound of the breeze passing through the colors of the trees. Their strong long branches and the cool green and yellow leaves lay together like umbrellas shading the ground from the sun's bright rays. Soon, they will change color, and the sky will be filled with orange, red, and yellow bursts. She saves the shiny coins he places in her hand, her "silver" in the colored paper mache box she made in Sunday school. Silent. Close your eyes; it will be over soon. Never tell.



Growing up, our family adventured into the great outdoors of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, camping at the foot of a mountain known as Mount Tallac called Talah-act, for "Great Mountain" from the language of the Native American Washoe Tribe. A cross of snow embedded on its face is seen throughout the basin, beginning in the spring lasting until the snow covers the entire mountain in winter. Native American folklore describes the area as a 'Da ow aga,' *a sacred place that gives life*. Predictions of an abundant fishing season or a drought year were determined based on the snowmelt from the cross. Every summer of my youth, I spent hiking, camping, and playing on this mountain and carved a path lined with stones from our

camp to the foot of Tallac trailhead. The trailhead is an open space surrounded by tall Sugar pine, Aspen, and cedar trees, and its floor is covered with purple Lupina, yellow Cress, and rows of Mule Ears. 'Da ow aga was my spiritual home, a place of safety, comfort, and care where I gathered strength and inhaled peace sitting under the shelter of the palatial Sugar Pine forests and breathing in the pristine, cool crisp air. I collected one stone from this sanctuary each year to remember the abundance I received from this magical earth. Today these stones lay in the backyard gardens of my home. Several stones lay under the noble fir, and pine trees, erected on a mound sprinkled with red, pink, and orange tulips and yellow Cress; next to this mound rests stones carefully placed along a path of plants that provide food and shelter for butterflies. Two stones each can be seen tucked under birdhouses that my husband constructed and placed in their sanctuary that includes a feeder for quail and dove hanging from a short hook next to rose bushes that provide cover as they enjoy their meals. When I glance over to the mound of pine and fir trees, walk along the path lined with Lupina, Eucharis, Lilac, and Lavender, and reach to fill the bird feeders, I smile, feeling the stones in my heart, remembering gifts of joy, safety, and care.



"Thou has not half the power to do me harm, as I have to be hurt" William Shakespeare: Othello

Da ow aga, you were with me when I was born, watched me grow, you protected me, you are ever-changing and always the same. You speak to me of a perfect place where the Spirit of nature provides all that is good.



I placed many Ebenezer stones along this journey, like a blanket of colorful strands of thread, each one remembrance of the Spiritual protection and guidance that has been provided during troubled times. And when I look back toward all of my Ebenezer's, beginning with an awareness in the therapist's office, the stones I gathered from *Da Ow Aga* and placed in my garden, and the adoration and determination of the quail, I can see how far I have come. They show me the goodness I have been given. Glorious mysterious paradoxes that when I faced fear, I was given courage; when I accepted pain as a part of a growing experience of life, I realized greater happiness. When I accepted my vulnerabilities, I was graced with unforeseen strength.