



*Lying
Naked in
the Snow:
A Memoir in Poetry*

by Anne

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TROUBLES AND TRIBULATIONS

Mommy why do you treat me like this?

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That's why you neglect me

I don't know what I do

I just know I am bad

That's why you keep hitting me

I laugh but I am sad

I laugh when you are hitting me

To show that I don't care

But the pain inside my heart

Is more than I can bear

Was told when I was under two

Lived in New York City, in 1943

Daddy, very sick in the hospital

He could not support a family

No one knew

If he would survive

He was very sick

But he came through it alive

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Till then Mom stayed at her father's house
Her mom died when her mother was ten
My grandfather loved when I watched him shave
I watched him every day, again and again

But I was not always with my mom
Was with my Irish Uncle Vinny
He took me to the convent
The nuns would keep me company

My uncle's sister was a nun
Her name was Sister Clare
There were two other nuns in his family
But I don't know who was there

So here I'm Jewish in the convent
Which is fine, it's true
After all, Mary was Jewish
And Jesus was Jewish too

Later on my mother told me
She would cry and hold me
But as a youngster, I recall
She would complain and scold me

I don't think my mother wanted me
She wanted a career
And my coming into the world
Just seemed to interfere

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I'd hide in the house when I was small
Don't know from whom or what
I'd hide inside the closet
Where the mothballs smelled a lot

This was done when I was young
Do I cry or laugh?
This was before my brother was born
When I was five and a half

When my baby brother was born
Mom didn't need me anymore
And also I did not get hit
As I did before

My brother made my parents happy
And for that I was glad
But I still kept on thinking
That I was really bad

My mother always wanted a girl
But my dad liked a boy much more
Because after my brother was born
He paid no attention to me like before

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I wasn't jealous of my brother
But jealous more of Mommy
Because she was the one who had the baby
It wasn't me

My brother did not want to nurse
To me this was a mystery
I always knew from those days on
I would nurse my baby

Then I started thinking
Instead of my brother a dog would be fine
Cause the dog would not be my mother's
The dog would be mine

But my parents did not want a dog
They did not want the work or could not see
How I really needed something
To be a companion to me

Later when my brother
Got to be two or three
We hung out together
And he was a friend to me

But when he was born and his diaper was changed
I could plainly see
How very, very much a boy
Was different from me

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In 1948 at the age of six
In the summertime
Off I went to day camp
Which should have been just fine

But very soon an older boy
Came up and said to me
“Come with me into the bathroom
There’s something I want you to see”

My being curious
Said “yes” with no objection
So we went into the bathroom
And he showed me his erection

It was kind of scary
But I think that was all
If anything more had happened
I just do not recall

I left the bathroom first
And I wondered about that day
Why that boy and my baby brother
Did not look at all the same way

However, I told my mother
A boy came into the bathroom with me
He pulled down his pants and showed me
What he wanted me to see

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Well my mother got mad and scolded me
So I knew I did something bad
And I never forgot that day
And the guilty feeling I had

Then at camp I would pee in my pants
Afraid of the bathrooms all the time
And others then would laugh at me
Nothing in my life seemed fine

And although it was summer
I was feeling as though
I was helpless, unhappy
Lying naked in the snow

Some time later my father mentioned
How he felt about me
Saying as a small child
That I was "ornery"

We lived in New York City
And I was happy when Mom took me
To the Museum of Natural History
With exhibits of animals to see

I recall an exhibit of fishes
Striking and vibrant colors to see
When home I did a crayon of it
Because it so impressed me

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Saw the animals there
And at the Central Park Zoo
I saw and loved it all
And the Planetarium too

Mom took me to the circus
When the circus was in town
Liked to feed the elephants
But did not like the clowns

The clowns were supposed to be funny
But they did not make me feel glad
I did not think they were happy
I thought that they were all sad

They were trying so hard to be funny
But this was not the case
They ran around doing nothing
With a smile painted on their face

But there was one clown all dirty
Dirty spots all over him
He tried to wash just one spot out
What about the rest of him?

Then there was the "Freak Show"
People with physical defects to see
And I'm doing all of this
While eating my pink cotton candy

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There was a man with fingers from his shoulders
A lady with frizzy wool hair
A girl without any arms or legs
A fat lady with fat everywhere

Then there was the sword swallower
Which made me nervous to see
He put a sword straight down his throat
I would not do that to me

But I did have to swallow
My parents' ideas I was fed
They did not want to listen
To my ideas in my head

And I remember my father
Sitting on his lap when I was small
But never any hugs or kisses
From either of my parents at all

I used to try to hug my mother
When I was twelve years old
She would never hug me back
"What are you doing that for?" I was told

But I've been writing poetry
Ever since the age of ten
"Write it down and keep it all"
Mommy told me again and again

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And I did just what she told me
Writing it down as time goes on
But the poetry I wrote at camp
All of that is lost and gone

When I became a teenager
Mom objected to the clothes I wore
I had to look like a little kid
As I was way before

She'd poke me in the behind and say
"You're sticking out. You're sticking out"
I don't think she had any idea
What growing up is all about

Then she made me wear a girdle
And a full slip too
Since a girdle is not comfortable
I figured out something else I could do

I started buying clothes too big
To avoid hearing what Mom would say
And when people made some comments
I said, "I like my clothes big that way"

My mother and I were always fighting
And she laughed to my dismay
She said, "You have a bad disposition"
And she thought all this was OK

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Well, now it is all over
It's over and it ends
I cannot pick my family
But I can pick my friends

And I do pick my friends
They're as lovely as can be
All different backgrounds
I like diversity

And in spite of all my struggles
There were good times too
Art, music, poetry, dance
Always wonderful to do

I really feel I'm truly blessed
No need to be defiant
All the troubles and tribulations
Made me strong and self-reliant

PEOPLE I MISS MOST

Grandpa and Uncle Vinny

Are the people I miss most, also

My little baby twin sons

Whom I never got to fully know

One wonderful relationship

With good times for me

Was being with my grandpa

Loving him completely

He would come over the house with peanuts in the shell

He, I and my brother would shell them all and eat

Or he would give us each a quarter

For an Ice cream soda treat

My mother could not understand her father

And why this meant so much to us

She said, "We give them everything

And all they talk about are the quarters and peanuts"

Grandpa took me around New York City

By subway train all the time

Once we had lunch in Chinatown

Went to the Statue of Liberty, with stairs inside to climb

We walked up and up the stairs

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Then Grandpa sat down a bit
Being a child I could not understand
Why Grandpa had to sit

Then Grandpa said to me
We can go down or up some more
But if we start going down
We don't go up anymore

So I decided to test him
And just went down one step to see
Then I said, "I want to go up"
Well, it was too bad for me

And I remain disappointed
Cause I never got to see
What it is like on top
Of the Statue of Liberty

Later I heard Grandpa telling
My parents about it all
And other days there were other trips
That I vividly recall

We went to Mayor Wagner's office
But the mayor was not there
However, I had the pleasure
Of sitting in his chair

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I went inside a jail cell
Although I walked right out of it
Knowing that not everyone
Is so fortunate

Met union leader Michael Quill
My grandpa took me to see him
Then I sat in another room
While my grandpa talked with him

And I listened to them talk
The only thing I remember well
Was that Irish accent
As clear as a bell

My grandpa, a city magistrate
In traffic court, I recall
Would take me to work with him
And I watched and listened to it all

The cops all liked my grandpa
And at night when he couldn't sleep
He would go to the park and sit on a bench
And there was a cop on the beat

When he saw Grandpa on the bench
Grandpa would give his name, that's all he would say
That was enough for the cop

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And he just went on his way

When I got a little older
Did not see Grandpa so much anymore
I know he suffered from depression
And things were not like before

But then Grandpa got very sick
Before President Kennedy was shot
In bed he was crying, "Mama, Mama"
My great grandmother, too, I had loved a lot

And when I went to the hospital
Grandpa tried to talk to me
I couldn't make out what he was saying
At least I was there for him to see

It's strange, he was considered odd
By some of the family
I don't think of him that way
He was just "Grandpa" to me

My grandpa was a socialist
A dirty word, some feel
But I actually lived under socialism
Age 19 and 20 in Israel

I lived in a kibbutz for eight months
A socialist community then

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And it was fine for eight months
But I wouldn't want to do it again

The problem with socialism
You have to do
What the community
Wants you to

Although Grandpa was a socialist
Definitely so
He was AGAINST communism
Communism—no

As for capitalism, one can earn more
But for the poor, there is a price to pay
Cause the more money the rich can make
The more they can have things their way

Grandpa had four daughters
All were democrats
But Grandpa stayed true to his party
And my mother respected him for that

But they also thought Grandpa was odd
I think that he was just fine
His "odd" traits may have come from the crash
Of 1929

Then came the Great Depression

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That he was living through
Until it finally ended
With the beginning of World War II

But when he needed to buy new shoes
He bought the shoes for sure
But he kept all the old ones
Piled all over the closet floor

He also took his own laundry
To wash at the laundromat
His daughters did not feel
That he should be doing that

And he did tell me something
Sometime before he got sick and died
If he had it to do all over again
He would be a reform rabbi

Also, I remember
My mother once told me
That Grandpa thought that politics
Was the career for me

That means, however, he did not want me
To have a married life
He did not believe women should work
Once they became a wife

And that would have been
OK with me
Except I always wanted
To have a baby

But at that time
It was a different life
I shouldn't have a baby
Unless I was a wife

*Then there was Uncle Vinny
Who meant the world to me
And was as perfect as anyone
As anyone could ever be*

He took me for rides
In his yellow convertible car
I was closer to him
Than my dad by far

The only problem was
He was addicted to smoke
But we used to laugh
Have fun and joke

In his mouth
He'd take some smoke
Then blow it into my mouth
For a joke

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Then I'd blow the smoke out
Like I'm smoking for real
When you're twelve and thirteen
That is a big deal

Later lived with him
And my aunt for a spell
To get away from school bullies
Who were giving me hell

But smoking was
Very bad for him
And it was lung cancer
That did him in

With lung cancer
There's pain with each breath
It is a curse
And a horrible death

When Uncle Vinny was dying and died
My uncle's family I hardly saw
Since my aunt made her own arrangements
Which did not suit her mother-in-law

Time marched on
And my life did too
Then met the man
I was soon married to

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At age 24 I was married
Marriage wasn't a happy time
But we lived five years in Italy
Which was super-sublime

I got away from New York City
Where everything is go-go-go-
Then I lived in Italy
Where everything is slow-slow-slow

The reason we lived in Italy
It was where my spouse went to school
There we traveled through Europe by train
Traveling was very cool

And I did love Italy
Good things were in store
You had your lunch, you had your nap
Nothing else mattered more

I remember in Rome there were riots
At the university
So my husband walked over there
To see what he could see

When he got there the place was a mess
Garbage strewn all over the ground
But there was nobody there
Not a soul to be found

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Then my husband saw one lone guy
So he walked over to him
Said, "I thought there were riots here"
The guy said "Yes, there have been"

So my husband said, "Where is everyone?"
He couldn't believe this was real
"Well," said the man, "They all went home
To have their lunchtime meal"

But my marriage in Italy
Was sometimes good, sometimes not
There and back in the States
My husband punched me a lot

I thought by having a child
The child would bring us together
But this never happened
We would fight forever

We soon had a daughter
Her name is Debbi
And we became
A family of three

*Then soon after I had
An unplanned pregnancy
Also things were not
As I hoped they would be*

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*I was happy to be pregnant
But was as sick as can be
There was something very wrong
With the pregnancy*

*With it came pain
I had to endure
Identical twin sons
Were born way too premature*

*Within two days
God took them from us
But as in the Book of Job
I say thus*

*“The Lord giveth
The Lord taketh away
Blessed be the name of the Lord”
I say*

My husband, Bernie
Knew why they died very well
But Bernie decided
To give me hell

He said it was the doctor's fault
That they did not survive
And since I chose the doctor
It was my fault that they died

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He kept on telling me this
Although it made me blue
He just didn't stop
What was I to do?

At one point I suggested
Marriage therapy
But Bernie wouldn't hear of it
He said the problem was me

And he could be
A bully too
There were times
I was all black and blue

And Bernie was
Controlling indeed
Could not eat what I wanted
Unless he agreed

But later he got sick
And I took care of him well
I showered and shaved him
And changed diapers as well

Now all of that's over
And life can be heavenly
Because all I need do now
Is take care of me

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It's over but it isn't
He's still inside my head
He's in my thoughts and nightmares
He died but he's not dead

Even when the sun shines
And the world is all aglow
There's no one who can help me
Lying naked in the snow

I suppose I should be grateful
Because I did survive
God took away my innocence
But I am still alive

But where do I go from here?
Can I break down the bars?
And in the day reach for the sun
At night, reach for the stars

There were times in my life that were very hard
My only friends were my God and me
I am grateful forever for these two friends
With them all is a possibility

When I feel that I'm at the end of my rope
I say to myself, come on
"When I feel that I'm at the end of my rope
I just make a knot and hang on" (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

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I also have bipolar disorder
Called manic depression too
It affects my ideas and my feelings
Called a mood disorder too

My manic depression is not easy
But there are good things about it, I'd say
It frames the way I think and feel
And I like myself that way

But its trauma leaves within me fear
As it raises its hideous head
While I want the beauty and bliss
That used to be in me instead

I am a jigsaw puzzle
With pieces all awry
And I cannot fit them together
And I try and I try and I try

And what should the picture be?
I cannot even recall
Trying to put myself together
Is there a way to do it at all?

There must be a way, there must be a way
But I just don't know how
There must be a way, there must be a way
What do I do now?

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Yes, I've had struggles in my life
Most within my head
But I'll keep marching forward
I will until I'm dead

Life is truly beautiful
With the beautiful friends I'm blessed
Although life can also be
One trial after the next

OK! OK!
Enough! Enough!
Of thoughts of the past
And all that bad stuff

But I say, "Damn you, Bernie"
Why did you treat me like this?
One minute the fist
Next minute the kiss

You say I am evil
You say I'm unkind
I say your f—king
Out of your mind

I wasn't always this way
Used to think you were swell
All the while leading me
On a road trip to hell

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Then one day
You couldn't work anymore
Illness was knocking
At your door

And you became sick
Very sick too
And I was the one
Who took care of you

I took you to doctors
You could not do a thing
I showered and shaved you
And did everything

Now you are gone
Now I am free
Living my life
Joyfully

I have a wonderful partner, Bruce
And a wonderful daughter too
And I'm living the life
I choose to do

MY SECRET LIFE

Feeling happiness and gratefulness
For my life today
Life wasn't always like this
I'll make sure it continues this way

I've always had a secret life
Way down inside of me
When little I turned it into a game
When older I thought it shouldn't be

For it kept me from doing my homework
Which I then did way too late at night
However, it made me feel good
It was pure delight

When I was very little
There was a special land
Where I would escape to
And everything was grand

I got there inside my closet
Where there was a special door
It was the entrance to Wolf-Land
And my spirits there would soar

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Sometimes I went there with my brother
When he was very small
Together we went to Wolf-Land
Through my closet wall

I had fun with my Wolf-Land friends
They would always play with me
Then there was the big bad wolf
But he could never get to me

His home was at the foot of my bed
Inside my bedroom wall
And though he wanted to eat me up
He couldn't get to me at all

He was also in my dreams at night
There he would appear
And I would always fight him off
And in morning I was still here

Yes, I was still here
To live another day
And to fight off the big bad wolf
And grown-ups call it play

And now that I'm a grown-up
Not much scares me anymore
After living with the big bad wolf
There's lots I can endure

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Yes, it's good to endure
But life is much, much more
I'll sing and dance with my friends
And let my spirits soar

My secret life and secret friends
Are why I did survive
They are the only reason why
I wanted to stay alive

Since teenage years my secret friends
Are real people that I know
But also they're in my fantasy
Admiring me so

But some of my life was very bad
Things were not so well
And thinking and thinking about it
Is taking a journey through hell

But hell is a very strange place
It's not always a place I have to stay
If things are not going right
Sometimes I can walk away

And it can be the other way
Hell can leave me too
That's what happened in my marriage
My husband died and my dreams came true

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All my neighbors noticed
How much better I became
I now have a future ahead of me
A future I can claim

I no longer walk around depressed
With nothing left in life for me
And loving what each day brings
Such cheerfulness and glee

But I always kept moving ahead
Even when married, I recall
Worked, went to school, had a family
Can't believe I did it all

But, I did it all by not sleeping too much
I went to bed very late
Then I got up really early
To keep my schoolwork up to date

Also in summer, when we went on a cruise
I would take a book with me
And I would look in my book
Instead of at the scenery

Before and when I was married
Knew life wasn't quite right
But was hoping life would get better
And eventually I was right

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Now I am living on my own
And it is heavenly
After all that's said and done
I'm happy to be me

Bruce is very good to me
He listens to all I say
There's never a mean word from him
And he feels about me the same way

I also have Faith, I also have Hope
Friends I'll never leave
To me it's sung by the angels:
"Have Faith, Hope and Believe"

Now my memoirs in poetry
Definitely show
I am no longer helpless
Lying naked in the snow

Also, one thing colors
How I think and feel
I have bipolar
And it is real

It colors most things
That I do
It comes out in my writing
And in my painting too

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Contrary to what
You hear people say
It does make me
Who I am today

I know I feel things differently
That most others I see
How many will get their Master's Degree
At the age of 80, like me

I'm not only older
But I have bipolar, it's true
But that didn't stop me
And nothing should stop you

Couldn't go to grad school when younger
My husband would not agree
And I kept on wondering
What would become of me

I had been working for my husband
But he was not paying me
So, therefore, I had no money
To pay for my degree

But now I have the money
And now I have the time
And now I am ecstatic
Because my life is mine

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“Don’t give up”

I would silently cry

And that is the motto

That I live by

“Don’t give up”

I would silently cry

And that is the motto

You, too, can live by

I have my passions

You have yours too

What is the life

You wish to pursue?

Follow your path

Follow each dream

May you and all others be

Worthy and serene

Now, what are my passions?

Let me see

My greatest is writing

Creatively

Another passion

I love to paint and draw

Guided by my heart

With colors galore

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Also, there is music
I cannot do without
To dance and to sing
That's what life's all about

Also, mania and depression
Are what I've been through
Known as bipolar
And manic depression too

Mania looks at me
Straight in the eye
No need to be afraid
Just do—I can fly!

I can do anything
Anything, any way
Nothing can harm me
I'll just fly away

Then I will fall
In depression and I
Don't think there is anything
I can do or try

They say the sky is blue
That's what they say
But all I see is gray
And hear the rain pounding away

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They say tomorrow is sunny
But I know that isn't true
It will be gray, gray, gray
And the rain will be here too

They say there is beauty in this world
But as for me inside
There is a dark, dark dungeon
Where sometimes I reside

I cannot escape it
But wait, I have the key
The key that I call "artist"
Is way down inside of me

It opens up the prison
And now I see the flowers
Smiling in the sunshine
Dancing when it showers

I can smile in sunshine too
And I can dance and sing
Escaping now to freedom
Breathing what freedom brings

And I have to give my thanks
To people who helped me
Helped me to find my own life
And live it joyfully

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They stood by my side
All along
Which made me feel worthy
Hopeful and strong

Got on "The Living Train"
When I was 18
Looked out the window
Saw scene after scene

There were scenes from my present
There were scenes from my past
At times I got out
Became part of the cast

In time of distress
I was a survivor
But now on that train
I am the driver

When there are storms
I weather the strife
And when the sun shines
See the beauty in life

Let's strive together
To accomplish our worth
And when our days are over
Return to the earth

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I am in charge

As Henley foretold

“I am the master of my fate

I am the captain of my soul”

This is where I stand today

I know now what I hope to do

To leave this world a better place

When my time on Earth is through