

**THE PRISON GATES  
ARE BROKEN**

**By Rhonda Lea Snow**

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*The Prison Gates Are Broken*

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## Dedication Page

**T**his book is dedicated to those who have been on this journey with me, those who have prayed for me, and especially those who encouraged me to keep plugging away and get this book published. Especially to my best friend and Editor, Ruby Sand who has stuck by me through it all, I couldn't have made it without you. To Becky Born, who so lovingly encouraged me to see the truth. To Wendy Clontz, who has continually, over the last decade, prayed for me, fought spiritual warfare for me and encouraged me to publish this book. To Cassandra Hamilton, who was instrumental in helping me begin my writing career. To my children, Nick, Joe & Amber, you are all such a blessing to me and I love each one of you. *And most of all to the Holy Spirit, who gave me the inspiration to write and the timing to do so. Without the Lord, this would not be possible, so thank you Jesus.*

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## Introduction

I began writing this book about my life on February 4, 1997. It started out to be just a therapeutic journal for me to put my feelings on paper, but soon after I began to put pen to paper, I began to hope to someday share my pain and triumph with others. All of the names have been changed to protect the innocent.

My prayer is that God will use my story “The Prison Gates Are Broken” to heal the readers who so desperately need to know that there is hope for the weary, the abused, the addict, the drunkard and sexually immoral. May the Lord be with you on your journey as He has been with me on mine. He will never leave you or forsake you. God Bless!

## Chapter One

# Where It All Started

I was born in 1965 to a family of hurt, rejection, and abandonment issues. My mom came from a very religious home where they lived by many rules and laws. My dad came from a very strict Orthodox Jewish family. They had to elope to avoid the conflict of religious ceremonies. I began my life in confusion over my religion and beliefs. Both of my parents rebelled against their religions leaving me with no real foundation. Both my mom and my dad were spending all their waking hours, while not working, drinking to fill the void that they had in their hearts.

My brother John, who was about five when I was born, had already the warning signs of a very confused and damaged child. My sister Lisa, who was exactly thirteen months to the day older than me, was already on the road to being a perfectionist.

I was born last. There were never any baby pictures taken of me, so I used to think and believe that I was adopted. I think my parents really tried to

love me, but they had so much pain of their own. My dad owned a tv repair shop, and he worked all the time, which left my mom with the responsibility of caring for very young children. I know that was tough, although she had help from my grandmother and her boyfriend.

I estimate that when I was about two years old, my grandmother, who we called “Nana” and her boyfriend “Papa Mac” started coming over. Also, Mom and Dad would take us over to their house. Usually, they would watch us for the weekend. I assume so mom and dad could go out and drink.

I have always been a strong willed outgoing person and because of that, I got in a lot of trouble. At the time, Nana’s boyfriend would discipline me for my wrong doings. The way he did it was unacceptable. He would sexually abuse me. He always did his “disciplining” in the bathroom with the door locked. My brother and sister would hear me scream, “no!” “stop!”, but they thought I was just getting a spanking. Not true; I was getting abused (sodomized) and having my childhood and my whole innocent self ripped, no, stolen away from me. I don’t know how long he would do this for, it seemed like hours, but I do know that I would just concentrate on something else, so that I

wouldn't feel the emotional and physical pain of what I was going through. I would disassociate myself from the present situation. I call it escape from reality, because that kind of reality is too much for a preschooler to handle. When it was over, I would totally forget about it. I would block it out like it never happened. It didn't change how I acted. It didn't change my friendliness to other people. But on the inside, mainly in my stomach, I became a very sickly child. I started biting my nails when I was around three years old. I started biting my toenails too. I bit them until they would bleed because I figured that if I hurt myself no one could hurt me. I also ate until my stomach would hurt. Again, if I was already in pain, then he couldn't hurt me. It's amazing that a young child could think that way.

This man died sometime when I was three. After he died I didn't have to go through the physical pain anymore, but I had to live with the emotional pain. And there was so much of it, that I just became a very sick child. I would catch every germ there was. I got pneumonia twice and I started getting stomachaches a lot.

Finally, I told my mom about Papa Mac when I was five. She told me to quit making up those lies,

and that she never wanted to hear that out of my mouth again. So from that point on, until I was thirty, no one ever did. I totally blocked it out of my mind, like it had never happened to me, but my insides never forgot. They trembled in fear day in and day out. My destructive behavior continued. I continued to bite my nails until they bled and instead of biting my toenails I just ripped them off until they bled.

Well all I remember about the ages of four to ten was just being sick all the time and lying around and watching a lot of television. My mom would give me chocolate milk shakes to cheer me up. The best thing that ever happened to me was when I was ten years old. I went to a church camp with a friend of mine, and I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart. I had no idea what I was doing, but I believe I was sincere about it. I know that at that moment I was saved, but because I had to go back home I got lost in the shuffle - spiritually speaking.

## Satan's Playground

Shortly after I returned home from church camp, my life turned around again - Satan took hold of me in a major way. I was hanging out with my brother and his friend, a boy who lived in the house behind us. He was about sixteen years old. He was developing film and he asked if I wanted to help him. Of course, I thought it would be a really cool experience, so I did. We went into a darkroom, and there was a piece of plywood over the light switch. I was sitting next to him wearing a cool-lot (unfortunately this provided easy accessibility). He reached down the front of my cool-lot and fondled me. I didn't know what to do except reach behind the plywood and turn on the light. I couldn't say anything. I just ran home and my sister, Lisa asked what happened. She had tried to warn me to get out of there, because she sensed something not right, but I was way too stubborn to listen to my big sister. So I told her that he messed with me and he was a pervert. But as in the past, I acted as if nothing

happened, and so I was the same I always was. But again my insides were trembling with fear, guilt, shame and confusion.

Not long after this incidence, I was introduced to Marijuana (pot) over at my friend Sharon's house. We were all in one of her sister's rooms. There were several of us, including myself, Lisa, Sharon and my other friend, Cindy. And believe it or not, even the dog and the cat. We all sat there and got high smoking out of hookahs (big round bong), and even the pets were getting high. Remember, I was ten, and in a lot of emotional pain. I found my relief. Pot was my escape out of reality. It was great. I immediately became an avid pot smoker. I loved it so much it became who I was - a pothead at age ten. I was already addicted to cigarettes, so pot was just another addition to my already bad habit of smoking.

My new life began. I could escape life any time I wanted by smoking weed. It was totally awesome, or so I thought. I started getting high all the time. Day, night, mornings before school, evenings before bed; whenever I could get away from life, I did. Life did not get easier however, it just kept getting harder.

The emotional pain was so overwhelming and

the abuse kept escalating to different levels. When my family and I went on vacation with friends, one of my friends brothers fondled me while I was sleeping on the couch in our rented vacation cabin. Of course I immediately blocked it out of my mind with drugs. I brought plenty of pot on vacation with me that year.

Life went on as usual and my pain got worse. All of a sudden, pot wasn't enough. Alcohol didn't quite do the job. I soon started experimenting with other drugs at age twelve. I started smoking PCP and taking LSD, while also staying with my drug of choice at the time, pot. I partied all the time. I drank, smoked, snorted and popped everything and anything. The only thing I didn't do was inject it with a needle. Thank God, because I'm sure I would have liked that too.

I got arrested frequently between the ages of twelve and sixteen. I believe I got in a total of twelve serious car accidents by the time I reached the legal drinking age. Throughout my very early teenage years, I was date raped several times, usually when I was passed out on Jack Daniel's. People who didn't even know me sexually molested me. Some I knew, some I didn't, but never in a million years would I have let them touch me if I

was awake. As usual I didn't let it bother me, at least not on the outside. Inside I just wanted to scream so loud for someone to come and rescue me. However, I had learned at a very early age to never show my pain or express that I was hurt. So I didn't, I kept up my mask of happiness underneath horrible pain that was eating me away.

I had a lot of relationships where I thought I was in love. I would wait two weeks before I had sex to make sure these guys were going to stay with me, and boom, right after I finally did it, they were history. Some would even tell me they loved me up until they got what they wanted. This was a pattern I couldn't quite figure out, but got burned by every time. All I was looking for was someone to love and someone to love me. I just wanted a true love and thought each and every one of them was it. In my heart I really believed they loved me, but one thing we all had in common was our love of getting high. So even though they used me for sex, I used them for drugs.

Then I met a guy named John, who I thought really loved me. He was gorgeous and nineteen years old and I was about thirteen. I thought he could take me away from the hell in my life, but he made it much worse. He took complete control over

my life. He abused me physically, mentally, verbally, emotionally and sexually. He took who I could have been sexually and distorted it to pornography. He made me say things while having sex. He made me move certain ways and scream certain ways. Everything about me was dictated. He treated me like a dog. He told me what to do and how to do it. Once he suffocated me because I drank too much after he told me to slow down. I didn't stop drinking, and I passed out. The next thing I knew, I couldn't breathe. He had his hand over my nose and my mouth. Afterwards, he made me have sex with him. There were several of these abusive occasions.

Another one in particular was one night when my parents were out of town. John came over, along with some mutual friends. I was talking on the phone while sitting on the floor against a refrigerator. The next thing I knew, John threw a peach pie in my face for no apparent reason. My instant reaction was to hit him with the phone I had in my hand. This was a big mistake! I ran outside and he started twisting my arm behind my back. I managed to break free and ran inside and took a shower; not letting him see my tears. I believed if he couldn't see me cry he really couldn't hurt me.

Our friends thought that he needed to be humiliated after doing such a good job of humiliating me by throwing a pie in my face. While he was banging on the bathroom door, these guys took his clothes off and threw him into the bushes outside. Guess who paid a price for that one? He came back in pounding even harder on the door this time. Of course, I didn't know what had happened to him because I was taking a long, emotional shower. I was so afraid to open the door but I felt if I didn't, he would break it down and beat the life out of me. So I opened it up, and he started throwing me against the wall and calling me a gutter slut. I don't remember exactly how that night ended.

I can remember sitting in John's living room watching television and all of a sudden, he would punch me in my chest as hard as he could, while calling me a gutter slut. The abuse went on for at least two years.

I ended up getting pregnant from him twice. The first time I was around fourteen. He had his friends say that they were the ones who slept with me, just in case my parents were going to press charges of statutory rape on him. They didn't but my dad did threaten him with it in order to get him to pay for the abortion. Afterward, the guilt of having an

abortion ate at me every day. I stayed with him at that point not just out of fear, but also out of guilt.

There was a time when we were driving down the road and he was being his usual verbal abusive self. After he told me what a cunt I was, he then put his hand between my legs. I threw his hand away from my body, and he put it back. Somehow, I got the courage to hit him over the head with a beer bottle. We then went to his friend's, and as usual I started playing poker with everyone, like nothing ever happened. He played the poor pitiful act of remorse on my sister Lisa and my friend, Sharon. I felt sorry for him and decided to go talk to him. I said to him, "Lisa and Sharon said you wanted to talk to me, so what do you want?" He proceeded to say "You killed my baby and you owe me the money for it." That was the absolutely most hurtful thing he ever said to me. It blew away any of the other abuses he thrust upon me. I actually believed him and bought into this horrible accusation. I stayed with John for several years because every time I got the courage to leave him and start dating someone else, he would manipulate me with guilt to come back.

There was a time when I started dating a guy named Danny, who was also a friend of John's. One

night when Danny and I went out, John and their friend, Mark, happened to be in the car with us. Danny and Mark got to see first hand the abuse I had sustained in the previous couple of years. My ex started reaching from the back seat and punching me in my chest and ripping off my shirt. It was humiliating. For some sick reason we got back together again after that.

Anyway, within that time period of dating Danny I got pregnant again, this time it was in my fallopian tube, which almost killed me. I thought it was Danny's, but it wasn't because I had already been bleeding while we were having sex. The only other person who could have been the father was John. I called him and told him about it, and he was so supportive over the phone, but he never came to the hospital. When I was admitted they explained to me that I was one day away from my fallopian tube bursting, thus causing hemorrhaging and most likely death. I was in the hospital for eight days.

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