

# Ever BLOOM

STORIES *of* LIVING DEEPLY ROOTED  
AND TRANSFORMED LIVES



by women of  
**Redbud**  
WRITERS GUILD

**Edited by Shayne Moore  
and Margaret Ann Philbrick**



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Trunk



# Encasing My Fear

*by JoHannah Reardon*

I was a frightened child. I was afraid my room was full of spiders when my mother turned out the light. I was terrified that ghosts roamed the streets and were bound to show up on my doorstep. Creepy music sent chills down my spine, and images of ghouls and skeletons turned my stomach. Of all the terrors, the thing that loomed largest was Stranger Danger.

When I was in grade school, a girl in my small hometown was abducted by an unknown man. This sent our community into turmoil and put my small elementary school on high alert. In an effort to keep me safe, my mother frightened me in any way possible, it seemed. It was confusing—because before this incident, she had made light of my childhood fears and repeatedly told me they were nonsense.

Now, Mother painted gruesome pictures of what would happen to me if I were not continuously on my guard against any man I did not know. My impressionable eight-year-old mind struggled. This scary, evil bad guy who was just out there taking little girls took over my imagination and fueled my irrational, lifelong fear of the “evil man.”

This horrifying paranoia followed me as I grew older. I found plenty of reasons to support my sense of evil men lurking everywhere. News stories of kidnappings, rapes, tortures, and girls and children sold into slavery abounded. Novels and movies fed my overactive thought life. I perceived the men around me with fear, convinced they all had wicked motives. Nighttime became a terror. It didn't matter if I locked every door and window. Mere glass and wood would do little to stop the “evil man.” Every noise and creak meant *he* had managed

to get into my home. I knew something was wrong with my paranoid view of things, but I didn't know how to overcome it.

When I became a Christian, I learned God wanted me to trust him with my life. But even that wasn't enough.

God *could* protect me, but I didn't believe he *would* protect me. After all, Bible stories offered little comfort: Joseph was sold into slavery; Jeremiah was lowered into a pit; the apostles were beaten and thrown into prison; and Jesus was crucified—all at the hands of evil men. I read books about overcoming fear, memorized Bible verses that addressed fear, and prayed God would take away my fear, but victory escaped me.

Church became an important part of my life despite my secret paralyzing fears. During my first season of Lent, I began thinking about the value of giving up something for forty days to ensure my dependency on God. Sincerely seeking God's guidance for this process, I definitively heard, "Give up fear and worry."

During those forty days, God did not hold back. He identified and rooted out the ways I fretted and worried. Setting aside forty days to concentrate on this part of my life revealed a hidden sin: the sin of not trusting God—the sin of believing God wanted me to live in a state of waiting for the other shoe to drop—the sin of not believing God loved me.

In the past, I had struggled to move out of my fear. Emotionally I was deeply programmed for fear to be my knee-jerk reaction. But during this sacred season of Lent, I learned to engage my emotions in my relationship with God. It was hard. It was scary. But I did it. I was honest with myself and God.

God immediately began to challenge my commitment to confront my irrational fears. One afternoon while walking in the park, my eyes caught the image of a van seeming to keep pace with me on the road next to me. This is a safe community park, and other people were around, yet my warped instinct was screaming, *Run!...*

**...continue reading *Encasing My Fear* in your copy of *Everbloom*.**

■ PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for being loving, good, kind, gracious, wise, and in charge of everything. I want to always see you as you are so I can rest safely in your care and not fear all the uncertainties of this world. Help me, as only you can. Let me walk through life confident that you never will let go of me. And plant within me the knowledge of your love so that it encases my fears deep within your goodness. Amen

■ WRITING PROMPT

Paint a picture with words of what you fear most. Where do you see the strong arms of God?