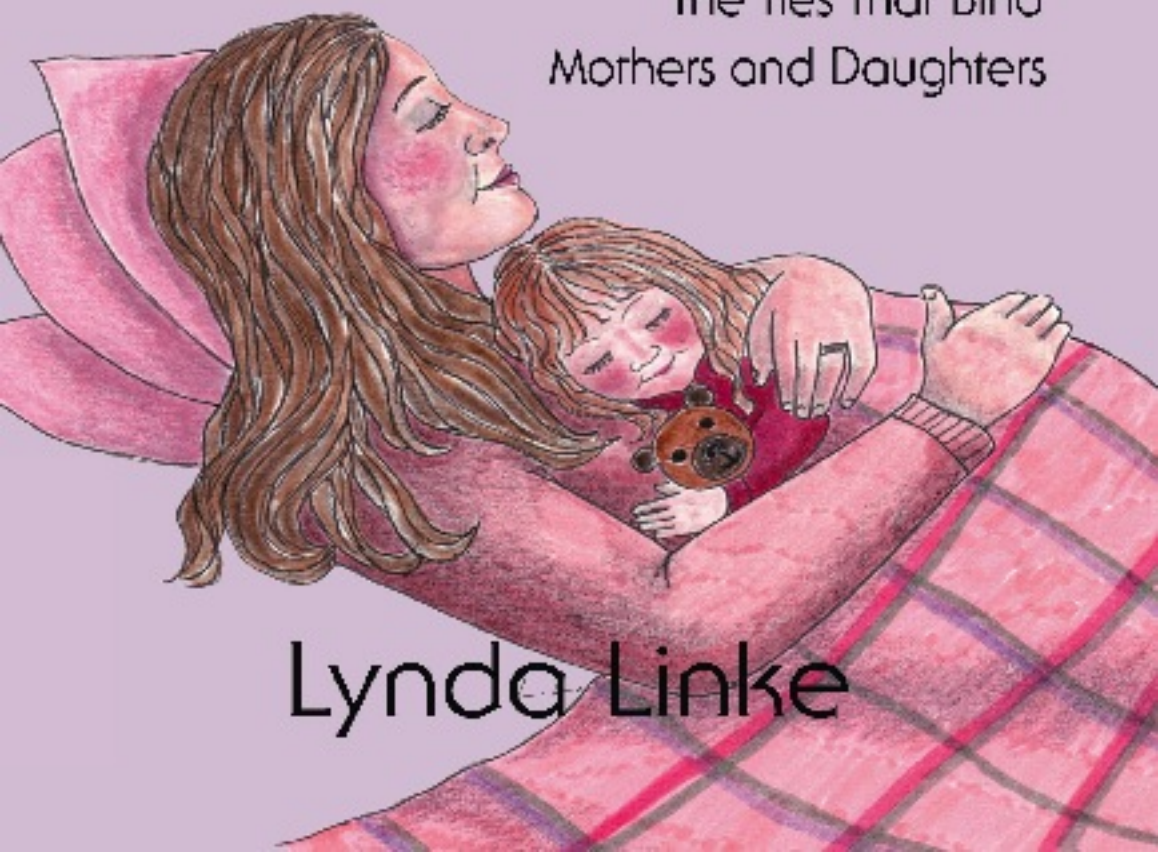
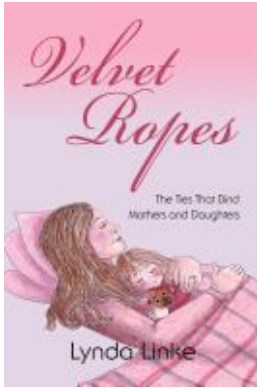


Velvet Ropes

The Ties That Bind
Mothers and Daughters



Lynda Linke



Twenty women share the personal stories of their relationships with their mothers, and describe how they view their mothers as individuals, apart from the role of "Mother". The stories take us on an intimate journey through the thoughts, feelings and memories of these women as they talk about the most influential, and often most complicated relationship of their lives. Their voices are honest and ring with messages to which all women can relate.

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The Ties That Bind Mothers and Daughters

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Velvet Ropes:
The Ties That Bind Mothers
And Daughters

Lynda Linke

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Section II

Losing a mother too soon....

Yvonne

Jonella

I am the woman who holds up the sky.
The rainbow runs through my eyes.
The sun makes a path through my womb.
My thoughts are in the shape of clouds.
But my thoughts are yet to come.

~Poem of the Ute Indians

Velvet Ropes

My mother was born Ora Marie in 1909 in Key West, Florida. This made her a native “Conch”. Her parents were also Conchs, having been born in the Bahamas. She seldom left the island and I’m not sure if that was because she didn’t want to live anywhere else or because there was just no opportunity for her on the “mainland”. She had six sisters and one brother...that’s counting just those who survived infancy. Ora and one other sister remained in Key West for their entire lifetime. It’s not easy for me to think about my mother without recalling memories of other important influences in my life like my father, brother, and my second cousin “Sue”, who played more of the role of a grandmother.

You might think that Mom’s family was a little strange but, if you got to know them, you would realize that they were just simple island people. None of them ever went by their real given name. Ora, or “George” as she was called by her siblings, was third oldest in birth order. She was the oldest who remained in Key West and I believe it was for that reason she became the “mother hen”, the one who shouldered the worries and responsibilities for the others. The other siblings were: Ruby (Artie), Lulie (Tom), Ilma (Fung), Claudia (Phenie), Gladys (Jane) and Jack (Dick). Uncle Dick was the youngest and fought alcoholism his whole life. We kids loved him. He was clever, told jokes, did magic tricks and carved little toys out of wood. He lived with us for awhile when he was drying out one time but lost his job and moved back to Miami. Artie was the one who could do the table tipping or “talking to the Spirits” as it was called.

Mom married my Dad, Paul Joseph, when she was 26. Most women back then married much younger so I’m not sure if she was waiting for “Mr. Right” or if she remained single because of family responsibilities. She was very bright and talented but never had the opportunity to further her education or start a career. She went to work when I was about 6 years old out of

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necessity because Dad had a serious heart attack and was also afflicted with post polio disease. My brother and I were sheltered from the bad news at the time and were shuttled off to spend a summer with Dad's step sister and his step mother in Mineola, Texas while he was treated. He might have had surgery but no one ever shared the information with us. That summer Mom got a job as a bookkeeper with City Electric System where she worked the rest of her life. The people there were caring and family-like. She made many lifelong friends there.

Because of Mom's work schedule, we were supervised after school by a cousin, Lucille (Sue). Sue was my dad's age and had a rough life...married an alcoholic who I seldom saw sober. His name was Harry but his nick name around town was Parakeet because when he was drunk he would mumble and sound like a parakeet trying to talk. When I was a teen, my parents got me a Parakeet and I named him "Harry". Other baby sitters were teen aged identical twins named Ruth and Alma. We called them both "Honey" and they were the "Honey twins" to everyone around town. They were Sunday School (Methodist) teachers and Brownie Scout leaders. That's where we got our first religious education much to the chagrin of our staunch high church Episcopal grandmother. When my brother was about 6, he decided that he wanted to go to the church where he was baptized so I followed along to St. Paul's Episcopal. It was walking distance from our house in the Telegraph Lane alley so it was not a problem for our parents. We were both going to Roman Catholic elementary school so we got that exposure also. Most of the nuns were very nice and seemed very lovingly concerned that because my dad had been baptized Catholic and my mom was not and their marriage was a civil one, that Paul and I were in fact illegitimate. I had no idea what that meant until years later.

My parent's marriage was secure. Back then, everyone stayed married. They must have had differences but I seldom

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heard them argue. No one ever raised a voice or a hand in my parent's household...except for me...I cried and pitched tantrums until I got my way. It didn't always work but I had a pretty good batting average in the "wear your parents down" department. I would describe my parent's marriage as one of respect with an old fashioned attitude about displays of affection or emotion and I am the same way. A little teasing and humor is okay but I get along best with men who are soft spoken and polite.

I have one brother, Paul. He is 11 months older and he was the favorite. The first born is always the favorite, isn't he? He was the smart one...really genius, but always reserved and quiet, much like our father. Being the "baby" and a girl, I found ways to become the princess and was very spoiled. My Dad often referred to me jokingly and lovingly as "Queen of the Pisswinks". Both parents were very patient with us and, believe me, the two of us together could be a challenge. Like my Dad, my brother loved to tease but I always seemed to have a trick up my sleeve and got the last lick in.

Mom was outgoing but in a very quiet way. She was always there to help whenever a friend or relative needed anything. To my high school friends, she was known as "Momma Moore"...the one who piled everyone into the old Chevy and took them for ice cream after church every Sunday and the one who would join in at slumber parties and keep the jokes going. Her children came first in her life and she let the world know that. She once threatened a nun who had struck my brother for not reading loud enough in grade school. That's another story!

I think she taught me to be strong and to believe that being female doesn't necessarily mean being subservient or weak. She was physically beautiful but never flaunted it. She championed the underdog and could always find a way to help those less fortunate. She actually enjoyed helping others and she made it

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fun, or so it seemed to me. She never expected pay back or praise and Lord knows she often deserved it.

I never got to be a mother in the usual sense but I did have a career working with challenging children and teens and, on several occasions, provided a temporary home for a few. Eventually, I took on my husband's children from his previous marriage. The two girls were 13 and 14 at the time. Yet another story!

My adult relationship with my mother was not much different than it was when I was a child. She was always there for me. She died when I was in my early 20's, just as our relationship had started to become one of friendship. We had a cruise to the Bahamas' planned that never materialized but I'm sure we would have had a blast. I hope she would approve of the choices I have made in my life but I'm sure there would be a few things that she would scratch her head at.

Velvet is a very strong fabric yet soft and also royal. Mothers are that way, or at least they should be. We should all treat them like royalty for the love and support they give us. The strong tie is always there and transcends time and even death.

Yvonne

Retired Social Services professional, animal advocate, wife, step-mother and grandmother

Velvet Ropes

My mother, Mary Adriane, was born in Kansas in 1920. She grew up in numerous cities in Illinois. She had five sisters and a brother and was in the middle of them all.

She was first married at the age of 23. She went to college practically all of her life and she was an elementary schoolteacher both before she was married and throughout her entire life.

My mother never figured out the marriage path. She married, had two sons, divorced, married again and had a daughter (me) and two more sons. She divorced my father when I was three and she was pregnant with her last son and married again when I was twelve. That was her last marriage...he was an alcoholic and was abusive both to her and to the three children still at home. I married just three months out of high school to a good man and we remained married for five years. After that I was single for twelve years and then I married my present husband. The influence my mother had in my first marriage was that of trying too hard. The influence she has had in my second marriage is her kindness, her devotion, her humor, and her tenacity.

Mom did have a favorite child, my next younger brother from me. He is brilliant and always was from the first memories I have of him. I always felt that, as a schoolteacher, she gravitated toward such a gifted child. Also, he was the oldest male in her second set of children and, as she got older, I think she found some protection and comfort from him. He always took on a tremendous amount of responsibility, even as a father and husband. I always said that Mom didn't quite know what to do with a girl. I spent as much time as I could away from the house at my grandparents' home in another town. While I knew Mom was proud of me, her only daughter, at the same time I felt like she resented me somehow and was even jealous of me

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sometimes. I always felt like I was having to hold myself up. She did the best she could...we were poor as dirt and we all had to do our part.

My mothers' personality was amazing. She had a heart as big as the ocean (something she told me the night I told her I was going to get married). She loved to laugh and sing and play the piano, accordion, and organ. She loved teaching and taught her own children as instinctually as if she never had the normal parental questions. Everyone loved her. Now for the other side...the side that could be at home. Whatever we could do as children we would do in order to never make her mad. In retrospect, I see a lonely, broke, frustrated, overweight, and sad woman. Her life was so hard. She never pitied herself or allowed others to pity her; however, she would always readily accept handouts and comfort when offered. She always had time to read to her children, volunteer, and support others in their times of need.

If I had to boil it all down to one thing I learned from my mother it would be perseverance. Through all of her times of life – good, bad, or indifferent – she could find her way back to a smile and a kind word for someone who needed it more. Her life is now like a beacon for me in my tough times. No matter what life hands me – ever – my life will never be as tough as hers and in my good times her smile warms me. I consistently thank her for my character and always try to make her proud. Two of the lessons I taught my children were 1) you're all you've got and 2) sometimes you learn from others what you don't want to do or be in life. Both of those lessons were ingrained in me as I watched and learned from my mother; however, there was also the amazing lesson of giving when you think you have nothing to give. I often wonder how she was able to pull that off with the life package she was given. She taught me to always make time for my children no matter what I was in the middle of...listen to

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them...play with them...nothing is too much trouble...and that hug of the moment is the most important thing in all of life.

I remember acknowledging that all I had to do to have a happy marriage was to not be the kind of wife my mother had been; however, at this writing I realize that I really never saw my mother “in” her marriages, but rather just know the stories. She was always off somewhere else or we had an event when she was married to the alcoholic and I was too young to remember any other. Besides, we three hated how he disrupted our happy life, raised strictly Methodist and in church every time the doors opened; this new life was quite a contrast. Anyway, I decided that I must be absolutely subservient to my husband. I remember feeling guilty once for cashing my paycheck and buying a 25 cent éclair with a girlfriend. Wow, I’ve come a long way, baby!

Unfortunately, my mother died when I was 24, after a seven year battle with cancer and, because of the dynamics of our relationship, I never got to be a friend with her. We loved each other desperately but never learned how to communicate. I always said that we needed to have that one big fight, meaning I didn’t really want to fight with her but, rather, I just wished that we could have had truth between us without the baggage. Now I feel that I can communicate completely and openly with her with a “heart and soul understanding” that I could never have imagined before.

I have always been an independent cuss, even as a little girl. I was imaginative, creative, and talented. I needed support more than approval. I made and still make my choices in life based on the background and morals my mother handed me and the lessons of my mistakes. I have many clichés that came directly from Mom that taught me life “is what it is”. As far as approval from her is concerned, I never felt that she knew who I was at the depth of me. Probably because I was only 24 when she went away, still vacillating, she could approve or not approve and I

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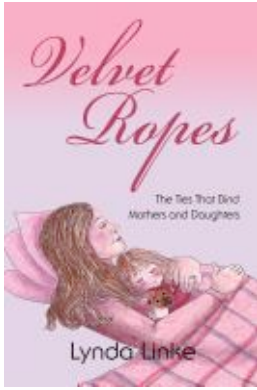
didn't count on that very much. In fact, at 57, I wonder sometimes if I am still trying to "find myself" so at this stage I wonder if I ever would have been able to let her in.

"Velvet Ropes: Ties That Bind Mothers and Daughters" is an interesting conglomerate of meanings. The velvet indicates a softness I never knew. We had our tie and our bond and I still miss her every day. I always help folks to know when they lose their mother that "No one ever loves you like your Mom".

Thank you for allowing me to write the things I have said for years about my Mom. She was a very special woman who had such a hard life. I have questions for her every day.

Jonella

Businesswoman, spiritual educator, wife, mother, grandmother



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