

Two girls born on the same day in the same place with dramatically different lives. A comparison tale of the torture of having a narcissistic mother and enabler father versus the validation and support that comes from nurturing parents.

Torture or Nurture, A Tale of Growing Up

By Janet Christy

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Torture or Nurture, A Tale of Growing Up



Janet Christy

What people are saying about this book

I was mesmerized while reading *Torture or Nurture, A Tale of Growing Up*. Christy has done an incredible job representing two very different lives: one of a child with loving parents as compared to the child of a narcissist and her narcissistic enabler. There were several occasions where I was moved to tears as I read of experiences that so closely mirrored my own childhood.

As the child of a narcissistic mother, I know all too well what it's like to have my mother see me as only an extension of herself. I found myself openly weeping when little Ellena, at the tender age of 7-years-old, already understood that she was not allowed to be the center of attention. The story Janet has related is exactly what I experienced growing up.

In another part of the book, poor Ellena hears her mother discussing sending her away. "As she sat in the big chair she felt as if she was growing smaller. She was also having trouble breathing. She wanted to run into the dining room and beg her mother not to send her away. She also wanted to go to her room and never come out again." I can't count the number of times I felt so small and as if I couldn't breathe. I felt as if I didn't have the right to live, to be who I was, and to express my own feelings. I never felt welcome in my own home. I didn't know that wasn't something that every child feels. I too had a friend like Arialle, whose parents truly loved her and made her feel wanted. It was the experiences of my Arialle that made me finally realize something was wrong with my mother. Janet Christy has quite simply brought my childhood experiences to life in this moving fictional account based on her own life. She has got it exactly right.

If you're the child of a narcissist or unfortunate enough to have a narcissist in your life, I highly recommend you read this book. It will give you insights you never realized into how this devastating mental condition has affected your life. I know you'll find it as revealing, inspiring, and moving as I did, and I know it can help you process your feelings. It helped me. Bravo, Janet Christy, and thank you!

Patricia Edwards

Inner Toxic Relief Blog Author, YouTuber, & Narcissistic Abuse Survivor
innertoxicrelief.com

There is no doubt that the responsibilities that come along with being a mother are enormous, however, when a mother is unaware of her narcissistic traits, it is the child whose life is inundated with the burden of managing the unimagined unmanageable. Narcissistic parents mask what strangers might interpret as a desire to help, through covert abuses of power engineered to intimidate a child into submission, designed to emulate, as well as mask insidious cravings for a parent's narcissistic supply. Prepare to have your eyes peeled, your hearts melted and your awareness expanded as you read this book. Janet Christy's characters will reveal to you the tragedy, as well as the triumph of children born to parents who are unaware they are unaware.

Lisa A. Romano Life Coach
Author of the bestselling book The Road Back to Me
<https://www.lisaaromano.com>

I wrote a book instead of keeping a journal.

After I realized that I had been the victim of narcissistic abuse in my childhood and in my first marriage, I began reading books and watching videos to help me with my recovery. Most of the therapists, counselors and coaches advise that journaling is not only helpful, but almost necessary to recovery.

Well, I decided that writing fictional books and stories would be more helpful to me than going back and journaling my past experiences. As an author I knew that a work of fiction would allow me to express pain, frustration, fear and other things I felt in ways that would help me heal. Stories would not only represent my experiences, but also give voice to the experiences of other people that I have seen and heard. This book is that work of fiction. I continue to write and post shorter tales on my website and blog (www.janetchristy.com).

Janet Christy

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Print ISBN: 978-1-64719-840-4

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-64719-841-1

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2021

First Edition

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Chapter 1:

The Beginning

It was dark and quiet in the large room. The woman in the bed was still and breathing in a slow measured way. There were five people standing about the room. No one was speaking. There was a soft glow from the sconces on the wall, but no other light was in use.

Suddenly the woman on the bed tensed. Everyone in the room became alert and focused on the woman in the bed. The woman held her breath for several heart beats as she felt the contraction in the center of her body. Then as the contraction eased off she relaxed again.

With a slight smile on her lips, the woman softly said, "I told you it was time."

A tall, lean man walked to the bed and leaned down to whisper to the woman, "You did, my love, you did."

The tall man reached for the hand of the woman, but before he could capture it in his, the woman's body tensed again. This time the spasm in the center of her body was stronger and lasted longer. She felt the sharp, clean pain as her body prepared to present her gift to the world.

As soon as the pain subsided enough for her to speak, she emphatically declared, "It is now! Prepare to receive my child."

The tall man raked his hand through his thick crown of dark red hair and reached again for the woman's hand. The other four people in the room moved to various points around the woman. All of them pulled on long gloves as they took their places. A doctor pushed up his sleeves and sat on a stool that had been placed at the foot of the bed. One woman attached a machine to the laboring woman's arm. Two other women moved a cradle on wheels close to the bed.

"It is best, Esther, to turn on the lights," stated the doctor. He knew they needed the light to perform their functions, but he also wanted to clearly see the child that he was about to deliver.

Just as her body tensed again, the woman replied, "It is fine. I want my child to have brightness to welcome her into this world." The last word was

almost lost as the woman shifted her complete focus to the deep pushing in her core.

Very quickly the baby entered the world.

“She is pink and tiny and beautiful,” said the doctor who received the baby from the womb. “And she has flaming hair just as her father has,” he further said as he handed the baby to one of the women.

“Can I hold her?” the mother tiredly asked.

The care giver woman holding the baby answered, “In just a moment. Let me check to be certain her health is as good as it appears.”

The tall man leaned down and kissed the mother on the forehead saying, “Our daughter is here. Our family grows in number and love.”

Moments later the baby girl was placed into the arms of her mother. The doctor asked, “So what do you think, Esther? Is she all you thought she would be?”

The mother smiled, this time broadly, and responded, “Absolutely!” She is all I hoped for.” She looked up at the tall man and questioned, “And what do you think, Caleb? Have you ever seen a more beautiful child than our daughter?”

“Certainly not!” the father enthusiastically responded. The parents looked down at the tiny round face and her father said. “She appears to be glowing. Perhaps it is just that her skin is so fair and her hair is such a dark red. I believe her hair is even darker than mine.”

“Have you chosen a name?” asked one of the care givers.

“Oh, yes,” replied the mother very quickly. “Her name is Arialle”

“It means lion of God,” the father said proudly.

Suddenly the baby opened her eyes and looked at her mother. Everyone gasped.

“Her eyes are gray!” exclaimed one of the women. “I have never seen a baby with gray eyes at birth. Most babies with red hair are born with green or hazel eyes. This is very unusual.”

“But this is a very unusual baby and she will grow into a very special woman” stated the mother.

Arialle closed her eyes again and her mother would later tell others that the baby smiled. She would say that it was a smile of contentment and confidence.

Just then someone opened the door to the room and quietly said to the doctor and other care givers, “Doctor, the other mother requires your attention.”

The doctor said to the new parents, “I must go and bring another baby into the world.”

“Go doctor,” said the new mother, “And may the other parents be as happy as we are with our extraordinary gift.”

The doctor and other care givers left the room and walked down the hall. They entered another room where two other parents prepared for their first born child. This room was full of light and sound. The mother-to-be thrashed about on the bed, shrieking, “Where is the doctor? Get him in here so he can relieve me of this pain and burden!”

“Here I am, Helena,” said the doctor in a quiet voice as he attempted to calm the woman. “Just be calm and we will deliver this little blessing for you.”

“Blessing?” the woman screeched. “This is no blessing! This leech has controlled my body for months. I am done with nurturing it. Please be kind enough to put me to sleep, so that I do not have to suffer through the pain of expelling this child.”

“Please do as she asks,” the father-to-be said to the doctor. “Helena is such a good woman; she should not have to endure this pain any longer.”

The doctor knew the woman commanding him and understood that the best course of action was to follow her direction. He signaled to one of the care givers to administer the sleeping agent. The father-to-be moved away from the bed and sat in a corner, attempting to remove himself from the situation. He had been alone with his wife for several hours and he could not endure any more. He sat in his corner as the care givers administered the sleeping agent and then delivered his child.

When the child had been examined a care giver asked the father if he would like to hold the baby. Before he answered, he looked at his wife. When he saw that she was still sleeping, he held out his arms for the baby. As he held the child, the care giver thought the father’s face was a mixture

of happiness and fear. He kept glancing at his wife as if he wanted to be sure she was still sleeping.

“Have you chosen a name?” the care giver asked.

“She is to be called Ellena,” the new father answered.

“How sweet that she will have a name so like her mother’s,” the care giver said pleasantly.

“Oh, yes,” he replied, “Very sweet. Her mother was adamant that the baby’s name be very close to her name.”

“Really?” said the care giver. “Would you have named the baby after you if it had been a boy?”

“No,” the father answered flatly. “My wife, was determined that if it had been a boy, it would have been named Alvin.” Then the father held out the baby to the care giver saying, “Here take her before my wife awakens.”

The care giver took the baby and laid her in the cradle as the father rose from his chair in the corner.

“When my wife awakens tell her I have gone to get her some pastries and will return very soon,” he whispered as he walked out of the room.

The care giver looked down at the baby in the cradle. The baby’s skin was almost olive in color and she had a slight down of dark hair. She was very different in appearance from her mother who was blonde and fair. The baby’s eyes were tightly closed. Although she was healthy, the baby showed little sign of life beyond her tiny breaths.

“I hope you did not hear the things your mother said,” the care giver whispered to the baby.

The next day both families took home their baby girls. As they left the Center for Health, Esther and Caleb thanked the care givers and accepted compliments and wishes for health and happiness. Helena made certain everyone knew that she had made great sacrifice to deliver her baby. She justified the things she had said by explaining that she had been in extreme pain and was profoundly worried about the baby during labor. No one asked her any questions, but she knew that they would want to understand why a woman of her significance would have succumbed to such emotion. As she

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swept away from the Center for Health she left behind her husband, Gideon, to make complaint about the responsiveness of the care givers to her needs and her discomfort. His instructions were to make it clear that had she received better care the delivery would have gone so much better for Helena and for Ellena.

Chapter 2:

The Early Years

Esther took her responsibility as Arialles's mother very seriously because she saw it as a privilege. She felt this way, not only because motherhood is an honor, but also because Arialles was destined to serve the people of Havenness in an important way. Esther knew this before her daughter was born because the Discernment Maven had told her so.

As Esther sat watching her daughter play with some of her friends in the Center of Communion Gardens she thought about the things that had happened over the last five years.

She remembered how she had encountered the Maven in the market before she even knew she carried a child. The Maven had suddenly appeared at Esther's side as she stood looking at the vegetables at one of the market stands.

"Good day, my Dear," the Maven had said pleasantly.

"Oh," exclaimed Esther as she jumped. She immediately recognized the Maven, but was startled by her sudden appearance. "Good day to you, Maven," she quickly responded. She did not want to seem rude.

The Maven placed her aged wrinkled hand gently on Esther's arm and said, "You are looking very healthy and happy, my dear."

With a gentle laugh, Esther responded, "Thank you, Maven. I feel very healthy and happy."

"And well you should," the Maven continued. "The child you carry is not only your blessing, but will be a blessing to all of Havenness."

Esther almost dropped her basket of vegetables. She struggled to voice her question, "The child I carry?"

The Maven smiled and chuckled at Esther's surprise and confusion. She explained, "I see you were not yet aware that you carry a child."

Esther could only shake her head.

The Maven comfortingly said, “Yes, my dear, you carry a child. But this child is not simply the child of you and your husband. This child will be my successor.”

“Successor?” Esther realized she kept repeating what the Maven was saying, but she could not seem to help herself.

“Absolutely, your child will become the Discernment Maven when my time has ended. When the child is old enough to speak I will begin her instruction. But your job will start from the time she enters this world. You will teach her to love and to have empathy. Learning these things will be vital to her being able to carry out the mission of Discernment Maven.”

Esther was struggling to absorb all that the Maven was telling her. She was afraid the old woman was confused. “Are you certain that my child is the one of whom you speak?”

“Yes, my dear. I am certain. You are about two months into this pregnancy. So, in seven months your child will be born. In about two years you will bring her to me and we will begin the instruction.” The Maven then adjusted her cloak and said, “I must go now, someone requires my assistance. Enjoy your day and this special time while you carry this special child.”

Then the Maven glided away leaving Esther standing at the vegetable stand with a flurry of unanswered question swirling in her mind.

As Arialle was growing in size and maturity, Esther almost daily thought about the things the Discernment Maven had told her. She often saw signs that the Maven was correct, even when Arialle was an infant. As she sat in the Garden she let her mind play over some of the times the signs appeared.

When Arialle was an infant and someone would hold her, she would carefully watch the person’s face as the man or woman talked. She would smile or look puzzled or even seem concerned as the person talked. As she grew, she would sometimes do the same thing even if the person was not talking directly to her or holding her. Esther loved watching her daughter’s face when this happened; it was like watching a pantomime although the expressions did not always match what the person was saying.

Then Esther thought about the first time her daughter had given voice to her expressions. Esther’s sister, Tamar, had been visiting in their home. As Esther and Tamar sat talking, Arialle, who was three years old, sat on the

floor playing with blocks. Esther noticed a look of concern and puzzlement on Arialle's face every time Tamar would talk.

After Tamar left, Arialle came to her mother and asked, "Mum, why is Aunt Tamar sad?"

Esther was puzzled since Tamar had been telling her how excited she was about the work she was doing at the Center for Administration and Assistance. She asked her daughter, "Why do you think Aunt Tamar is sad? She was telling me how happy she is with the work she is doing?"

"She was happy some of the time she was talking," Arialle replied, "But when she talked about that man, she was very sad."

Esther had later found out that Amos Ribasan, Tamar's superior, was doing things that were not appropriate for the work his sector was supposed to do. The sector was supposed to help the citizens of Havenness whose physical limitations hindered them supporting themselves. Amos, however, was taking advantage of those people for his own benefit. Esther still was not clear on the things he did; her sister had a difficult time discussing it. What remained in Esther's mind, though, was that her daughter had known that Tamar was unhappy even though she never said anything about it.

Esther remembered another time when Arialle was four years old. They were at the market and Esther was discussing the quality of some bread with the vendor. The vendor was claiming that the bread was baked that morning. She went to great lengths to tell about mixing the dough the night before and then rising early to bake the bread before the day at the market.

While the vendor was still talking, Arialle pulled on her mother's skirt. Esther looked down at her daughter who beckoned for Esther to lean down. When she leaned down her daughter whispered into her ear, "She is not telling the truth, Mum. The bread was baked two days ago."

Esther then asked the vendor if she could have a sample of the bread to be sure that it was fresh and had the proper taste for the sandwiches she planned to make. The vendor refused, saying that if Esther did not purchase the bread no one else would want to buy a loaf that had been cut. The vendor had acted very offended and finally suggested that Esther might be happier shopping at some other stand.

There was much that was perplexing about the reactions and knowledge her daughter had when Arialle had no way of knowing what was behind or beneath a person's words. Esther reassured herself that things were as they

should be by remembering the words of the Discernment Maven when she had seen her at the market and in the times they had talked since. The Maven had told Esther that every Discernment Maven had their own method of discerning and of delivering the truths they discovered. For the Maven her discernment came when she touched someone. It appeared that Arialie's discernment, and sometimes revelations, came when she heard someone talk.

Just then Arialie ran over to her mother and asked for a piece of chocolate for her and her two friends. Esther took three pieces of chocolate candy from her purse and handed them to Arialie. "Here is a piece for you and one for each your friends," she said as she handed the candy to her daughter.

After thanking her, the child ran back to her friends. Esther loved her daughter more than she had ever thought it possible to love someone who could not do anything in return but love. This love made it easy and fulfilling to teach her daughter to care for others and have the empathy that the Discernment Maven said would be so important to Arialie when she became the Maven.

Esther thought about her role in Arialie's development. Yes, the Maven had told her that she was responsible for teaching Arialie to love and have empathy. Because those are emotions and somewhat intangible to a child, Esther had decided that teaching her daughter to care through example and instruction was the way she could carry out her assignment. Esther thought that caring was the active part of love and empathy.

As Esther heard Arialie call to her, "Mum, watch this!" she realized that it was getting late and it was time to go home and prepare dinner. She called to her daughter and they left the Gardens hand in hand while Arialie told her about all the things she and her friends had pretended to do and be as they played.

During the early years of Arialie's early childhood she and her mother rarely encountered Helena Neemis and her daughter Ellena. Occasionally they saw them in the market, but they never talked. Even though Esther, Caleb and Arialie Dewarin were Anthros as were Helena and her family, they did not do the same things or visit the same places. Anthros were the largest of the Havenness populations, so it was not unusual for families to

not interact, especially before or after their children participated in the Center for Learning.

More changes had occurred in the Neemis family than in the Dewarin family. When Ellena was three, Helena had given birth to another child, a boy she named Alvin, just as her husband had predicted. Alvin was fair complexioned and had blonde hair like his mother's.

A few months after Alvin was born, Ellena had an extremely frightening experience. Although she was only three, almost four, years old, she had already developed a very sharp warning system about her mother's moods and reactions. She was already adept at making herself nearly invisible so that she did not attract her mother's ire. She had already learned not to do certain things in her mother's presence.

On this day, her mother was very fretful. She was preparing dinner while Ellena played with her dolls in the living room and Alvin swung to and fro in the baby swing set up in the kitchen. Ellena heard the back door open and her father's footsteps as he came into the kitchen.

"Good evening, Helena," her father said.

Helena responded, "Thank goodness you are home!" Ellena thought her mother's voice sounded like the cat she had seen cornered by a dog in the neighbor's yard the day before.

"Can I help you prepare dinner?" Ellena heard her father ask her mother.

Before her mother could respond, Alvin began to cry.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Helena. "All I have done today and this whole week is take care of children and cook meals. I do not think you fully appreciate the things that I do and the strength it takes to manage this household!" Helena had stopped her dinner preparation and turned toward Gideon. She pointed her finger at him as she continued, "You are able to go to your work every day and talk with other adults and be recognized for what you do. No one even notices all the things that I do."

Helena was becoming more animated as she continued, "I stay here every day being the perfect wife and mother and no one acknowledges it."

Ellena wanted to go to her room, but she was afraid that if she moved her mother would notice her and target her with some of her irritation. She sat very still, continuing to listen.

“Why are you shouting at me?” Gideon asked her, now raising his own voice. “You are the one who wanted to devote your time to being a wife and mother. You are the one who decided that it was not appropriate for you to work now that we have two children and this large house. You said that being a wife and mother are the highest calling for a woman.”

Helena responded, “Of course, I made the decision to be a devoted wife and mother! However, I did not realize that my efforts would go unnoticed and unappreciated.” Helena had completely forgotten the dinner preparation and was gesturing wildly. “I was at the Center for Communion Gardens this afternoon and none of the other mothers seemed to have time or interest in talking with me. I was telling two of them about all of the baking I had done and how I had completely reorganized our pantry. After only fifteen minutes they suddenly remembered that they had to be somewhere. It is impossible to have friends when people are jealous of one’s abilities and accomplishments. No one understands the sacrifices I have made to create this wonderful home we have.”

Gideon attempted to calm his wife. “I certainly do appreciate all of your skills and efforts, he said. “I do not know how to help you feel better.”

“Well, you can start by finishing the dinner preparation while I see to the needs of my son,” Helena replied as she took Alvin from the swing.

Then Helena said something that made Ellena almost stop breathing.

“There, there, my sweet boy,” Helena said to baby Alvin. “Mother has you now.” Helena continued, “Father is going to finish preparing dinner so I can take care of you.” She walked out of the room continuing to talk sweetly to the baby. “If only you had been born first my little boy, then I would not have had to birth two children. I so wanted a delightful baby boy that would love his mother.” Helena walked through the living room, not even noticing Ellena on the floor with her dolls. She persisted, “Taking care of this huge house and your sister just does not give me enough time to spend with you. I know you will appreciate me unlike your father and your sister and those silly women at the Gardens.”

Ellena continued to sit on the floor clutching her dolls. She could hear her father in the kitchen finishing the dinner preparations. Finally she rose and went into the kitchen.

“There you are, Ellena,” her father said. He did not realize she had been in the living room and heard everything that Helena had said. “How about you set the table for dinner,” he continued.

As Ellena got the plates and flatware from the cabinets her father said to her. “Ellena, you must try harder to be a good daughter. You should thank your mother for the things she does for you and for the delicious meals she prepares for us.”

“Yes, Father,” Ellena responded.

Gideon pushed on, “You have a very dedicated mother and she wants us to see that she is dedicated. You must tell her how much you appreciate having a mother like her.:

“Yes, Father,” Ellena said again.

“If we tell her how wonderful we think she is and how grateful we are to have her, she will be happier. You are the first born, so it is your responsibility to help make your mother happy. Do you understand, Ellena?”

“Yes, Father,” she said for a third time.

In her head Ellena told herself that she must make her mother feel happy or her mother might not want to be her mother anymore. As her father walked by Ellena, he patted her on the head as if to say he was sorry about the way things were. Ellena wondered why her father’s head pat did not make her feel any better.

When Arialle and Ellena were six years old they began their studies at the Center for Learning. Both girls were placed in the class of Rebecca Morthison. Rebecca was a revered teacher who wanted to see all of her students learn much and grow in mind and spirit. All of her students called her Ma’am Rebecca. The teacher was not much taller than her students; she often jested that she saw the world from the same level as her students. She had long brown hair that she attempted to keep in a tidy bun on top of her head. She had large brown eyes that some students said could see right into their souls. It was pretty close to impossible to trick or mislead Ma’am Rebecca. Most of her students loved her as did the majority of the parents. Occasionally there would be a parent that attempted to steer or strongly

influence Rebecca; Helena Neemis was one of those parents. Helena's attempts began the first day of school.

Most of the students had assembled in Rebecca's classroom when Helena swept into the room with Ellena. Helena rarely took her daughter by the hand, nevertheless, Ellen followed close behind as if her mother had a tether attached to her.

The mother and daughter pair entered just five minutes before class was to start. Helena went straight to the teacher and held out her hand. At first Rebecca thought Helena was extending her hand in order to shake hands with her. Very quickly though it was obvious that Helena's extended arm was a gesture meant to punctuate her words.

"Good morning, Ma'am Rebecca. My name is Helena Neemis," she paused as if waiting for Rebecca to acknowledge the presence of a person of note.

Rebecca slightly bowed her head; this was not her first encounter with a parent who wanted to establish his or her importance from the beginning. She accompanied her head bow with a pleasant, "It is very nice to meet you."

Helena stepped to the side and gestured again, this time toward Ellena. "This is my daughter, Ellena. She will be in your class."

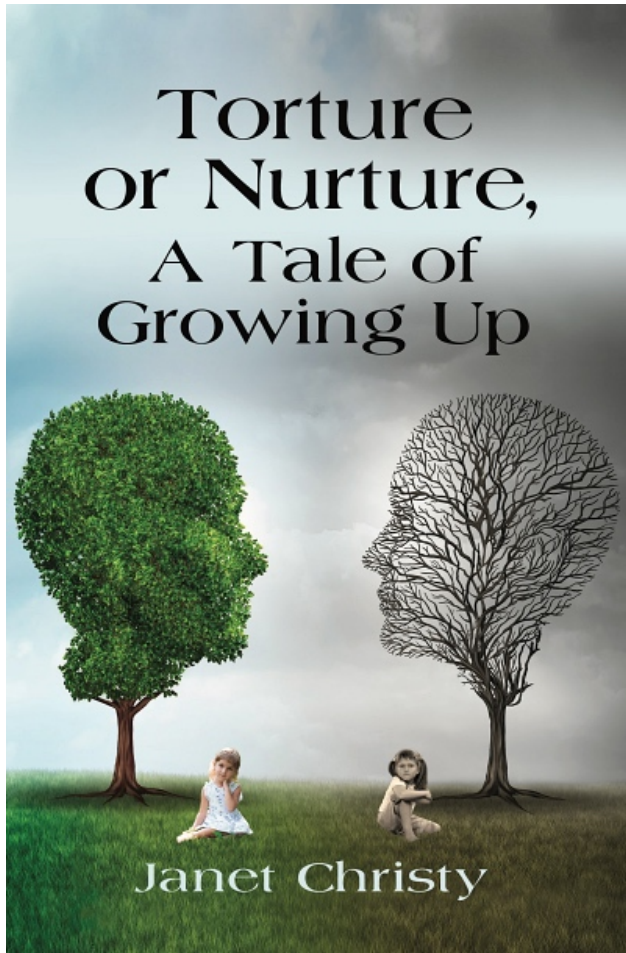
Rebecca stepped forward and held out her hand to the girl who looked shy and scared. "Hello, Ellena."

"Hello, Ma'am Rebecca," Ellena said in a near whisper as she took the teacher's hand.

"Welcome to the Center for Learning and my classroom," continued Rebecca. "Please join the other children and we will begin class in a minute or two."

Ellena looked up at Helena who said, "Go on, girl. I want to speak to Ma'am Rebecca."

As Ellena walked over to the other students, Helena began her onslaught of Rebecca, "As you can see Ellena is very shy. Unfortunately she seems to take after her father when it comes to confidence and personality, both are much too quiet." Helena obviously wanted Rebecca to know that her personality was not quiet. She persisted, "However, Ellena is bright and learns very quickly. In that she is like me. You will have to be very



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