



After sexual assaults in my teens, I began a two-decades-long fall into a dark world of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse; due to untreated PTSD. I share going through the process of reclaiming each precious, broken piece of myself.

When Birds Sing: My Journey from Trauma to Triumph
By Arielle Spring

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12565.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

When Birds Sing

My Journey
From Trauma
To Triumph



ARIELLE SPRING

“What I love about this amazing journey is how relatable Arielle describes her experiences. From a little girl growing up through her teens and beyond, Arielle brings you on a desperate journey of mental, emotional and physical abuse taking her to the precipice of death. The practical application of PTSD to the story, her interaction with family and ultimate emergence from this despair strikes a perfect tone. Experience her re-setting of self, great awakening and reckoning with her Savior. Arielle’s story reminds us of the heartbreaking reality of how many girls and women are having similar experiences everyday - everywhere. A must-read for parents and anyone on the receiving end of abuse. Arielle’s story will deeply impact anyone who reads it. Life changing.”

— Terrence D. Delehanty, former General
Counsel of NCCI, Inc.; served on multiple boards protecting the rights of
abused children

“Arielle Spring courageously shares her journey through life altering trauma that was left untreated for years. Arielle inspires readers, with her captivating and enlightening story of breaking through the darkness, to discover their own path to physical, spiritual, mental and emotional wellness and healthy self-empowerment.”

— Lynn Migyanko, Executive Director/Owner
Empowered Path Wellness LLC

“Most of the time we avoid talking about traumatic experiences in our lives. We do not tell our stories and compartmentalize our pain. This limits us as individuals and in our ability to connect with others. In this book we are invited into stories of trauma and pain. The author’s journey has not been an easy one, yet there is a thread of hope and faith that is remarkable and inspiring. Perhaps in reading this book you will be empowered to share your own story of trauma and see possibilities of hope and healing beyond heartbreak and pain. I recommend this book to all who have experienced trauma or know someone who has.”

— The Rev. Dr. G. Mark Griffith

Arielle Spring

“This is a special sharing that shows the dark side of humanity and the trauma it creates. It is a long journey that rises from pain, sorrow, and confusion—and ultimately to a new hope. One might use this offering as a metaphor for one’s own inner struggle with darkness. Perhaps some part of this story will give others hope for a new direction to emerge in their life. However you read it, you will experience the courage and evolution of the author as she creates her own happy ending. Not a Fairy Tale ending, but one of triumph and emancipation. And for the author the end is the beginning. A new day of never ending light.”

— Ernest Brown, Ph. D
School Based Family and Adolescent Psychologist San Francisco, California

Copyright © 2022 Arielle Spring.

Paperback ISBN: 979-8-88531-332-2

Hardcover ISBN: 979-8-88531-333-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

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

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2022

First Edition

DISCLAIMER

This book details the author's personal experiences with and opinions about sexual assault, trauma, domestic abuse, and post traumatic stress disorder . The author is not a licensed therapist.

The author and publisher are providing this book and its contents on an "as is" basis and make no representations or warranties of any kind with respect to this book or its contents. The author and publisher disclaim all such representations and warranties, including for example warranties of merchantability and therapeutic advice for a particular purpose. In addition, the author and publisher do not represent or warrant that the information accessible via this book is accurate, complete or current.

The statements made about products and services have not been evaluated by the U.S. government. Please consult with your own legal, accounting, medical, or other licensed professional regarding the suggestions and recommendations made in this book.

Except as specifically stated in this book, neither the author or publisher, nor any authors, contributors, or other representatives will be liable for damages arising out of or in connection with the use of this book. This is a comprehensive limitation of liability that applies to all damages of any kind, including (without limitation) compensatory; direct, indirect or consequential damages; loss of data, income or profit; loss of or damage to property and claims of third parties.

You understand that this book is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a licensed medical, legal or accounting professional. Before you begin any change to your lifestyle in any way, you will consult a licensed professional to ensure that you are doing what's best for your situation.

Arielle Spring

This book provides content related to sexual assault, trauma, domestic abuse, and post traumatic stress disorder topics. As such, use of this book implies your acceptance of this disclaimer.

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Beginnings and Foundations	3
Chapter 2 Development	9
Chapter 3 Innocence	13
Chapter 4 Perfect Storm	21
Chapter 5 Aftermath	31
Chapter 6 Searching	39
Chapter 7 Interlude	45
Chapter 8 Dancing with the Devil	49
Chapter 9 Drifting	67
Chapter 10 Oasis	75
Chapter 11 Abyss	79
Chapter 12 The Joker	87
Chapter 13 Homeless	93
Chapter 14 Revisiting the Joker	97
Chapter 15 Running Scared	101
Chapter 16 Ray of Light	119
Chapter 17 Bumpy Ride	125
Chapter 18 Trudging Uphill	131
Chapter 19 Falling in Love (with Myself)	139
Chapter 20 Ascension	141
Chapter 21 Going Deeper	145
About the Author	149



Chapter 4

Perfect Storm

I began a work co-op program and took a job at a Merle Norman studio that was run by a wonderful woman named Mrs. Culpert. The skin-care studio was in her home. I was learning everything from everyday skincare to specially applied facials plus make-up application and learning it quite rapidly. This line of work came quite naturally for me. I was given more and more responsibilities as I showed my abilities went beyond makeup application and skin care.

Mrs. Culpert had entrusted balancing the books to me as well. I was very personable with the clients; therefore, I was bringing in more business. Mrs. Culpert's husband, Burt, seemed like a nice man. They had a daughter, Melody, and he seemed very attentive to her and called her his princess. As the weeks went by, he began calling me his princess also. A tiny red flag alerted my mind that this was strange and not right. Our family was not friends with their family. It seemed out of place for him to call me such an endearing name he had bestowed upon his only daughter. He began being overly friendly with hugs, as well.

One day my boss informed me that she had to go into the hospital for gall bladder surgery. She appointed me in charge of the studio in her absence. I felt trusted and flattered that she believed I could handle the day-to-day operations of her business. She instructed me that, if business was slow, I could watch my soap operas in the living room.

One day when the area was experiencing a heat wave, with temperatures in the high 90s, no one was scheduled for an appointment and there were no walk-ins. I decided to watch my favorite soap in the living room. I was wearing my

white uniform with cute-as-can-be shoes and nylons on my legs when Mr. Culpert appeared in the room and promptly plopped himself down across from me. I was feeling annoyed that he had invited himself in the living room as he had always stayed on the screened in porch up until that point.

He immediately interrupted my show and started interrogating me. "Have you been on any dates yet?" he forcefully prodded.

"Yes, a few," I sheepishly replied.

"What do you let them do on the dates?" he questioned.

Alarm bells immediately began ringing in my head, as I knew this was an inappropriate question. Before I could get up or get any words out of my mouth, he appeared in front of me and was hovering above me. Then, the unspeakable happened. He shoved his hand up my leg until it hit my crotch.

At that point, I made a defense move by grabbing his hand that was on my crotch and latching on as tight as I could. "What do you think you are doing, Mr. Culpert?" I shouted. "Let go of me!" But his hand continued to grab my crotch.

Because he hadn't tried anything else, I had confidence that, if I just stood my ground by continuing to stay locked on his hand, he would eventually let go. We were in a power struggle, and I was determined that I would *keep my power*. I was proving that I was empowered and confident. Silence... *tick-tock, tick-tock*. It seemed like an eternity that he had his hand firmly placed on my most vulnerable body part.

Finally, he let go. I immediately bolted for the front door and ran into the front yard. There I began pacing in the blazing sun. I didn't want to just walk away as my purse was inside and I was also feeling a responsibility toward my boss to not leave the studio unattended.

Then he poked his head out of the door and said, "What do I have to do to get you to come back inside?" He never said he was sorry.

"Stand clear of the door!" I exclaimed. There was a telephone in the foyer. "I am going to call my mother," I barked.

I called her and told her I wasn't feeling well and that she needed to come pick me up at once. I gathered my belongings and waited in the front yard for her to arrive. As I stood there waiting for her, I felt devastated by Mr. Culpert's assault and betrayal. I also thought about how I could never tell his wife, my boss, about this incident. I wanted to protect her from his betrayal. Beyond that, I was nervous to speak to my parents about this horrific event. I had a history of not being able to share with them how I felt or what I needed. I felt somewhat closer to my mom, so I planned that I would tell her after dinner,

alone, as I did not want much time to pass before exposing what Mr. Culpert had done to me.

As I planned, I tried to eat some dinner and then told my mom that I needed to speak with her alone. I proceeded to tell her of my horrific afternoon and what Mr. Culpert had done.

“Please, do not tell Dad,” I begged.

I no sooner got the words out of my mouth than she yelled, “Honey, come in here!” And she told him my secret.

Dad decided that we would all ride over there and he would have a talk with Mr. Culpert. When we arrived, he parked the car in the driveway and instructed us to wait in the car while he went inside. After a while, Dad came out and informed me that Mr. Culpert had *promised* him that he would never do anything like that ever again and *promised* that he would stay on the screened-in porch for the rest of the time I would be running the studio alone. I was not informed as to what Mr. Culpert told my dad he did to me, however.

How could my dad take this man at his word after he violated me? I cried inside. Dad then instructed me to return to work as usual the next day. My mother stood in unity with him. I was in disbelief. This did not seem right. It seemed like they were placing me in danger by telling me to go back. How did they trust this virtual stranger over me? I was reeling from their command. I felt terrified to go back to the studio because Mr. Culpert would be there. But I was not able to express this terror to my parents because I was taught to do what I was told.

After a few days, I fell into a state of paranoia. I was talking on the phone to my best friend, Andrea, about the entire incident when I heard a click on the line.

“Oh, my God, Andrea, did you hear that?” I whispered to her. “I think that *he* was on the line and heard *everything* I just said to you!”

She tried to calm me down, but it was to no avail—my heart was pounding with anxiety.

As the days went by, I began to think that he was going to kill me because I had told someone about what he had done. I made my lunch in the kitchen, which was located right next to the screened-in porch where he would sequester himself while I was at work, but I was so scared he would accost me again that I didn’t do the dishes. After two weeks of this behavior, the dishes had piled up in the sink. I went into the kitchen and, much to my horror and humiliation, I saw mouse droppings everywhere on the counters. I confided in my mom about the situation, and she came and helped me clean up the mess. I felt so buoyed by her support. Unfortunately, her loving gesture did not stop my paranoia, and

I eventually broke out of the “good daughter” mode, walked home, and let my parents know that I could not and would not go back there ever again.

I was a walking, ticking time bomb because I was unable to confide in my parents. I thought I had handled Mr. Culpert with maturity, but when they made me go back into the environment with him, I began to doubt my decision-making abilities. Plus, they appeared to be distant from each other and me. The fact that my best friends were off at another school and my parents were distant led to my losing my confidence, focus, and motivation.

I needed to know that I was seen, heard, and that I mattered to my parents, friends, teachers, etc., but there was no one doing that for me in my life. To seek those things, I began running away from home. The first two times I ran away were short stints of less than a day, but the third time I ran away from home, I thought that I needed to leave. Somehow, I heard of a house where a bunch of kids were staying, so I went there and gained entrance immediately. However, the scuttlebutt in the house was that one of the girls staying there was wanted for murder. The group of kids who had approved my admittance told me that she did not like me.

We had only met once, but that was apparently enough for her to form an opinion of me. It seemed that I was a pretty girl, and that threatened her. She did not want another pretty hen in the henhouse. The group feared for my safety because this girl was dangerous. So, to keep me safe, they built a little room for me underneath the stairs so that I could essentially hide from her. The thought was that I would be out of sight and therefore out of mind. But I was not thinking clearly (obviously) and I impulsively went out for a walk with a boy around three o'clock in the morning.

Little did I realize that an all-points bulletin had been issued for me. Red lights began flashing, and the next thing I knew, I was placed in the police car and taken back to my home. The police came in and sat with my parents. I was told that if I ran away one more time, I would go to jail. I presume that they thought this scare tactic would be effective. But I felt alone, misunderstood, and rejected.

Not only did I feel alone, misunderstood, and unsupported by my parents, but the environment at home seemed to be putting a lot of stress on me. I did not know if my parents were having problems in their relationship, but I realized that they were not available for me to turn to for counsel.

Without proper guidance from my parents or a counselor, I turned to a boy for love, validation, and a sense of identity. His name was Leonard. He was known around school as a greaser. He slicked his dark, straight hair back and

When Birds Sing

would not be caught dead without his black leather jacket. He was basically the antithesis of what I wanted in a boyfriend. He was on the fringe of the crowd at school, an outcast. I, on the other hand, was working at sixteen years old. I was beautiful, stylish, smart, and funny. I was very involved in many clubs at school—student council, debate, choir. I was even nominated for homecoming queen.

A few weeks into the relationship, it became apparent to me that he wanted one and only one thing from me—to take my virginity. If only I could have stepped outside of myself and seen my self-worth and beauty. But I could not. I was searching for attention, love, and caring. I chose someone with whom I had virtually nothing in common and simply used the relationship to escape my life. I did not understand the reason I felt compelled, really compelled to be in a relationship.

He was nice enough about taking my virginity. He arranged to use an apartment of a cousin or someone and had it all set up with candles and flowers for the big night. After six months, I assume he tired of me and thus broke up with me. Being rejected by him was a blow to my self-esteem.

Even though my confidence and self-esteem had taken a huge hit, I continued to study classical piano. But I felt an emptiness inside. One day the phone rang, and it was this guy, who was the older brother of my next-door neighbor's boyfriend. This was a surprise to me, as I really did not know him.

“How did he get my phone number,” I asked myself. “He’s kind of scary,” I thought to myself.

I had heard negative things about him but, due to my low self-worth and self-esteem, I was somehow flattered that he called to ask me out. *What could one date hurt?* I told myself as I grappled with the decision. My level-headedness told me to say no, but my emotional state told me to go with him—and I said yes.

By this time, my parents did not show much of an interest in what I was doing. I also had extreme difficulty talking to my mom, so I did not tell her about the date. It seemed that I could come and go as I pleased.

Looking like a Breck shampoo ad with my green eyes and long, honey-blond hair and smelling like delightful fresh snow, I approached his car. He did not get out to open the door for me, which felt ungentlemanly, so I opened the door myself. As I got into the car, a chill beyond words shot through me. He seemed like he was mad or in a bad mood. *Just tell him you don't feel well and get out!* a voice inside my head was shouting. But I dismissed this wise and powerful voice and stayed. He drove to pick up a boy from our class. I thought this was

odd but said nothing. Then, he drove to pick up yet another boy, who was in the class behind us. This was not what he had told me was going to happen. I was led to believe that he and I were going on a date.

What is going on? I screamed inside my head. I began to freak out and feel terrified but kept it all inside. He drove us all out onto a desolate dirt road. *What should I do? How can I escape? What horrible thing is about to happen?* I began to ask myself. As he began driving me out onto that deserted road, that was the moment I began to completely leave my body and was hovering over myself. I became like an animal who was hiding from its predator so that I would not be killed.

I was then told to get into the back seat. I did as I was told as I feared for my life. One by one, they each had sexual intercourse with me. Why was I not screaming, kicking, and clawing my way out of there? Why was I not cursing and spitting and biting and saying “No! No! No!” I didn’t realize it at the time, but I did the *exact right* thing to save my life. If I had fought, any one of those guys might easily have strangled me to quiet me, and those two other *cowards* would have stood by and done nothing to help me. As I got up the next day, I thought that it was all my fault. I did not understand what I was beginning to feel about myself and began acting quite erratically.

I sought out each one of the boys involved and waited for them after their classes. To each one I blurted out “I am so sorry” as they stood looking at me through blank eyes. This part of me, who criticized myself endlessly and told myself I never did anything perfectly enough, led me to offer this pitiful apology. I had just heaped a mountain of burden upon my shoulders that would be such a heavy weight for my tiny body to endure. Shortly after this horrific event took place, I was nominated for homecoming queen. *How dare they!* I thought. I tore up the petition. I was not worthy of such a title. I never confided in a single person about that tragic night. I now felt completely alone. However, I did have some company. My new companions were shame, guilt, and despair.

A volcano, of sorts, was rumbling inside of me. Had I been able to look into a crystal ball, I would have seen myself standing on the edge of a precipice of decades of free-falling into dark and dangerous places and life situations. Upon further observation into this crystal ball, I would see myself void of feelings, except anger and rage. These emotions blindly moved me in a forward motion. I was running scared, but my self-pride kept me going and my strong French and German stock kept me alive. However, the trauma would begin to lead me now—to a newly carved path—a dark and lonely path of shame, self-

When Birds Sing

loathing, and looking for redemption. I was searching for that sweet, trusting, naïve girl that was buried alive that night.

Time marched on over my junior and senior years of high school. There was a chasm between me and my parents. My mom seemed very distant, and my dad seemed very angry. I was on a path of destruction. I smoked pot and drank alcohol at parties. I imagine that my parents felt helpless and scared for me, but they were unable to express those feelings to me. What I did receive from them was judgment and disdain. I was desperate for their approval, so this left me feeling lost and alone.

I dealt with all this chaos by meeting another boy, Nicholas. We began dating right away. He was into sex, drugs, and rock and roll. He was a ‘bad boy’ and came from the neighboring large city. So, I thought that I would look cooler to my classmates if I was dating this mysterious guy from another school and city. He was not a good influence on me whatsoever. My decision-making abilities were not improving.

When we would go out on dates, he would try to ply me with drugs. His drug of choice was downers, which he would force me to take. What he was unaware of was that I would hold them in my cheek, and when he was not looking, I would throw them out the window. One time we went to an outdoor Chuck Berry concert. When we arrived, Nicholas saw a vat of “Kool-Aid” in the middle of the area. He walked over, poured two glasses, and handed me one. I drank a little bit of it. Shortly afterward, we had to sit down, as we started to feel very poorly. We could not even make it inside to sit in a chair—we just sat down on the ground. Then, we both had to go into a prone position. Not only did we have to lie down, but we could also not move. A very popular drug at the time was a type of animal tranquilizer, and I suspected later that animal tranquilizers had been put in the drink.

We were immobilized completely. Finally, after roughly three hours, we began to rally each other to get on our feet. It took all our strength and each helping the other to get up off the ground. No one came to our assistance the entire time. We made it inside the venue and sat on the stage, as we were still very weak, and we could hear Chuck Berry singing outside to the large crowd. Someone gave us cups of water. Nicholas and I finally made it to his car, and he drove me home. I never went to the hospital or doctor and never told my parents of this very scary event.

A week or so after the concert, where I laid on the ground for three hours unable to move, I was still not feeling my best. Of course, my parents knew nothing about my near-death experience. One afternoon, my mom called me

into her bedroom. She was angry with me about something, but that was nothing new as it seemed she was in a perpetual state of being angry toward me. I stood there enduring her yelling loudly at me for the umpteenth time, but this time she had gotten too close. She moved into my personal space. I was desperate to get her out of my space and didn't feel that enduring such treatment was part of my duties as a daughter. I grabbed her by both shoulders and guided her down onto the bed.

"Mom, PLEASE, I can hear you – PLEASE STOP yelling at me – you are ALWAYS yelling at me," I exclaimed.

The next thing I remember was my dad calling my name. Apparently, he had been eavesdropping at the bottom of the stairs of our two-story home, listening to our argument, and he decided to intervene.

BAM, I felt the blow of my own Dad's fist right on my mouth. I crumpled to the floor from his punch to my face. This was the ultimate betrayal. I sprang up from adrenaline and ran out of the room. My shock and disbelief soon turned to *rage*.

As I entered my bedroom, I screamed, "Look what you have done! I hate you!"

I spewed a mouthful of blood out onto my huge wall mirror to pronounce my heartbreak and betrayal. The blood sprayed in all directions, covering the giant mirror. If only I had had the courage to call the police to let them know of this abuse. But all I could think about was how I was ever going to face going to school with a huge fat lip or let my boyfriend see me.

I thought, "*What have I ever done to warrant this brutality from my own father?*"

I felt devastated in my heart. The man who was put on this earth to protect me had just assaulted me violently. I was tried and condemned without ever being able to have a voice in the matter. I started to believe that I and my opinions did not matter in my family or in the world.

The next day, I called Nicholas and told him that I needed to see him that evening. He agreed and asked me to drive to his parent's house, where he lived. As I walked into his home, I was hoping to receive consolation and support, but instead, without even so much as a mention about my battered face, he notified me that he was breaking up with me. When I asked him if he noticed my injuries, he told me I would be just fine. I felt crushed that I not only did not receive condolences for my swollen and bruised mouth and broken heart but also that he had the cold-heartedness to break up with me at that moment.

When Birds Sing

“What a cold-hearted bastard”, I said to myself. A voice inside my head screamed out, “You always knew he was an SOB.” Hatred and disdain toward men was building inside me. I felt dejected and disgusted, but also tiny and lost.

One day, the phone rang, and everything went into slow motion as I heard the caller inform me that my beloved mentor and piano teacher had suffered a fatal heart attack. I had only gotten started on my path to becoming a concert pianist. How could fate be so cruel to me? I felt even more alone and devastated as he had been teaching me more than classical piano—he was teaching me to believe in myself.

He was teaching me not only to believe in my talents and gifts but to become in touch with my capabilities in all ways. He wanted me to shine as the bright star that Jesus had intended me to be. If only my parents had sat me down and asked me what I needed to heal from this horrible loss. But no one asked what I needed and, sadly, I was unable to express my feelings or needs to my parents.

My journey to become a concert pianist ended, but it was so much more than that. The wounds of the assault by my boss’s husband and then the horrific sexual assault were open and festering inside of me. I looked fine from the outside, but inside, I was deteriorating at a time I should have been blossoming and launching into the world.



Chapter 11

Abyss

Upon my return to the area I was living, I was feeling numb from the information that I had received on my trip. I moved into a place on a canal near a causeway and soon met a guy named Jay. He had left a lucrative position at a university to pursue an acting career in the big city. As our relationship progressed, we began talking about pursuing acting together, and he convinced me to do strip-o-grams. Jay felt this was a great steppingstone to acting and somehow, I bought his drivel. I guess because I judged him by his credentials and not the character, he was presenting to me.

The job entailed going to a function such as a business meeting, birthday party, and so on, where I would dance to music and take off articles of clothing. By the end, I would end up in just my panties. Jay reassured me, ad nauseum, that he would also do it. He promised that I would not be alone and that we would go on the jobs together as a team. He again reiterated that it would build our confidence to pursue our acting careers. I had wanted to be an actress since I was seven years old, so I let myself buy into the notion that doing strip-o-grams would be a stepping- stone into acting.

When it came time to do the “acting chops job,” I demonstrated a wonderful work ethic by going out on many calls, but Jay always had an excuse not to go. One time, the job assignment was to perform at a birthday party, so I drove to the address in the middle of nowhere by myself, as Jay now was no longer coming along with me either. So much for the team we were supposed to have. The party was in a teeny-tiny house filled with people who spoke only Spanish. It was so crowded that it was all I could do not to have a full-blown

panic attack. But I kept my commitment by performing all three numbers that were required by the company. When I finally left, I got into my car, but the engine only made an *er-e-r-er* sound. The battery was dead. Beads of sweat broke out all over my body as panic began to set in. As I turned, I saw a guy approaching my car.

“Hi,” he said in English, “it looks like you need some help?” “Oh, *yes*, I do,” I blurted.

Fortunately, he had jumper cables and began attaching them to my battery immediately. *Vroom*—ahhh, the sound of a functioning engine once again. As I drove off, I gave a wink of thanks to the unknown helper. Once again, my guardian angel was there protecting me from what could have been serious harm, such as rape or even death.

One day I was called to go to a business to perform at a big executive meeting. When I arrived, I realized that I had worked there previously as an admin doing temp work in the office. Now I was headed to the boardroom with my boom box in hand. I felt very nervous, wondering if the guy I had worked for would be in the room. When I entered the room, I spotted him right away, but as they say, the show must go on. So, I began my routine. During the middle of my second number, I saw him get up from his seat with what I imagined was a disgusted look on his face. With all my strength and courage, I finished the performance and ran to my car with tears streaming down my face.

I went back to my tiny bedroom in a lady’s apartment on the causeway that day and quit the strip-o-gram job. I began to see that Jay was not who he claimed to be and ended it with him as well. I had a little momentum going, but the panic of not having any money to pay the rent or even buy food was setting in.

Out of sheer desperation, I got the idea that maybe I should try nude dancing. When you’re next to homeless, the lure of these so-called fast-money-making jobs is strong. The job was far away, and as I drove there, I thought that I could make enough money quickly to get out of the jam I was in, get an apartment of my own, and get on my feet. Finally, I had arrived, and they called my name to go up on stage. The music began, and I started the first dance with my top and bottoms on—no problem. I got into the rhythm easily. The second song was with just bottoms. I could still find the rhythm but was getting nervous. Then, for the third song, I was nude. I just stood there, unable to dance because I could NOT find a rhythm because I felt so ashamed and humiliated. My numbers were finally over, and I did as instructed I took a seat. I noticed this cute guy walking over near me.

When Birds Sing

He plopped down in the seat next to me, slipped me a one-hundred-dollar bill, and asked me, “What is a nice girl doing in a place like this?” I mumbled, “I don’t know,” and he asked if he could take me out to dinner. Even though I had never seen him in my life, I agreed to go to dinner with him.

After that first date, I never went back to the nude dancing club and began dating him. About five months into our relationship, I realized that he was running a huge drug ring in the northeast portion of the country. That explained how he was able to give me a monthly allowance, but I did not understand why he did not want to have sexual relations with me. It all became clear one night when he got us a beautiful hotel suite, and he spent the entire evening in the bathroom.

I could not imagine what he was doing, but then it dawned on me—he had gotten hooked on the drugs he had people selling for him. He was a cocaine addict. Even though I knew this, I let him talk me into going over to his townhome. He had never taken me to his home before, so I thought it might be a positive step. After we visited for a while, he locked me in the bedroom, telling me he had to meet with one of his local dealers. My heart was pounding as I knew this was going in a bad direction. I called someone while locked in the bedroom even though he had specifically told me not to use the phone. He overheard me and came bursting into the room quite angrily.

“Get off the goddamned phone *now!* Who told you it was okay to make a call?” he screamed.

While he was still yelling at me, he began searching frantically in the upper part of his huge closet. *Maybe he’s looking for a gun*, I thought, even though I had seen this behavior previously when he was high on cocaine. The voice inside my head continued: *Don’t wait to find out what he is looking for. You’ve got to get out of here ASAP. Just grab your purse and shoes and make a run for it!*

The voice was now screaming inside my head, “Please! Please, Lord Jesus! Please let me just make it to my car alive!” I ran barefoot as fast as I could through the rocky parking lot. I jumped in my car and drove away as my heart was beating out of my chest. “Thank you, Jesus! Thank you!” I cried. My life was spared once again!

As I scrambled to find my place in the world and looked in all the wrong places and eyes for love, I made worse and worse choices, which led me to living a life of death threats, violent attacks, venereal diseases, malnutrition from lack of food, drunken blackouts, and eventually homelessness.

By the grace of God, my legion of angels and Jesus, I was able to get a studio apartment three blocks from the ocean in a now infamous area. My

neighbors were a crack house and a famous seafood restaurant. It was the early days of gentrification in the area, hence the juxtaposition of my neighbors. I could only walk south to get to the beach because, if I walked north, I would run into very unsavory types.

One day I ventured north anyway. As I walked, I could tell that someone was following me. I picked up my pace, and so did he. I started to break into a sweat, but then I saw a police car. I ran toward it. The officers just sat there without rolling down the window, so I knocked on it.

Finally, they opened the window and asked, "What seems to be the problem?" I told them that I was being followed, but the blank looks on their faces did not change.

As shivers went down my spine, I flashed back to when Donovan and I had been pulled over that fateful night when he had slugged me at close range in the vehicle and broken my nose and police officers had tried to place me in a straitjacket. I would often have these flashbacks of trauma and had no idea why. After what seemed like an eternity, they told me to get in and drove me back to my apartment building. They were a real friendly and helpful bunch.

Things were going along quite nicely, but I didn't realize that it was because there was no one in my life. I was living in my own values and beliefs. I loved my studio as it provided me the luxury of walking just three blocks to get to the most amazing beach. I was an avid beach walker, as it provided solace and calming. I was a pretty much a vegan, eating only fruits and vegetables, but occasionally I did see the need to eat fish or chicken.

I was doing a modeling gig when I met Paul. We hit it off right away. I learned that he was smart and cute through our conversations over the next few weeks, and he had a good job doing contract work as a computer programmer. When he told me he was in between apartments (that should have been a clue that he was not stable), I asked him to move into my studio apartment with me. I was continuing to search for love. Over the next few months, our love life became lackluster. Then, he started going on out-of-town computer programming contract jobs; however, he would send money back to me, so I thought that we still had a relationship. One time when he came back, he took me on a lavish shopping spree the likes of which I had never experienced. In the back of my mind was this nagging thought that he couldn't have made all this money from computer programming. But that is where it stayed, in the back of my mind. For that one day, I felt like a princess, and we had the most fun shopping for hours and hours.

When Birds Sing

But that loving feeling soon shattered when one day, after returning from errands, I walked into my studio and found Paul kissing my friend, Maggie. I felt betrayed beyond belief by them. I let that be the last straw in a series of bizarre incidents to fuel me into asking him to move out. He claimed to love me and refused to leave.

“Am I going to have to call the police, Paul? because I am not going to back down. I want you out of my studio and out of my life!” I snapped. “Well, I guess you are going to have to call the damn police because I am not leaving!” he barked, as he dug his heels in.

I immediately stepped into my power and called the police. This time, unlike so many other times in the past, the police officers who arrived were respectful to me and escorted him out of the apartment without hesitation. A month or so went by, and I wanted to go dancing, which I enjoyed immensely. I had heard of a cool club, which was about thirty miles away. I made up my mind that I was going there by myself. I was running away from myself. If only I could have applied this determination to become independent and love myself.

I wore some cool, torn, bright green jeans and had \$240 in cash in my pocket. I thought it would be safer to not take a purse. I danced and danced and danced until I was worn out and needed to use the restroom. I checked my pants pocket and, lo and behold, the cash was gone. I asked people to search the club. After what seemed like an eternity of searching, I had to accept the fact that, most likely, someone had found my money and absconded with it. Why couldn't I go out and have some fun without having this kind of bad luck, I asked God.

As I was getting ready to leave, this gorgeous couple stopped me and asked if I would like to go home with them. After taking a moment to think about it and wondering if they could make my money woes go away, I played out, in my mind, the possibilities of what could happen to me. It was not a pretty picture.

When I was pulling into my parking space on the street in South Beach, a car quickly pulled up right beside me and stopped. It was about 2:00 in the morning, and I was stunned. I looked over and saw a man sitting there just staring at me.

Suddenly, a wave of belligerence came over me, and I found myself saying, “You son of a bitch! You can sit there for as long as you like. I will not move, and I *most certainly will not* get out of my car!”

After, what seemed like an eternity, he finally pulled away. I cautiously waited until his car was out of sight and then bolted up the stairs to my door.

Whew! I fell to my knees in gratitude once I was safely inside. I locked the door and breathed a sigh of relief. My life had been spared once again. One day, I was going to an appointment in a place I had not been to before, and I ended up in a dangerous neighborhood. I had been told time and time again *not to ever* go there because I would not come out alive. Now, I was *lost* inside the walls of this hell hole, it was ninety-five degrees with 95 percent humidity, and I had no air conditioning in my car. But I rolled up the windows tightly and immediately began sweating profusely. I began to pray and pray for God to *please* help me find my way out of there in one piece. I didn't care that I was so hot because I knew I needed to stay safe. If only I could have used that insight with relationships. Then God answered my prayer, and I found my way to familiar surroundings. Just like the dozens of other times, angels had come to my assistance, guiding me to safety.

Having met a tall, dark, and handsome guy after being single for a month or so, I now was finding myself in yet another dangerous situation. I cherished my studio three blocks from the ocean. I dreamed of earning enough money to buy it, but that was only a dream, but my lifestyle had now taken me to a motel nestled in a residential area six blocks away from my studio. I was staying there because the wife of the tall, dark and handsome guy, was parked outside my apartment.

My phone rang one night, and once I answered, I heard, "I am outside, and you are not leaving there alive, bitch. We will *kill you!*" Then dial tone. *Oh, my God, what have I gotten myself into this time?* My brain was scrambled, and I began pacing. No one was going to bail me out of this situation—certainly not Django! He was nowhere to be found. This was beyond anything I had encountered thus far. I was aware that he lived with someone, but he had said they had "an understanding."

Well, *he* may have had an understanding, but in gypsy culture, living with someone means that you are married. I took her threats very seriously. I paced and paced till the wee hours of the morning. Then, I peered out and saw that her car was gone. *She must have finally had to go back home,* I thought, since she had been there for several nights. I threw my belongings in my car and made a break for the motel. I checked into the motel under a false name. I stayed there for around six weeks and let Django come visit me there. After one visit, I came to my senses and realized that it was too dangerous to continue to see him, so I called it off.

While holed up in the motel, I saw an ad in the local paper for the most adorable tree house for rent for only six weeks and set my sights to, somehow,

get it. How would I pay for it? I had no job. I loved going to the natural food market, and it was there that I met a guy and began working to intrigue him. I strung him along for the entire six weeks so that he would pay my rent. And then, when it was time for me to move out, I dumped him (gently, of course). I was playing with fire.

Now, I was looking for another place to live because the studio landlord had finally tracked me down to tell me that I was being evicted.

“But wait,” I pleaded. “I just had some trouble with a boyfriend and had to leave for a bit. I will pay the rent. Please, please, let me stay. I love it here.”

“So sorry, but we have already found other tenants who are actually buying the property,” they said.

Their words pierced my heart as that was *my* dream and now it had been given to someone else. I called my friend Maggie, and we had a long talk. She asked for my forgiveness for betraying me with Paul, so I forgave her. Then, much to my surprise, she asked me to come live with her in a beautiful penthouse that she was staying in thanks to her sugar daddy. I did not stop to think that she could not be trusted. But what other options did I have? I went back to the studio and packed my car to the gills. I drove to the natural food market and pulled up at the pay phone.

“Hi, Maggie, I am here at the natural market, and I have everything packed in the car. I am *so* excited to move in with you!” I exclaimed with glee. I heard a man’s voice in the background. “Who is that? Who is there?” I demanded.

“Oh,” Maggie said sheepishly, “that is Manny.” “What do you mean—that’s Manny?”

“Oh, well, he surprised me and showed up last night. I’ve told him he can move in.”

As I screamed into the phone at her, I began beating the phone in the phone booth with the receiver. Those were the last words she ever heard from me. I began sobbing uncontrollably. I had nowhere to go with all my belongs in my car. I was homeless.

All I could think to do was to go inside the market and speak to Terrence, who was the owner. I knew he liked me as I always caught him flirting with me. He would sometimes even comp my dinner in the market restaurant. He told me to hang out for the afternoon and calm down. That evening he drove me to a motel on the beach and paid for a couple of weeks.

As the days went by, Terrence would come by after work, and we would take evening strolls on the beach. But I could see no direction for my life. I was so lost. Terrence was a friend and never asked or expected anything from me

Arielle Spring

for helping me out. He even got me a position in the gift shop. I didn't last long there, though. The pressure of life was weighing heavily on me. I had no idea how much help I needed.



About the Author

Arielle Spring is a living example of a phoenix rising. Her idyllic life spiraled out of control for over twenty years due to experiencing many traumas. In her darkest moment, she saw a light to freedom and began her ascent to wholeness. Arielle's openness, insight, and warm empathetic heart has inspired her to share her story.

Arielle hopes others will be compelled to retrieve their healthy, true selves and soar to new heights of being, while knowing they are loved and can love.

www.ArielleSpring.net



After sexual assaults in my teens, I began a two-decades-long fall into a dark world of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse; due to untreated PTSD. I share going through the process of reclaiming each precious, broken piece of myself.

When Birds Sing: My Journey from Trauma to Triumph
By Arielle Spring

Order the book from the publisher [BookLocker.com](https://www.booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/12565.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**