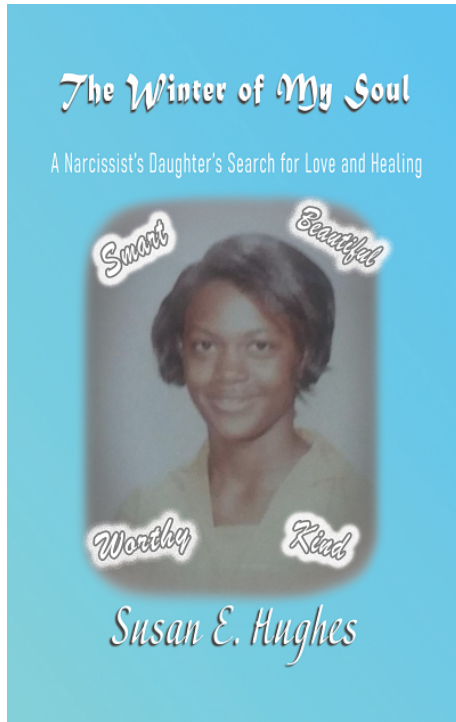




Raised by a narcissistic mother, Susan fights to reclaim her truth. This fierce, honest memoir exposes the wounds, the awakening, and the fire it takes to rise stronger than the woman who tried to break her.

**The Winter of My Soul:
A Narcissist Daughter's Search for Love and Healing**
By Susan E. Hughes

**Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com
<https://booklocker.com/books/14263.html?s=pdf>
or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

The Winter of My Soul

A Narcissist's Daughter's Search for Love and Healing



Susan E. Hughes

Copyright © 2026 Susan E. Hughes

Print ISBN: 978-1-961265-71-4

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88532-218-8

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.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2026

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Hughes, Susan E.

The Winter of My Soul: A Narcissist Daughter's Search for Love
and Healing by Susan E. Hughes

Disclaimer

This memoir is a work of nonfiction. The events and experiences described are based on the authors recollections of real people and situations. Some names, identifying details, and certain events have been changed or condensed to protect privacy and maintain narrative clarity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I: SOLSTICE.....	1
Chapter 1: FIRST LESSONS	3
Chapter 2: THE WORD	11
Chapter 3: THE GIFT BECAME THE CHORE.....	15
Chapter 4: A HARD KNOCK LIFE	21
Chapter 5: INK AND BLOOD.....	29
Chapter 6: CROSSING LINES	39
Chapter 7: REWRITTEN TRUTHS.....	51
Part II: ADAPTATION	67
Chapter 8: THE ART OF SURVIVAL	69
Chapter 9: THE COLOR OF LOVE	79
Chapter 10: THE QUIET BETWEEN US	87
Chapter 11: SECRETS	95
Chapter 12: PERFECT DAUGHTER POWERS-ACTIVATE.....	105
Chapter 13: I WEAR THE MASK.....	111
Chapter 14: YOU'RE TOO UGLY, AND STUPID	121
Chapter 15: THE WRONG KIND OF ATTENTION.....	133
Chapter 16: THE PROM THAT NEVER WAS	141
Chapter 17: UNMASKING.....	149

Part III: REGENERATION	153
Chapter 18: REBELLION.....	155
Chapter 19: SMOKE AND FLAMES	163
Chapter 20: TRIGGERED	173
Chapter 21: THE RABBIT DIED.....	181
Chapter 22: YOU GOTTA DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO	195
Chapter 23: A FOOL AND HER MONEY	209
Chapter 23: TRAPPED.....	215
Chapter 24: UNDER HER ROOF	225
Chapter 24: ELLIS.....	231
Chapter 26: THEA	237
Chapter 27 Sabotaged	245
Chapter 28: GIFTS AND GHOSTS	253
Chapter 29: LIFE AND DEATH	259
Chapter 30: HOME INVASION.....	275
Chapter 31: BERNARD.....	283
Chapter 32: DUPED	293
Chapter 33: USERS	303
Part IV: TRANSFORMATION	313
Chapter 34: AWAKENING.....	315
Chapter 35: WRITE WHAT YOU FEEL.....	319
Chapter 36: THE MIRROR	323
Chapter 37: BECOMING	329

Chapter 2:

THE WORD

Ma would have fits of temper. Me and my siblings never knew what would set her off. It could be something as small as accidentally knocking over your milk, not doing well on a test, or telling a white lie—you just never knew. It was like living with a ticking time bomb in a housecoat.

The first of several incidents that stand out in my mind happened the summer before first grade—when I got my first real lesson in how fast calm could turn into chaos.

We lived in a duplex on 123rd Street, owned by my great-aunt Johnnie, my maternal grandpa's sister. Aunt Johnnie stayed down in the basement, and a lady named Thelma lived upstairs with her mother. I was enamored of the boy who lived next door. I thought he was so smart. He was three years older than me and had taught me how to shoot marbles and dig in the dirt for worms. He was just easy to talk to.

On this particular day, we were in his yard digging for worms—something I shouldn't have been doing because I had on a dress, and Ma had given *explicit* instructions to stay on the porch. I was venting about how my mom was always on me

about one thing or another. He listened, like a little therapist in dirty sneakers. When I finished, he looked at me and said, “Look, the next time your mom gets on your nerves, say—‘Oh shut up bitch,’ just like that.”

I didn’t know what a bitch was, but it sounded like a magic word—one that might stop my mom’s nagging demands. And I trusted his advice. I was crushing. Hard.

Back inside the house, I was on my way to use the toilet. Ma had just finished bathing my baby brother—the third of four boys—when we met in the hallway between the bathroom and kitchen. A bucket of dirty mop water sat in the middle of the floor, blocking the bathroom door. I remember that bucket clear as day because I had to sidestep it to get pass Ma to the toilet. And I had to use it bad—I’m talking pee-pee dance, knees-knocking bad.

So, of course, that’s the moment Ma decided to give me a directive about something she could’ve done.

“Go get the baby powder from the dresser,” she said, walking right pass me.

“I’m about to pee myself,” I blurted, dancing from foot to foot.

She stopped, turned back and repeated herself. “I said go get the baby powder.”

The Medusa-like look she shot me should’ve frozen me in my tracks, made me run for the talc—but I was tired of being her gofer. All I wanted to do was take a piss in peace. And before I knew it, the words came flying up and out:

“Oh, shut up, bitch.”

Her hand was faster than lightning. She back-handed me so hard that I stumbled backward, my heel catching the mop bucket. Dirty water spilling, splashing everywhere.

My feet started slipping, trying to keep me from falling on the wet floor. I flailed my arms, which only propelled me backward—and then I went down, landing in the tub that still had my brother’s bathwater in it, my feet sticking up toward the ceiling.

Hearing all the commotion, Daydee came to see what the ruckus was. He found me in the tub, soaking wet and crying, while Ma screamed, “You better get that heifer before I kill her.”

Daydee hauled me out of the tub and calmed her down enough so she wouldn’t do any real harm. The water was warm, but my skin felt cold. The smell of soap and mop water clung to me as I stood there trying to make sense of what had just happened. I don’t even remember the slap itself—just the shock. That was the first time I could recall Ma striking me.

Then he asked what had made her slap me. When I told him, he wanted to know who’d taught me such a word. Daydee was calm as always. I can only remember a few times in my life when I ever saw him angry.

I ratted out my neighbor like Judas selling out Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

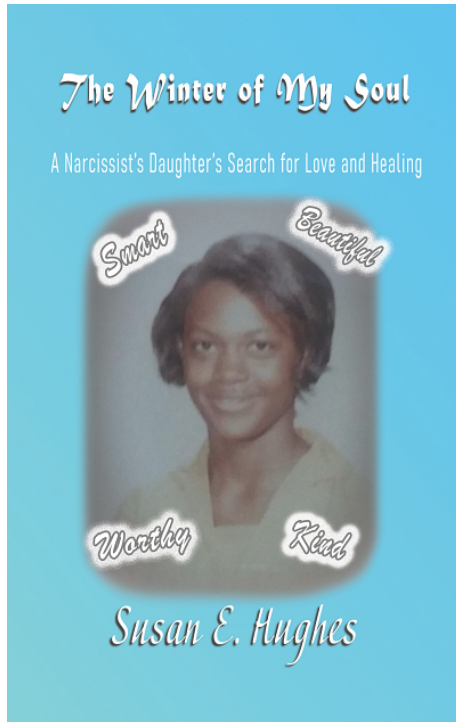
I don't know if I cried because I was hurt or because I was stunned, or maybe it was both. Mostly, I felt embarrassed—ashamed, even—for the way I'd fallen backward into the tub, legs in the air like some kind of cartoon.

Thinking back now, I realize how easily I could've hit my head on that porcelain edge. But Ma didn't seem concern. I was six then. That was a time when teaching me better ways to express myself should've been at the forefront of my mother's mind. But when a person has narcissistic tendencies, it becomes more about them and their feelings.

I had challenged her authority and rejected the role she had set for me. The hurt and betrayal cut deep—not just physically, but emotionally. I was devastated by the actions of both my mother and my neighbor, who'd had the tar whipped out of him for his part in it.

He apologized to me and to Ma, but things were never the same between us again. That slap became her go-to form of punishment for me—one good crack across the face with her hand, a shoe, or whatever was handy.

That fateful day, she drew the proverbial line in the sand, daring me to cross it. But even after that episode, I still wanted her love. I learned to bend myself into whatever shape pleased her—more accommodating, more careful, Quieter. Anything to avoid her wrath.



Raised by a narcissistic mother, Susan fights to reclaim her truth. This fierce, honest memoir exposes the wounds, the awakening, and the fire it takes to rise stronger than the woman who tried to break her.

**The Winter of My Soul:
A Narcissist Daughter's Search for Love and Healing**
By Susan E. Hughes

**Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com
<https://booklocker.com/books/14263.html?s=pdf>
or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**