PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL
by Sue Conrad

For as long as I remember, I’ve been inspired to write. I stated in the second or third grade submitting countless poems to teachers who cared to read them. When I reached my high school years, I started developing my writing into stories. These stories became a reflection of my life and the inner sadness which I could never openly express except on the pages that lay before me. I could never openly vent my feelings of loneliness or shame, as no one truly understood me. In my writing I could break apart my pensive, interior world. I was a loner through most of my school age years, ashamed of the way I looked or dressed; always feeling like I was on the outside looking in. Even in my family life, I felt as though I were an intruder, always looking in from the outside.

It was during my loneliest times, that I would sit and write, slowly unfolding past events and unresolved feelings onto blank pages. I never shared any close bonds, except for my father, who always accepted me for who I was. He never passed judgements on me, and he always tried to build my self-esteem. We often shared common interests, as he would talk for hours on end about the history of the world. Although I tried to focus on what he was saying, I would always find myself drifting away to another world, in another time. In a way, daydreaming, like my writing, is an escape from reality, a way to express my feelings of desolation. When I daydream, I can take on another life, one that is filled with love and sincerity: where nature would be in perfect harmony with the rest of the world.

Some of my fondest memories were the times I spent with my father, as we walked along the ocean; witnessing a dramatic sunset. During these times, my father would share a piece of his life such as childhood days; they were a mirror of my own. Those times will never be forgotten. I decided to interpret those times into a story that would reflect the inter-relationship I now share with my own two children.

When I was a child, I remember the times I spent with my father, holding his hand as we walked along a pebbled beach. He always voiced words of wisdom, but I could never focus on them; instead my mind would create it’s own imaginary world. My father would often stop for a moment, jarring me back to reality. I’d look up to study his face, and notice his eyes fixating on the aesthetic quality that surrounded us. I would then turn
towards the ocean, my eyes embracing a framework of art that was natural and serene. A soft breeze often touched our faces. The ocean receded, low currents of salty, blue water. A flock of seagulls would soar overhead, a lighthouse illuminated the hazy distance. On a backdrop of oranges and reds, a descending sun would peek over the horizon.

I hold onto these steadfast images, knowing I could never capture the realism on a painter’s canvas. I’m older now, but I continue to admire nature and all it’s surrounding beauty. I left my childhood far behind, only to be faced with the complexity of an adult world: my past life which appeared so innocent, left me with adversity.

I am married now, with two children of my own. I often share a quiet moment with them, standing alongside that same pebbled beach. I step back to watch them, their tiny bodies silhouetted against the grainy sand. There is a cosmic fascination as they reach into their bag of breadcrumbs, the seagulls anxiously awaiting their frenzied feast. My son turns and gives me a quizzical look, which I’ve seen before. His face is usually puzzled, as he intently draws a single line on a vast sheet of white paper. My daughter’s face is filled with amusement and innocence. She similarly gives me this look, as her dinner tray becomes a mixture of colorful food.

Time will cause my memories to fade, but they will never be forgotten. I will always treasure my moments of solitude, as I struggle to meet the demands of a fast-paced world. I realize my children have a long road ahead of them, one that will become less simple with each passing day.

If I were an artist, I could capture my life on a piece of paper. It would depict scenes of a little girl and her father, watching a sunset; and continue with my own two children, silhouetted against the grainy sand.