



A LETTER FROM *our editor*

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Winter Issue of *Text Power Telling Magazine*. As we are shown time and time again, art can help heal us by creating beauty out of the darkness we endure in our lives. Anguish pervades some of the writing and art in this Issue as our brave and brilliant writers delve deeply into their trauma. Some pieces are chilling in their grief and sadness, as John Ganshaw shows in “Smiles Run Deep,”

within he cries and no one cares
his monsters and demons lurk in the shadows there
he battles those foes every day

I urge you to take your time with each piece – each unique artist unraveling a distinct experience of suffering, deserving of space and acceptance. Unspeakable secrets come to life through writing and art,
as described by Anna Smith in “House of Shame”:

We withered away
Made lines on our wrists
To bleed out the diseased
Not even realizing
The secrecy was the disease

Despair saturates some pieces, as seen in Jean Varda’s work, “All I Know.”

All I know is the loneliness
of this motel room
and the long road
of broken dreams.

These individual pieces come together on one page, somehow enabling the loneliness to turn into an act of communion and shared comfort. I see beauty in this virtual gathering of words and images. The communal experience is also explored through the interactive dance piece called *Traffick*, as performed at the Cincinnati Fringe Festival. Our digital art exhibition features masks created by a group of survivors of sex trafficking. The act of collectively creating art out of pain gives a glimmer of light and of fellowship.

In “An Open Letter To My Fellow Survivors,” author Elizabeth Gade lovingly reminds her community to:

Never stop fighting
for you

For your right
to be the bravest woman
you’ve ever
incarnated

The nurturing cradle of Gade's words are moving. As we finish out our last weeks of Winter, I look toward the Spring – lighter days, renewal and rebirth of both spirit and blooms. Traci Neal is so wise in her piece, "Reclaim."

Strength is a string we must agree to
and straighten out our opposition in a knot.
Open a new wardrobe
to thrive in your appearance.
Refuse to reject yourself,
but race toward renewal.

Thank you, readers, for being here in community with all of us.

Love,

Anita Lakshman
Editor-in-Chief