

Drowning in a sea of Family violence and alcoholic abuse, feeling abandoned by God and life in general, Christa finally has her own epiphany when one more drink just doesn't erase her reality of constant violence and abuse. An inveterate optimist, Christa's story reminds us all that we are indeed capable of reclaiming hope even when desperately trying to grab on to a most elusive and exclusive life in the Hamptons.

In her final, desperate act of courage Christa finds in her own deepest heart, with the power of God to take charge of her life and with her children in tow, the ability to rise above the demons that have plagued her since childhood. It is a remarkable saga of one woman's refusal to be held hostage to the inevitability.

—**Marie Levine**

Author of *First you Die: Learn to Live*  
*After the Death of Your Child*

Christa Jan Ryan knows why we have pain and what to do with it. In "Silent Screams from the Hamptons" she allows us to stand beside her as she shoulders Herculean pain. To let go of that pain is the challenge we all face. Christa has started with ending the abusive marriage, getting sober and seeking change in every facet of her life. Imagine all that energy going into loving herself and her children. Bravo Christa!

—**Jim Owen**

Meditation Teacher/Sound Healer/  
Landscape Designer

With her latest novel, “Silent Screams from the Hamptons,” Christa Jan Ryan proves once again that she is a whirling dervish with enough energy to light up Manhattan. An exterior made of steel and an iron will, she proves that adversities beyond anyone’s worst imagination can not only be tackled, but risen above. Entertainment abounds as we frolic through the foibles of her millionaire clients. But, “Silent Screams from the Hamptons” is not your typical “get it off your chest” memoir. At its heart is Ryan’s clear determination to create solutions that will work for people who are suffering through their own private hell.

—**Joanne B. Carsley**  
Screenwriter of *Repeat Offenses*

We have watched God work powerfully in Christa, and our prayers are for her to continue to do his work, and be of service to those in need of her encouragement and inspiration.

—**East Hampton Church of Christ**

The strength of the heartbeat that threads its way through this book, only reflects how huge Christa’s heart has become in feeling compassion for her fellow man.

—**Dennis Watlington**  
Author/Screenplay writer  
Author of *Chasing America*

Christa has a unique and compelling way of shooting straight from the hip.

—**Betty Hill Crowson**

Author of *The Joy is in the Journey:  
A Woman's Guide Through Crisis and Change*

"Silent Screams from the Hamptons" is a poignant, sometimes hysterical, and mostly profound read. Christa bears her soul by sharing her journey with us. She is true inspiration for all who read this important book.

—**T. J. Parsell**

Author of *Fish: A Memoir of a  
Boy in a Man's Prison*

Christa has articulately defined the gut-wrenching struggle of her internal battle between self-destruction and self-love. This book allows us the privilege of walking beside her to witness her journey to wholeness; and it forces us to look inside ourselves and contemplate where we are on our own path, and to take responsibility for where we are going.

—**Steven G. Rise LCSW, BCETS**



Silent Screams  
from the Hamptons



*Christa Jan Ryan*

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*Manufactured, Typeset, and Printed in the  
United States of America*

*Ten percent of all the Royalty's from this book will go  
to a fund that aids All Domestic Abuse Survivors.*

*The names and locations have been  
changed to protect my ass, period.*

To My Good God who:  
Is What He Says He Is,  
Can Do What He Says He Can Do,  
Proclaims I Am Who He Says I Am,  
Has Made All Things Possible.

**Dedicated to:**  
Christina Baker and Susan Caldwell

This book could never have been conceived  
without their encouragement.



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*A note on forgiveness to all...*

THE APPLE DOESN'T FALL FAR FROM  
THE TREE, AND ONE DAY YOU WAKE  
UP AND YOU ARE THE TREE

The mustard seed is the most prolific  
plant in the plant world. Ironically, in  
order to reproduce, the plant must die.



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## Introduction

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This book is about the Disease of The Family of Origin and how we unintentionally carry over our patterns of hurts, hang-ups, and habits into the next generation. The generational inheritance that I received was addiction and emotional woundedness. The legacy I wish to leave is how we can change our generational inheritance through the power of our willingness, love, and forgiveness.

*The Importance Of Memory*

I CAN'T GO FORWARD WITHOUT GOING  
BACK. I RETURN TO THAT VOICE THAT HAS  
NEVER QUIETED, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES  
SPEAKS IN A LOW WHISPER. IT IS THAT  
LAST GASP THAT LONGS TO FIND PEACE  
WITH MY TRUE SELF.

### *A Memory*

Ever since I could remember I was told that God never gives us more than we can handle. When I was little, lying in my bed at night and staring out at the stars, I believed this with all my heart. It made me feel warm when I was cold, secure when I was in doubt, loved when feeling unwanted and deeply cared for and special when there was no reason on earth for me to feel that way.

One night I remember seeing droplets of rain dripping down the window and believed God was crying, but I didn't know why and wished there was something I could do to make Him feel better. I jumped out of my warm bed and ran downstairs to ask my parents why God was crying; but before I could speak to them, I saw that they were crying too. They sat on the floor holding hands, in silence, just smiling through their tears at my three little sisters asleep on a blanket on the sofa. My triplet sisters had all been born with Cerebral Palsy.

I went back to my room, climbed under the now cold covers, and looked at the sky. I knew why God was crying. He was crying for my sisters, for my parents, and for the way His most divine creation had turned out. That night I was changed forever. That night I heard His gentle words come into my room and speak to me in a soft, loving, and caring way. Even God Himself could not make me understand how this situation could have happened to my family. He said, "I will always give you more than what you think you can handle, not because I want you to suffer, my sweet child, but always, always to remind you to depend and rely upon me."



# 1

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What *Good* Can Come  
From All of This *Chaos?*

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*Take courage, the earth is all that lasts.*  
~ Sioux saying



## Prologue

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### ***The Hamptons—Summer, 2000***

I'm busting my ass working a shindig in East Hampton, while Jacob sits in his truck listening to tapes of his band's recent gig at the Memory Motel in Montauk. Our clients, *Big Bucks on the Hill*, are showing off their big bucks to four hundred of their closest big buck friends, as they celebrate the completion of their 1.5 million dollar waterfall on their Georgica Road estate in East Hampton.

I am beyond cranky but riding a champagne-fueled rush of glory over our latest landscaping triumph. Compliments have been flowing, along with the champagne from the Gucci-clad guests, for our work on the waterfall. It's Memorial Day Weekend, and I haven't had a day off since April 1<sup>st</sup>. I'm exhausted.

I grab a full bottle of Dom P and stroll toward

Jacob's truck as it gyrates to the beat of loud Rock 'n Roll. I watch him take a long hit from a joint before releasing a torrent of smoke.

"Hon," I say, "how about a little action before I leave for my mother's?"

"Yeah, sure, when I'm done," he says, looking annoyed. "Keep the bubbly chilled."

I head for the hot tub irked by Jacob's tepid response to my proposition. I watch as he suddenly leaps out of the truck to look at a sighting of bluebirds through binoculars. It's been some time since I've elicited as much enthusiastic interest from my husband. Undaunted, I fire up the client's tub and get into a sexy mood, hoping to take the edge off of my impending trip upstate to visit my mother. Mom recently had a massive stroke and is convalescing in a Kingston hospital. After waiting for Jacob for what seems like forever, I pop the cork and allow my heat to diminish, despite the tub's 104-degree temperature. I drain the entire bottle before passing out.

Several hours later, I wake up, hung over and shriveled, which induces a seething resentment at my husband who has left me to drown in my desire. I head to his truck, only to discover that he is passed out with a bottle of wine between his legs. I grab the bottle and empty the contents on his head. He awakens in a daze as I run to my truck, like my life depends on it.

As I put the truck in gear, I hear Jacob hollering, "You dumb, stupid, fucking bitch!" With wheels spinning, I hightail it off of the estate with the image of my red-faced, wine-drenched husband shaking his fist into

my rearview mirror.

Two hours later I arrive at the hospital, and I'm filled with fresh anxiety over the illness that has befallen my mother. With a bouquet of Peonies in hand from an estate of one of my clients, I crack the door and watch as she presses the oxygen mask tighter to her face. I'm saddened by the thought that she will never again visit the beautiful gardens her daughter has designed.

I approach the bed and lay the flowers on her stomach before taking the hand of the woman who had endured the good, the bad, and the always crazy. Her face brightens and she lowers the mask below her chin. "Oh, honey, I was just thinking about you. Aren't these lovely flowers? Thank you."

As I sit rubbing both her hands, I can feel her old bones becoming my bones. She begins to narrate a story about the difficulty she had faced with my father bringing up triplet, handicapped daughters. There were six kids, and my parents struggled to raise us with little money and plenty of heartache. But I know that this blueprint wasn't what tore them apart—it was their abuse of drugs and alcohol. And it hits me like a ton of bricks: maybe Jacob and I were becoming more like my parents than I care to admit. Their alcoholic arguments were the soundtrack that echoed through my childhood. My young children are now listening to the same discordant music.

I gently rest my head on my mother's chest as she strokes my hair.

"I was thinking of something, Chrissy. Can I tell

you what it was I was thinking about?” my mother asks.

I look into her eyes and smile, holding back the tears that seem to have followed me my whole life.

“Of course.”

She clears her throat and talks softly. I listen intently to what might be her last coherent words.

“You know, Honey, in 1948 I was working on a pageant down at the Kingston Redeemer Lutheran Church. I was conducting a choir and was told that there was a very handsome, young man working as a light manager. Well, he turned out to be your father...”

She drifts away for a moment and then continues with emotion, “Minna Elizabeth was a pound and a half and Maureen Ellen weighed in at two and three quarters. Michelle Ann was the fatty, about three pounds and a couple of ounces. They all went right into the incubator. I knew something was drastically wrong.”

Her voice trails off and she begins to cough. I put the oxygen mask on her old face and tighten the elastic behind her thinning gray hair. I pull the blanket up to her neck, and memories hit me like a tornado.



Please Don't Let Me  
Grow Up to be Like  
Mommy and Daddy

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***Kingston, New York***

Jeanne and Ernie Ryan met in church after the war. My father arrived home in Kingston, New York, after serving in the Air Force and got a job as a light manager at the church where my mother was directing a Christmas pageant. His eyes lit up when he saw Jeanne, and he asked her out for a drink. They fell instantly in love, and by that spring my mother realized she was pregnant. On Easter Sunday of 1949, they were married.

Jeanne lived by the rule, her rule: There was the right way, the wrong way, and Jeanne's way! She

would rather be right than president. A graduate of Ithaca College, specializing in Physical Education, she had established her career as a high school coach before she met my father. Jeanne was one hell of a knock out—blond, buxom, blue-eyed, and beautiful!

Ernie Ryan was an easygoing person who went with the flow of Jeanne's way. When he wasn't selling insurance or wiring the electricity for Ulster Electric, he was unwiring himself at home, usually in front of the television. My father was tall at 6'4", extremely skinny, distinguished, and handsome. He was recognized with the Air Medal during World War II for flying missions during the Normandy invasion. He had survived the front lines in the war, but in our home Ernie was in retreat.

My parents formed a dynamic union of intellectual, spiritual, and creative chemistry. They shared a very powerful sexual attraction to each other. Mom always dressed to the hilt and that turned on my father. On Sundays they would get drunk and disappear into the bedroom for hours. We used to call my father Dirty Ernie because he was always pursuing mom for a quick squeeze.

My older brother Stevie was born December 8, 1949, followed by my sister Sandra three years later. The birth of the triplets was on November 13, 1955. It was a total shock. The doctor called to tell my father the news that his family had grown from two to five in a matter of hours. Dad went to sit down when he heard the news and completely missed the chair, ending up sprawled on the floor—an ominous sign.

Minna, Maureen, and Michelle were twelve-months-old when they were diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, a birth defect of impaired muscular strength and coordination from brain damage, usually occurring during or before birth. The day of the diagnosis, Jeanne discovered that she was pregnant with me. That had to have been nine long months for my mother. I was born February 3, 1957, the sixth child in eight years.

We lived in a big old grey Victorian home with a wraparound porch that stood on the top of a hill on West Chestnut Street in Kingston. It was a dead-end street with twelve houses of practicing Catholics and no less than seven children in every household. At any given time there might be as many as forty-five kids playing unsupervised outside. We were a neighborhood gang, and there was always trouble to be found.

The chaos on the street matched the dysfunctional quality of life in our home. The hum of the washer, dryer, and dishwasher was ever-present and mingled with a continuous assault of radios, television, stereos, and screaming children. The noise level was beyond distracting. It always looked like a bomb had just been dropped. Our neighbor felt sorry for us and sent over her housekeeper, Rosie, to tidy up once a week. After Rosie was finished, we could never find anything and would rip apart the house in search of our belongings, creating even greater bedlam.

Jeanne was always running behind schedule, and half our childhood was spent waiting for mother. I have a wild memory of an incident when I was four years old. My mother dressed the triplets and me and

placed us out in the old '52 Chevy that we nicknamed "The Bomb" to wait for her while she got herself organized for the day. As we sat in the car the triplets began rocking back and forth simultaneously.

After fifteen minutes, I was about to jump out of my skin from all the rocking. I leaped into the front seat to open the door to see what was taking my mother so bloody long. As I landed in the driver's seat, I accidentally kicked the car into neutral and we started to roll backwards. The momentum of the triplets rocking actually made the car roll faster. The triplets looked out the window and started to scream their heads off. "Wereeeer goinnng tooooo fast without youuuuuuu mommy!" yelled Maureen.

Out came my mother with a Pall Mall cigarette dangling from the side of her mouth. She saw the car rolling down the hill and bounded down the stairs three at a time. Jeanne ran like hell, driving the butt from her mouth, and surprisingly, her dentures became unglued and sailed through the air. My mother caught up to the car, opened the door, and jumped in. After gaining control of the car, she stuffed a cigarette into her toothless mouth and with a trembling hand managed to light it. "Myst 'ole Chrytie, shit, piss, and corruption!" she exclaimed.

My mother's life was demanding with a full-time job and a chaotic household. Every night my father buried himself in newspapers, and my mother was left with the Herculean task of trying to get six young children to bed at a decent hour. Jeanne struggled with her unmanageable situation until she couldn't cope

and then would snap in a rage of anger that would send everyone, including my father, running for cover. We lived in great fear when her anger was unleashed and went to extraordinary lengths to keep her from going there. The siblings named her anger the “Big It.” Once her anger was spent, it was always the same for my mother—remorse and regret. I learned early to manipulate her shame; it was the perfect time to ask for things that would generally have been denied.

With each outburst, my father disappeared further from the radar screen. The moment Dad came home from work, he camped out in a corner of the living room with his booze and cigarettes, disconnecting from the high-voltage energy circulating through the household. My father spent most of his time in an alcoholic daze.

My brother Stevie was brilliant. At the age of eleven, he was building go-carts and motorized bicycles from scratch. I have fond memories of watching him construct very elaborate models. He would throw away the instructions and under his breath would say, “I don’t need those destructions.” But he had learning issues and no interest in what school had to offer. I remember my mother insisting that “No son of hers” was going to be a blue-collar worker. It was unfortunate that the support he needed to help his budding abilities just wasn’t there. His self-esteem was badly damaged.

Sandra was gorgeous. With her blonde hair and sparkling blue eyes, she was the belle of the ball wherever we went. She suffered with migraine

headaches, possibly a symptom of her repressed rage for being put into the role of caretaker of the family. Mom desperately needed a built-in housekeeper/cook and Sandra was drafted for the job. She was overwhelmed with the workload at school and at home and stressed to the limit trying to protect us kids.

Our poverty was depressing. My parents could barely afford to put food on the table. I can remember Mom running out to the old “52 Bomb” with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth and her checkbook in hand rushing to Central Hudson Electric Company because the power was going to be shut off by 4:00 P.M. How painful that thought still is to me of “The Bomb” racing down the road, and Mom speeding like a lunatic to pay the bill so that we had electricity for the night.

The triplets’ disease drained the family pocketbook. It always seemed as though there was some crutch or mechanical device that was needed for the triplets. There was a constant buzz of “doing for the girls” and taking them here and there and in and out of hospitals and dealing with doctors. Between the ages of five and twelve, the girls went to a Cerebral Palsy Center and worked with therapists. And every so often Minna or Michelle would go in for an operation.

Minna was afflicted from her waist down and couldn’t walk without crutches. On one occasion the doctors decided to cut her Achilles’ tendon because they thought that it would help to stretch her legs and give her more mobility. That surgery seemed to produce no result, and to this day she is in and out of wheelchairs.

The right side of Michelle's body was severely damaged, with the left side being fairly normal. For the purpose of better grasping, one of the doctors thought to put a cow bone in between her thumb and her index finger in her right hand. Well, it didn't work. But it did traumatize her so much that she began coddling her cow-bone hand. Poor Michelle was extremely crabby and ornery and would lose control and have temper tantrums. We used to tease her and call her "the bullhead" or "Gimp-along."

Maureen and I played together the most because she was able to get around more than the other two girls. She was the least physically affected, despite her delayed mental motor skills and speech impediment.

Jeanne tried to foster an atmosphere of a Christian household. "Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you," would be the continual line that was repeated over and over as we would be beating the crap out of each other. "Mom, hold on, I'll be right there; let me do unto Stevie as he has done unto me!" I'd scream. It would drive her insane.

Dad stopped going to church even though the rest of us attended "religiously." He would sneak away on Sundays. Mom would ask, "Going to that God and Run Club, Ernie?"

She was referring to one of my father's favorite outlets: an all-male rod and gun club. He would hunt pheasants and deer with his cronies and hang out afterwards drinking beer and bullshitting about their kills. Joining this gun club had allowed him to run from the problems and insanity of our life at home.

The thing that detonated our dysfunction was my parents' drinking. Every night they would come home from work and my mother would mix scotch sour. It would start off so agreeably. We would hear the chink of ice cubes in her sterling silver antique shaker and the sound of their amusing banter as the liquid was poured into glasses. After a few scotch sour, they would open the cheap sherry and port. As the night progressed, their raised voices would filter up to our bedrooms. We'd stick our heads under pillows, trying to quiet the inevitable knockdown, drag-out fight that would ensue. I would often awaken to the terrifying sight of my father punching my mother over the banister.

By an early age my overwhelming surroundings had ingrained within me a pessimistic view of life. Most of my thoughts during childhood were that life was **JUST PLAIN UNFAIR!** It was unfair that my sweet triplet sisters were handicapped, unfair that my parents were dealt such a heavy burden. Many times as a child, I would scream out: "GOD, WHAT WERE YOU THINKING? YOU WHO HAVE THE POWER AND GREAT HAND IN CREATION, YOU CALL THIS A PLAN? WHAT GOOD CAN COME FROM ALL OF THIS CHAOS?"

