# THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

 There is a merry-go-round that I have ridden for years. Sometimes I catch myself as I get on and sometimes I don’t. I used to be stuck on the ride as it went faster and faster but now I can get off after a short ride when I choose to. . Sometimes the ride is enjoyable for a short time but the fun or pleasure wear off quickly. If I do not keep alert the ride soon begins spinning out of control. I jump off and look for the lessons, vowing once again to not get back on again.

The merry-go-round of codependence is easy to get on but not so easy to climb off of. I have been on many of these rides during my lifetimes. I still struggle with the ride because the riders are those I care about. Usually I jump on because I think I love the other riders. I jump on because I think there is hope I can make a difference or make the ride easier for someone I care about. . There are times as I ride when I want to stay. I see the others enjoying the ride and I feel good inside. As I hold their teddy bear, their toys, their responsibilities and their souvenirs I feel helpful and worthwhile. I am serving a purpose in their life. I am supporting them through their trials. . But along with their treasures, I find myself being weighed down as they also bring more and more unwanted burdens they chose to grab but don’t want to carry themselves. . They drop blame in my lap and pound out their anger against my chest. The more I hold the faster they run. The faster they run the less I am able to keep up. I want to run and have fun like they appear to be having, but I am being crushed and they don’t care. The only way to save myself is to drop their load and jump. I have to jump off the ride. I need to jump for my life.

 I start looking for the exits and planning my escape. I begin looking for a helping hand, hoping that someone cares that I no longer know which way I am going. There are helping hands, in the distance, outside my reach. They don’t want to get back on the ride but if I will reach out they will help pull me off. I realize the only way to get off is to jump. It is up to me to make the leap. I look for a soft place land. . All around the ride are rocks and ditches. There are grooves over there where someone tried to get off but dragged their feet from fear. I know it is a risk to jump. I could be hurt. I could feel pain. I will definitely feel scared, afraid and alone. I can’t even begin to remember why I got on this ride. I only know that in order to survive I have to get off. Several times I come to the edge, ready to jump, ready to stop. Then that special someone that brought me on the ride with them pulls me back from the edge. “You won’t leave me will you?” they cry. “What will I do without you? I love you. I need you.” My arms go back around them and I stay. One more time around won’t hurt I lie to myself. Yet it does hurt. They quickly pick up the load I left, add on a block of guilt for wanting to desert them in their hour of need and give it all back to me so they can go on with life unfettered and free. As soon as they are around the corner I put down the load. I am determined this time to succeed. This time I run to the edge and just keep running. I don’t really jump out onto the rocks and thorny bushes. I just take one step off the edge. I stumble and take uneasy footsteps but I keep running. I hear the ones I have left behind crying for my help. They don’t want to ride the merry-go-round alone. I turn to go back. I don’t know if they can do it alone. I worry about how they will survive if they try to pick up the load themselves. If it was too heavy for me, how can I expect them to carry it alone? It is then I see them standing sorting through the load. They start complaining that this is not all theirs. I left them with blame and guilt. They don’t want to carry those items around. Why do I think they gave those packages to me? . They cry for me to come back. I don’t have to get back on the ride. They just want me to take the guilt, blame, responsibility and consequences with me. I hesitate, listening and thinking about what they are asking. When I do not run back to lighten their load, they start to throw me the burdens they do not want. They have no guilt about anything they did, so that must be mine. They need someone to blame other than themselves so that is thrown as quickly as it is found. As long as they are giving the blame away they might as well give me the responsibility to make everything better as well. I turn away from the flung packages and run the distance to safety.

 My heart aches as I listen to the pleas and cries behind me. “Where are you going? I want to go too.” “Don’t you love me? If you loved me you would be here.” “When are you coming back?” “You don’t want me to do this alone do you?” “How dare you stop carrying my load?” “I hate you.” “I’ll never forgive you.” “You’d better watch out because I intend to get you for this.” “I’ll show you. You can’t do this to me.”

Safely away, I find loving arms to greet me. They assure me there is life besides the twirling and repetitious circles of the merry-go-round. Out here I can walk. I can play. I speak and can be heard. I have control of my own actions. I do not have to carry someone else’s teddy bear. I can love myself without guilt. When I serve others there is appreciation. It is not expected as something owed. . There is warmth and sunshine instead of bright, flashing lights overhead. There is silence and peace instead of the cacophony of music and voices on the ride.