

Cheryl Evans-Ritonya was born on September 22, 1968. She went to sleep on March 18, 2011 and never woke up.

This is for you Cheryl.

Born into the world - a blank canvas ready for paint.
And also born an evil lying patiently in wait.
Baby steps and first words lay in the months ahead.
The first steps down a long dark path are filled with fear and dread.

She's just 10 years old - not a care in the world.
Please leave her alone - she's just a little girl.
The coming years are filled with jumping rope and running footloose.
Then running becomes fleeing and the rope becomes a noose.

Teenage years and high school made harder by the pain.
Many times to hide her tears she'd go walking in the rain.
Weekend parties - boys and clothes - an imagined canopy bed.
The beer and weed her initiation to the life that lay ahead.

Two distant children couldn't know how much she really loved them.
Although she tried she couldn't be the mom she should've been.
She took a surrogate daughter who doubled as a niece.
Her failures as a parent never offering her any peace.

These roles she could have played better - sister, daughter, wife and friend.
The time spent lying and stealing didn't matter in the end.
Grandma loved her without condition - in her eyes she could do no wrong.
Deep down inside I think she knew what you were doing all along.

Just turned 40 - second marriage - worried about the bills.
But nothing really mattered but the bottles and the pills.
A brush with death couldn't derail this train and where it was heading.
It only delayed the inevitable - her nightmare would soon be ending.

So damn tired - lay down your head and dream of being ten.
She shuts her eyes but doesn't know they'll never open again.
Her friends and family gather - their purpose is to grieve.
The life she chose too difficult - and so she chose to leave.

If you have no guilt or could have done things better raise your hand.
Although we tried to keep her safe things rarely go as planned.
I should have been a better man - a better protector and brother.
Too little too late are empty words - we share the blame - no other.