

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards

**Author(s):** Cheri Calvert  
**Title:** *The Garden Song*  
**Category:** Life Stories

**Judge:** 33

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "poor" and 5 meaning "excellent," please evaluate the following:

Plot: 5

Grammar: 5

Character development: 5

Production quality and cover design: 4

Judge's commentary:

What did you like best about this book?

You showed great courage in writing this book. It couldn't be easy to relive the violence against you, but I believe your efforts to re-find the light in your life will be inspiring to others. I wondered if you'd tried to place chapters of this book in magazines or journals. I was particularly moved by chapter 8 about the monsters. Your compassion toward Luke is truly amazing. The book was structured well, going back and forth with authority into moments about the rape and then at the jail. You had many lovely descriptions and observations, as on page 15, when you write about the effects of the moon.

How can the author improve this book?

The cover works very well after you've read the book. Then I appreciated its subtleties, the dark shadows in the front of the lawn, the sign advertising a designer seamstress. But when I first picked up the book and I read the title and saw the picture, I thought it was going to be a cozy story. You do say on the cover that it's about a rape, but that lettering is small and I didn't notice it right away. I'd like a stronger indication that something bad is taking place in that house. Also, some of the paragraphs weren't indented. But overall, this is certainly a book I can imagine being used in counseling groups.