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My Body of Work

Maureen Ann Mooney
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

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Faculty Mentor: Marilyn Kallet

PROJECT TITLE: My Body of Work

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Marilyn Kallet, Faculty Mentor

Date: 5/12/99

Comments (Optional):


Maureen Ann Moneey has created a substantial, energetic and varied book of poetry and prose — a remarkable achievement. With these poems and stories she has won a special merit award in English, a prize for fiction, for traditional forms of poetry, and for non-traditional forms. Her Honors thesis, part of this manuscript, won the English Department award (\$500) for best thesis. Brava!

Marilyn Kallet

My Body of Work

Maureen (Reenie) Mooney

University Honors Senior Project


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My Body of Work

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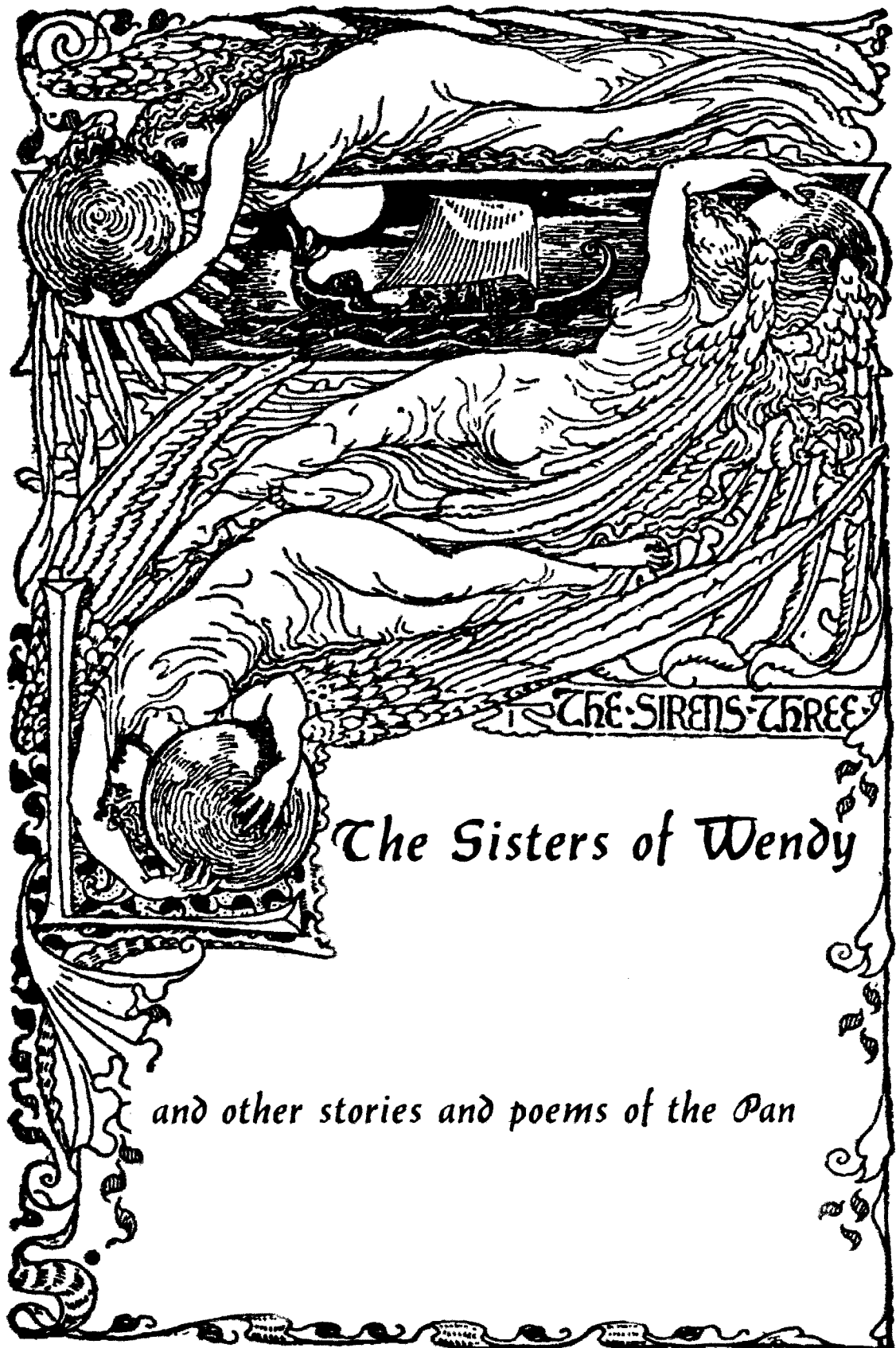
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THE SIRENS THREE

The Sisters of Wendy

and other stories and poems of the Pan



Belle of the Piccaninny Tribe

I want to write a love poem for the girls I kissed in seventh grade . . .

~ Marie Howe ~

They gave her the part because of her long dark hair, the longest in Mrs. Robini's drama class—maybe the longest hair in the entire school. Nobody ever thought to measure it. At a time when girls were favoring shaggy cuts with blow-dried and curled wings, or sassy Dorothy Hamil bobs, Katie wore her tresses an inch shy of her bottom. Her female classmates would toss their fashionable dos about, whip out bottles of Aqua Net from their gym lockers, creating an aerosol fog in the bathroom, while Katie silently plated her locks into a heavy braid, fastening it with a colorful elastic band. The braid slithered down her back—a black snake nipping at her coccyx; her forehead stretched tight from the weight: she always looked surprised.

Mrs. Robini had been eyeing that hair all year, so when the announcement came that the spring play would be “Peter Pan,” she hounded Katie to audition for the part of the Indian Princess. “You’re our Tiger Lily!” she’d ooze, fondling the braid with her fat fingers. “You’re perfect!” Katie stood with her knees locked, fists clenching inside the pockets of her coat, fearing that her lunch of macaroni and cheese would soon make its way back through her esophagus. Hitching a bit, she lowered her eyes, fixed them on a spot right in front of Mrs. Robini’s red pumps, wondering if she could aim for a target.



Katherine Theresa O’Shea was a girl. Her mother wanted that fact emphasized to the nth degree. The seventh child of a hardworking Irish-Italian Catholic family, Katherine was the youngest and the only child to fall into the category deemed the second sex. Mrs. O’Shea (née Bataglia) presumably kept up the act of reproduction until she produced a girl, and

hen—unbeknownst to the Church or Mr. O’Shea—she dutifully underwent tubal legations to prevent the surprise appearance of yet another son. Katherine was the girl, the doll for dressing and the hair for primping. If you looked in Katherine’s closet—being the only girl she was the only child in the O’Shea house to claim a bedroom for herself and therefore a closet—you would find a wealth of dresses, pinafores, skirts, and crinolines. What you would not find was a pair of pants, jeans, culottes or shorts. Not even the deceptive skort was allowed to grace Katherine’s body. Along with the dress rule, Katherine was not permitted to cut her hair. Trimmings were performed six times a year by Mrs. O’Shea: “*If I take you to the parlor, the first thing they’ll try to do is give you feathers! Remember what happened when you were three!*?” Katie did not remember, but had the entire incident recited to her each time her mother sat her in the kitchen for a trim.

“All those beautiful curls! Gone.” She would whip around to the front of the chair, shears in hand. “I was only gone for five minutes!” She held her palm up to Katherine’s face, displaying all five digits. “You’ve had straight hair ever since.” There was no arguing with Mrs. O’Shea. The lost curls were kept in an envelope that came out once a year lest Katie forget. “Look at those sweet curls,” her mother would place her hand amidst the wispy, dark locks and shiver.



It wasn’t on account of wanting to be Tiger Lily that she sat there; she really had no desire to pursue a stage career. On the day of auditions, Katie cowered in the back row of the auditorium, twirling her hair around her wrists. That morning she’d woven her hair into two fat braids instead of one, attempting to look the part. It was imperative that she be as perfect as Mrs. Robini claimed because Patty Limerick was a shoe-in for the part of Pan, and Katie had loved Patty since the fourth grade.

They had shared a social studies project, building a diorama of the Sahara desert with glue-on sand, Play-School people wrapped in striped caftans, and Palm trees fashioned from number two pencils and green construction paper. Patty had fussed over Katie's hair, petting it, wondering over it lovingly. "My mother won't let me wear my hair long anymore," she would rub the bare spot at the base of her thin neck. "She says it's too hard to keep."

For the three weeks before the project came due the two would meet in Patty's rec-room planning out their project, reading entries from *The Book of Knowledge* or *Encyclopedia Britannica*: "*The Sahara Desert in northern Africa is the largest desert in the world. It spans the continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea and extends northward from the Niger River and Lake Chad to the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea.*" And when their research became dull, they'd pull bedsheets from the line in Patty's backyard pretending to be escaping slavegirls from a Bedouin harem. Sometimes Katie would bring her Barbies along, and they'd dress them in the glittery outfits Patty's grandmother had made for the busty dolls: ball gowns, bathing suits, lingerie, suits, and fashionable dresses copied from *Vogue*.

For three weeks Patty was Katie's best friend, a friendship which included a sleepover one Saturday night where they sat up and pondered the naked women in *Oui* and *Penthouse* that Patty had swiped from beneath her older brother's mattress. But at the end of twenty-one days, they turned-in their project with a four page paper describing all the pertinent facts and figures about the worlds largest sandbox ("*The name Sahara is from the Arabic word for 'desert' or 'steppe.'* "), and without looking back, Patty returned to her old friends: the girls that would come to primp their puffy locks in the locker room before class. There was no explanation for this betrayal of burgeoning friendship other than peer pressure or the fact that Teerza Zurpowski had a new indoor/outdoor pool, or her parents' insistence that she spend more time and effort at her gymnastic class. With that, Katie spent the next three years worshipping Patty from the chasm of lunchroom tables or rows of desks—a distance that seemed as remote and broad as the Sahara. The girl was far too polite to demand justification

or apology.



There in the back of the auditorium she sat while each student mounted the stage, recited a passage or two, and then Patty had her turn: *"I'll teach you how to jump on the wind's back and then away we go. Wendy, when you are sleeping in your silly bed you might be flying about with me, saying funny things to the stars."* And she bounded across the stage with her thin tumbler's body, her short, frothy hair making a perfect landing on her head. When Mrs. Robini called Katie to the stage, she had the girl deliver Tiger Lily's line "like you're the Queen of all little Indian girls." *"Pirates! Have um scalps? What you say?"* Katie had her arms folded across her premature breasts in every way a princess, in every way the "belle of the Piccaninny tribe."

"You were wonderful." Patty rubbed the almost Indian princess's shoulder. "Your hair looks so much like it ought to."

Katie smiled and lowered her eyes. "You were perfect." But Patty was already bouncing out the backstage door with Teerza—who would most likely be Wendy—talking about what it would feel like to be fixed into the harness while they soared over the stage.

Katie arrived at school early on Monday morning, waiting at the auditorium doors for Mrs. Robini to post the cast list. "As if you had any doubt," her heels clicking, her voice echoing in the still empty hallway. "All you had to do was show up sweetie." She pressed thumb-tacs into the long sheet of yellow legal paper fastening it to the door. Katie dragged her finger down the list of names; Patricia Limerick-Peter Pan; Teerza Zurpowski-Wendy Darling; a list of other students including names of the high school students who would play Mr. and Mrs. Darling, Captain Hook, and the Piccaninny braves. There was Katie's named wedged between Smee and Panther: Katherine O'Shea-Tiger Lily. At the bottom of the list:

Please initial this list to let me know that you have accepted your role. Our first rehearsal will be Wednesday at 7:00 PM. Please pick your scripts up at the office from Miss Windsor. We will be doing a read-thru and I will give you your rehearsal schedule at that time.

Katie pulled a fat marker from the pencil box in her bookbag and wrote in a heavy hand **K.O.** She would bide her time until Wednesday night.



The read-through went well; Katie felt as though she was a part of something special surrounded by the Juniors and Seniors from the adjoining high school. Mrs. Robini had everyone sit in a big circle on the stage; everyone taking turns introducing themselves. Patty and Teerza sat beside one another, giggling, trying to flirt with the boy who was playing Hook by flipping their hair and wiggling about on the floor like slippery fish. Across the big circle Katie sat (Indian style) between a fifth grader who was playing Michael and a little second-grader decked-out in wings who would play a fairy. She watched Katie with unashamed admiration, delivered her lines perfectly and sat perfectly still for the remainder of the read-through. At the end the rehearsal Mrs. Robini passed out the schedule, and Katie's heart dropped as she read in the bleeding purple script of the mimeographed sheet that she would only be needed once a week. "But is it all right if I come anyway?" Her eyes searched the drama teacher's heavily made-up face. "Just to watch. I'd like to come and watch."

"If you're quiet." which was a ridiculously simple request to make of a girl who never spoke in class unless asked to speak.

Katie came the next night to watch Mrs. Robini block Act I. To her surprise, Patty

plunked her muscular bottom in the seat beside her. "They don't need me 'til later," was the explanation. And that was Patty's first words for countless nights; whenever Mrs. Robini rehearsed Act I. The two girls would sit quietly together in the velvety seats of the dark auditorium seats watching the play into a stilted delivery of lines and chalky movement into a living fairy tail. Once costumes and were incorporated, they would sit in the wings behind the backdrop of the Jolly Roger and listen to Teerza attempt an English accent and the boy playing Nana the sheepdog barking wildly as he struggled to carry the pudgy little Michael across the stage. "You don't mind helping me into my harness?" Patty asked one night, and Katie strapped the girl into the leather and nylon bindings, securing the riggings tightly across Patty's knobby little breasts, pulling the buckles between her sturdy thighs, clinching the band against her vagina and buttox.

"Too tight?" she'd ask, tugging at the belt.

"It won't ever feel comfortable." Patty wiggled in the harness, stepping up and down. "Go get Mr. Robini so he can check it." It was OK for Katie to help Patty into her harness, but there would be no flight until Mrs. Robini's husband Tony had given final approval. And Katie would hunker down behind the Jolly Roger watching as two of the bigger high school boys tugged at the pulleys that allowed Peter Pan to take flight.

Once the show opened, Katie didn't get to talk to Patty very much. Everyone was nervous, rushing around making sure the play went off without a hitch. Teerza always forgot some of her lines in the first act, Hook was notorious for losing his wig (once it was yanked off his head when Michael Darling flew in too low during the big fight scene on the Jolly Roger), and the gradeschool children usually had a finger up a nose as well as a tendency to spot relatives in the audience. But Patty was perfect, always on her mark, never a line forgotten, sailing through the air as though she was born to it. Katie found herself in the dressing room quite a bit fending off Mrs. Robini who had taken a personal interest in making sure Tiger Lily looked spectacular: "I played her on Broadway you know," she chimed as she braided gold

silk ribbons into Katie's hair.

During all of this Teerza had been in a continuous state of flirtation with Andrew Morgan who played her brother John. As rehearsals progressed and opening night grew closer, the boy began to return Teerza's affections leaving Patty to seek out Katie's quiet companionship.

"You go home the same way I do don't you?" Patty caught Katie's arm on her way out the backstage door after a Sunday matinee performance.

"Yeah, but I turn off on Pine, and you usually go straight to Bank Street." She shifted her bookbag on her shoulder. "And I road my bike. You always walk because you're closer."

"I walk because my mother won't let me ride my bike." Patty sighed and kicked at a clump of cigarette butts left by Mr. and Mrs. Darling. "She's afraid I'll get hit by a car or fall off and break my arm or something." The lithe girl rolled her eyes. "She wants me to make the national gymnastics team. I had to beg her into letting me do this play."

The moon was just coming up behind the pine trees that surrounded the baseball field. It was warm for April, and the girls had their jackets tied around their waists. Patty's was a blue warm-up jersey with red and white stripes down one arm. She fiddled with the elasticized band of the sleeve, thumbing the little patch of five interlocking rings that decorated the edge. "They think I'm going to make it into the summer Olympics next year."

Katie imagined sitting in front of the television in her living room pointing to the screen, telling her mom, "That's my friend Patty." How her mom would call her dad to the room and say, "Katie has a little friend in the Olympics." And perhaps, if her mom found Patty feminine enough in her little leotard, she might be able to talk her mother into allowing her a haircut like Patty's or even a warm-up suit like the girls on the Olympic team got to wear.

"That would be cool," was all Katie could manage.

"Do you think you could ride me home on your bike? I can ride on the handlebars."

"I don't think I know how." She slipped her bag into the basket on the back and began to work the lock of the chain wrapped around the front tire.

"Then I'll ride you." Patty mounted the banana seat. "Teerza and I do it all the time when mother isn't looking. Hop on," she smiled and patted the handlebars.

Katie paused for a moment, weighing the significance of the opportunity. "But I'm heavier than you."

"No. We weigh the same."

"I don't think—"

"I heard your weight called out in gym class," came the explanation. "115. I'm all muscle, and it weighs a lot." She snatched Katie's hand and placed it on her thigh. "Feel." At first Katie let her hand rest, and then she flexed her fingers into the denim kneading the resistant flesh.

"It's hard!" she pulled her hand away quickly.

"It's all muscle. That's why I don't wear skirts." Patty pointed at the hem of Katie's jumper. "Not like you. My thighs look like logs."

"Mine look like sticks."

"You have pretty legs Katie. That's why Mrs. Robini had your costume made short instead of long."

"I thought it was because the first costume they had wouldn't fit around my chest." She looked down at her swelling breasts as they tried to burst their way out of the neat cotton blouse her mom had pressed that morning.

"What? Are you kidding?" Patty reached out and gently tapped the side of Katie's right breast "Your boobs looked great in that."

With a slight shiver, Katie stepped backward. "Shouldn't we be getting home?"



Patty was an excellent rider. The muscles of her thighs and calves pushed the bike forward into the warm night. With her hands gripping the center of the handlebars, Katie held on, swinging her legs out and forward to avoid running them into the tire. They road down Bank Street in silence, the breeze blowing into their faces, causing their eyes to water a little and Katie's braids to fly back slightly. When they were a block away from the Limerick house, Patty slowed to a stop and dismounted, helping Katie from the handlebars.

"I can't let my mother see me riding like this; she'll be mad at me." They walked the rest of the way, Katie pushing the bike. She felt like she had in the forth grade, like suddenly she was the girl her mother tried to make her. She could talk about girl things, ask girl questions.

"Is Teerza going out with Andrew Morgan?"

"I guess." Patty walked a little faster then turned around and walked backwards, swinging her arms back and forth. "They went to the movies last weekend together. They hang out a lot after school"

"Don't you miss her?"

Patty shrugged and turned herself around facing forward again. "It's not like I got to see her a lot anyway. I have to go to gymnastics class right after school every day." She slowed and looked over at Katie. "There's going to be a cast party after the last show on Saturday night."

"Yeah, I know. Are you going?"

"Can't. Mother's afraid I'll get drunk with the high school boys or something."

"Oh." For weeks Katie had been looking forward to closing night and the cast party. Now the upcoming event lost a bit of its luster and appeal.

"But if you're not going, you could sleepover if you want."

“Yeah. Sure.” Her stomach did a flip flop. “I’ll ask my mom, but I’m sure she’ll let me.”

They were at Patty’s front door; the glow of the yellow porch light painted their faces jaundice. The sound of the Limerick’s television leaked out into the evening. Before Katie knew what was happening, Patty leaned over and hugged her, placing a lip-glossed kiss on her cheek. “See you tomorrow.”

In bed that night Katie stared at the ceiling, imagining the Limerick house the way she remembered it: the red shag carpet in the rec-room, the cushiony sectional sofa in the living room, the smell of lilacs from the tree outside if Patty’s window. Mrs. Limerick always made popcorn, and Patty only had to share the bathroom with her one brother, not six like at Katie’s house. Before she had gone to bed that night she had packed her overnight bag with her best pajamas: a short pink nightgown with eyelet lace around the sleeves and matching panties with a pink satin rose sewn to the waist band.



The week dragged by for Katie as she anticipated Saturday and the sleepover. Even the excitement of Friday’s performance (Hook lost a tooth when one of the pirates misdirected a stage punch in his direction) couldn’t take her mind off of Patty’s invitation. On Saturday she arrived at the auditorium early, having walked the ten blocks from her house lugging her overnight bag. She thought her best option was to put her mind on the show, and so she began her Tiger Lily preparation early. She even allowed Mrs. Robini a little more time on her hair and makeup before lurching out of her seat, almost missing her entrance. At curtain call, the audience gave everyone a standing ovation, and three roses were sent to the stage—one for Patty, one for Teerza (who, in this eleventh hour performance, had finally remembered all of her lines in), and one for Katie—care of the Limerick family.

Backstage was a madhouse as all the young actors gathered their possessions which had collected on shelves and corners over the last two months. Mrs. Robini cried and hugged everyone to the point of asphyxiation before they could leave the building: "You have made me so proud," she'd gurgle and sob. Patty had changed into tight jeans and a T-shirt with a iron-on of Fleetwood-Mac emblazoned across her chest and was washing the makeup from her face when Katie approached the sink to do the same. "No. Don't." Patty took the washcloth from Katie's hand. "It looks really good tonight. Enjoy it." With that, Patty walked over to Katie's bag and replaced the washcloth.

The Mrs. Limerick was waiting for the two girls in the parking lot in front of the school in her big, blue Chrysler: "You girls want some pizza?" This was a big treat for Patty because her mother usually didn't allow "junk food" past her daughter's pre-Olympiad lips, but tonight was special because Patty had a guest, and it was the last night of the play. They went to Pontillo's and ordered a double-cheese with pepperoni and mushrooms, sat in a back booth by the jukebox, drank a pitcher of Coke, and watched the high school boys play pool. Before they left, Katie excused herself to go to the bathroom. "I'll go with you," chimed Patty, and they both scooted past the pool players who whistled at Katie, still in silken braids and makeup.

"Lay off!" Patty sneered at the group. The girls barricaded themselves in the bathroom, giggling.

"What was that about?" Katie said from within the stall.

"Well, look at you!" Patty pulled herself up to peer over the door, hanging there like a monkey. "You're all, I don't know, you're really foxy tonight."

The blush that painted Katie was not reserved for her face; it began at her ankles and made its way up her legs and into her stomach. "Ya think?"

"You're a hot mama," Patty winked and dismounted. "Mother's going to make us go right to bed when we get home you know. We have to go to mass in the morning, but we can

hang out some afterwards.”

“That’s OK.” Katie wiped herself and flushed. When she stepped from the stall, she saw Patty sitting on the edge of the sink shaking her head.

“Yup. One hot mama.”



Moonlight shown through Patty’s bedroom window. Katie knew this because she had lain awake for the last hour staring at the great yellowy disk wondering at this moment.

“Are you awake?”

The voice startled her, and she briefly contemplated faking a quick snore but thought better of it.

“No.”

“Good. I can’t sleep.” Patty rolled over on her side and rose slightly to lean on her elbow. “You looked really pretty tonight.”

Katie continued to stare out the window. “Thanks. But I . . . I’m just sick of being . . .”

Patty reached her free hand out tugged on Katie’s braid. “I wish I had hair like yours.”

“That’s just it. I wish I could cut the whole thing off. It gives me headaches.”

“That’s because you tie it up in knots all the time.” she sat up and slowly began to unfasten the braid she had been fondling. “Let’s set it free.”

Patty’s hands worked deliberately at removing the rubber ties and then untwining the braids and ribbons. Each thick plait came free, raven and kinked from its bondage, and fell across Katie’s pink nightgown. Patty worked her fingers into the strands, spreading them out, fanning them across Katie’s breasts and stomach. She brought her hands up to Katie’s scalp and smoothed the hair out at the roots, rubbing the skull and pressing her thumbs gently into the temples. “How does that feel? Better?”

If there were words for how Katie felt at that moment, she could not remember them. As Patty massaged the skin of her head, she fell into a slight stupor. The queer feeling of excitement and relaxation entered her skin at the same time, and she could only groan a sound of acquiescence.

“Have you ever kissed a boy Katie?” fingers moving from head to neck.

“No. Have you?” moonlight oozing onto the coverlet.

“No.” Patty’s face was so close now. Her breath was still sweet with Colgate. “We could pretend though?” Her hands danced along Katie’s throat and dwindled at the top of the breastbone. Her mouth grazed the side of Katie’s face. “I won’t tell.”

Katie turned her head and met Patty’s mouth with her own. The first soft shock of skin upon skin sent a spasm through her bellybutton and down into the warm spot between her legs. She pressed her lips a little harder against Patty’s mouth, and the girl returned the pressure, this time forcing lips apart with a minty tongue. Hands began to move away from neck and away from the sides of the body and explore breasts and back and stomach, traversing the skin as though a great desert, searching for an oasis. Patty found it first.

Hand against the pelvis, finger on the small knob of flesh which when pressed, caused Katie to quiver and incline herself against the finger. Tongue on neck, on ear, on shoulder. Teeth gently nipping. Katie’s hand found the waistband of satin panties, the tight, round muscle of a gymnast’s buttox; her hands moved to push away the fabric, and Patty moved her legs to free herself.

Fingers pushing and wiggling. Lips searching for a nipple. The moon glowing off of the skin of two thirteen-year-old girls as they both found a place that made the other tremble with a seismic flutterings. And then they curled into each other sleeping harder and deeper than they realized could be possible.



In the morning neither of them took communion using failure to have made confession as an excuse. In the afternoon Patty showed Katie her trophy case which her father had built. It was packed with plaques and medallions and statuesque awards topped with dainty women in graceful poses. On the middle shelf, between a short golden trophy for tumbling and a first place plaque for her team was the diorama. Patty pulled it out carefully and handed it to Katie.

“You kept this?”

“As a reminder.”

“To what?” Katie stared lovingly at the pencil palm trees.

“You.” Her hand rested on Katie’s shoulder.

“But you stopped being my friend after we turned this in . . .”

“No. You stopped talking to me after I started going to gymnastics class every day after school.” Patty looked hard at Katie.

“You started hanging around Teerza.” She felt like slapping this elf-like girl; standing there, lying to her face.

“Teerza has lived across the street from me since first grade. Of course I hang out with her.” Both of Patty’s hands were clasped talon-like on Katie’s shoulders now. Her voice was insistent. “We, I mean, me and you, were friends and then suddenly you didn’t talk to me because you thought I dumped you for Teerza?”

Katie lowered her eyes and studied the little people in the tiny desert. There was a little mirror under a palm tree to represent the oasis. She could see her reflection and her face becoming pink and her hair (still down the way Patty liked it) fell across her cheek in waves and waves of black. “Yes.”

The talons that had been digging into Katie’s shoulders loosened. A cool hand came

up, brushed the hair from her face, wiped a tear from her cheek. A kiss landed softly on her forehead. The diorama disappeared from her hands as Patty placed it back on the shelf and closed the glass doors of the case.

"C'm on." They went outside and sat in the faded wooden seats of Patty's old swingset. The wind blew Katie's hair gently, caught the hem of her skirt and made it rustle and lift against her knees.

"Mother and I are going to Colorado next week." Patty's voice was low and serious. "She and my coach think it's the only way I'll make the Olympic team."

Katie thought she was going to throw up. Her hands gripped the heavy steel chains that linked swing seat to bar. "So you're moving? Before the end of term?"

"Dad doesn't think it's a good idea, but he pretty much does what mother says." The swings swayed back and forth, and their feet pushed in the dirt below creating little clouds of dust. "I just want you to know that, because when I go, I don't want you to think I'm not your friend."

From where she sat, Katie could see the window of Patty's bedroom and the lilac tree which was beginning to lose its bloom. She couldn't remember smelling it the night before. She rose from her seat and walked across the yard, broke off two blooms, walked back to the swingset and handed one to Patty. The wind came up a bit harder and rustled her hair, blowing it into Patty's face. Patty took some of it in her hands and breathed it in along with the scent of the lilac bloom. "God. I wish I had your hair." Their eyes met, and for a moment it seemed they could read each others minds.

"Do me a favor?" Katie swept her long tresses over Patty's shoulders.



A week later Patty and her mother drove the big, blue Chrysler to Colorado. Mrs. Limerick became chummy with the father's of one of Patty's teammate, and by December, had

set up permanent residence in Denver. Teerza and Andrew stopped seeing each other when Teerza's father found out Andrew was the son of a Baptist preacher and not a good Catholic boy. Mrs. Robini took a job at the community college teaching theatre and speech classes to students who would someday become medical assistants and x-ray technicians.

Patty would end up breaking her arm in a dismount, preventing her from placing on team America, but her mother was awarded custody, so she remained in Denver. Her father had the trophy case sent out minus one object but including something much more valuable.

Each night before the two went to sleep, Katie flipped her short hair in the mirror of the tiny diorama oasis, while Patty fondled long black tresses braided into a rope with silk ribbons and the withering blooms of spring lilacs.

W E N D Y

Blue, *Thorns and All*

This is my Emotional Baggage:
I carry it around with me like a passport,
like American Express,
like a driver's license,
like condoms and spermicide.

My Emotional Baggage
is always in the middle of the floor
 blocking my path . . .
always on the stairwell
 waiting to trip me up . . .
always collecting in corners
 Like dust under couches,
 Like 29¢ stamps,
 Like out of date magazines,
 Like books I mean to read,
 Like pens out of ink,
 Like unfinished love letters,
 Like the Glass Menagerie
 . . . like blue roses . . . like blue roses . . .

My Emotional Baggage
won't fit in the overhead compartment
nor pass through customs.
 (Yes, IT has been out of my sight for more than five minutes.
 Yes, I have been approached by someone.
 He has asked me to carry something for him in my baggage.
 My Emotional Baggage is carrying contraband.
 and I can't afford the import duties anyway.
 I always try leaving IT at the airport,
 but when I arrive at my destination,
 IT is always there on the luggage carousel . . .
 circling . . .
 circling.)

She travels fastest who travels lightest;
She travels faster who travels
alone . . .

I do not open my Emotional Baggage,
not on purpose.
But sometimes . . .
 when I attempt to shove it under the bed
 to clear the way for another new lover . . .

*It smells like cheap beer,
tastes like stale perfume.*

(like blue roses)

*It smells like cold coffee,
tastes like dirty sheets.*

(like blue roses)

*It smells like the tenuous, salty kisses of dark-haired boys,
like salty kisses*

like tenuous boys

(like blue roses)

like boys it tastes like dried semen.

It smells like—

like boys . . .

(like blue roses)

like boys . . .

it smells tenuous

like boys,

like tenuous

boys,

It is blue

thorns and all.

I do not open my Emotional Baggage,
not on purpose.
But sometimes . . .
 when my Irish is up
 and the whiskey numbs my throat
 and I'm almost out of cigarettes . . .

I do not open my Emotional Baggage,
not on purpose.
But sometimes . . .
 when I hear the metallic twang of a steel guitar
 or the hurling hush of a 3:00 AM Santa Fe freight train
 or when I play Joni Mitchell's Blue . . .

I do not open my Emotional Baggage,
not on purpose.
Never on purpose.
But sometimes . . .
sometimes . . .
the lock pops,
the zipper splits,
the Velcro rips like leather, vinyl,
like nylon lips . . . open and screaming . . .

I packed in a hurry,
 packed without looking or thinking or—
 I packed in a hurry.
Three-day-old black cotton panties
piled and twisted, twisted and crumpled
beside freshly laundered faded button fly blue jeans . . .
 I packed in a hurry,
and I can't separate the dirty from the clean.
 I packed in a hurry,
and now it all smells like I've worn it once too often.

My Emotional Baggage
smells blue
like stale perfume, dirty sheets,
and dried semen.
My Emotional Baggage
tastes blue
like cheap beer, cold coffee,
and the tenuous, salty kisses of dark-haired boys.
It smells . . .
 smells like blue roses . . . like blue roses . . .
thorns and all.

The Sisters of Wendy

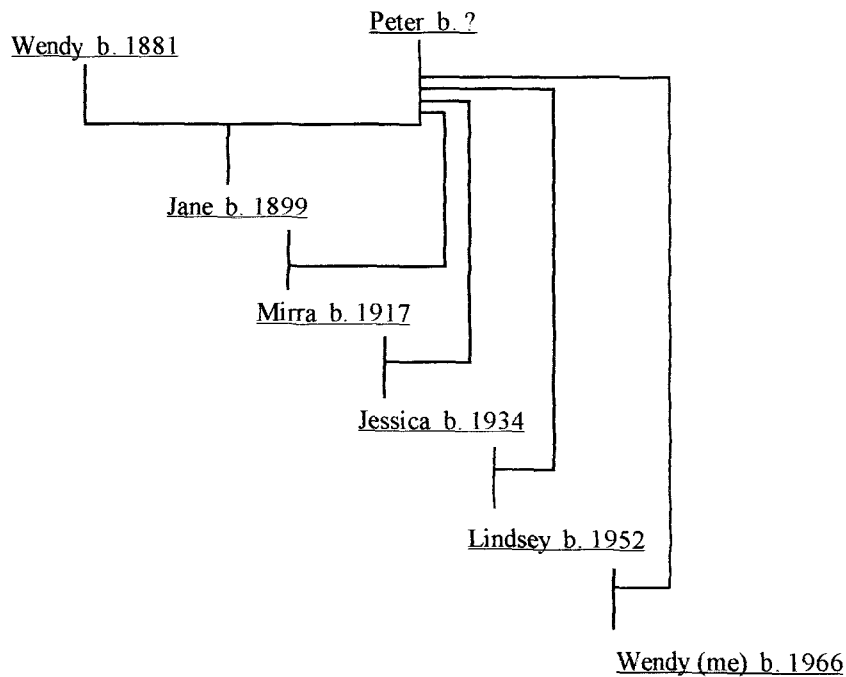
He had an unusually well developed penis for a boy, something more man-sized. I say this in retrospect, having had experience with a number of penises both large and small. None of the women prepared me for this; it was never mentioned in the stories or in Grandmother Darling's diaries. How any of them could omit this outstanding fact surprises me. Perhaps it was polite embarrassment on their part. Although I can't imagine my mother not mentioning it; her memories are quite explicit—graphic to the point where as a child I was often asked to leave the room. She would explain their lovemaking in perfect detail, reliving every gasp and moan and quiver.

The first time he came to me I was sixteen—over the hill by my family's standards. My great-great-great-Grandmother was ten, her daughter Jane was nine, Great-Grammie Mirra was two days shy of her tenth birthday, Grammie was visited at eleven, and mother was the youngest at eight. His late appearance in my life had more to do with my Grammie's intervention than Peter's forgetfulness. Hoping to end the "legacy," Grammie had mother practicing the rhythm method soon after the young girl's cycle began. But as many Catholic women will tell you, this technique is hardly foolproof. So when mother became pregnant with me, Grammie and Papa George packed us all up (me, still well-ensconced in my mother's fourteen-year-old belly) and moved us to the States where she believed we would be safe once and for all.

I grew up in the shadow of Kensington middle-class, English propriety—Grammie rushing around the house as if she were still under the matriarchal eye of the Queen; Papa George humbly accepting his role as grandfather at thirty-five; mother grasping her pillow at night, weeping for her lost love. I went about oblivious to the severity of our particular situation: until I was fifteen, I thought Grammie was my mother. Lindsey was presented to me as my crazy older sister (which isn't far from the truth considering our identical paternal connection) who I should take with a hefty grain of salt. Other than that, I had a "normal" childhood.



The maternal history of my family is the stuff of twentieth century legend. There are those that are privy to the unusual parentage of each new daughter of Wendy—midwives in particular—and those that perpetuate the rumor through speculation and association. Our family tree is decidedly lopsided. When I say that Wendy was the mother of us all, it is figurative. When I say Peter is the father of us all, it is fact:



Peter has never fathered a son, nor have any of his progeny (excepting Wendy) ever reproduced a sibling for the children of Peter. Wendy went on to six attempted births—three miscarriages, two stillborn, and a daughter that survived for six hours before the tiny child’s lungs collapsed—with her husband Roger before dying in childbirth a mere two days before the birth of Mirra.

It was pure luck of a sort that Roger was present within the family at this particular

moment in history: the Great War was raging in Europe, and many, if not most, young husbands were on the continent fighting. Roger had been discharged after the loss of his left hand in a particularly silly accident involving a supposedly dead shell casing and a load of perishables being delivered to his squadron. The details have never been very clear, but it is said that he always elicited a chuckle from his friends when recounting the story. The irony of his missing appendage was the prompt replacement of hand for hook. According to Wendy in her diary from the period:

The thrill of greeting my dear Roger was diminished at the sight of the steel barb attached to his left arm. The way the sun glinted off the hideous thing sent me into a sudden state of horror and revulsion. "Hook!" was the only word I could utter. As my husband advanced, I shrank away, fearing the plank, fearing the menace of my childhood memory. I have asked him never to wear it in my presence nor to leave it in any place where I may encounter it unawares.

Roger, always the loving husband, had a wooden implement fashioned for himself that resembled a hand. In fact, for the next sixteen months until her death, Wendy did her best to minimize the tragedy by fashioning him lovely gloves to wear over the oaken extremity.

Wendy, Roger and Jane were, by all accounts, a happy family: Roger accepting Peter's occasional visits to his step-daughter as customary rather than bothersome. At the very least it proved to him the existence of such a creature. He had met Wendy in France where she was sent to live with a maiden aunt prior to the birth of Jane. It was the intention of the family Darling to give the child over for adoption to some wholesome, provincial farming couple and send Wendy home with explanations as to her absence being the result of introduction into polite society. Roger, being a disillusioned and disinherited man of thirty with few prospects for any favorable monetary matches, fell in love with Wendy and her

middle class upbringing in a Cathedral outside of Marseilles. They were married there a scant month after their first meeting with promises from Wendy's aunt that she would provide a dowry suitable for setting up house. Papa Darling offered the upper rooms of the family's modest home as accommodations for the couple, eventually willing the house to Wendy and Roger (to the dismay of both her brothers). The house was sold some time after Jane's first trip with Peter, in favor of a newer home in a more upscale district. Roger had done well to return to English soil and had made the most of the dowry by starting his own business with a substantial portion of the sum. Fearing that Peter would not be able to find her once Spring cleaning came around, Jane left a map with directions to the new residence nailed to the casement above the nursery window. Peter is very good at reading maps.

After many failed attempts at creating an heir, Wendy again found herself with child only to discover her daughter in an identical state. Because mother and daughter (sister and sister?) became pregnant at nearly the same time and for the sake of propriety, Roger and Wendy decided to hide themselves in a remote part of Scotland until the birth of Mirra (the maiden aunt having passed away years before). Roger eventually claiming Wendy as the mother and never admitting to his daughter's indiscretion buried his wife in the cold ground of some wispy Scottish town and returned home a widower, never to remarry. Like myself, Mirra was raised to believe that her Grandmother was her mother and that her real mother was an older sister.

This would be the practice for the following generations: the stealing away to foreign—or at least far away—soils, returning with a child that never resembled the presumed father. For whatever reason, no one close to the family ever questioned this ritual. This branch of the family has always been deemed a bit eccentric, and so the practice was overlooked by familial ties. Grammie wasn't taking any more chances though, and thought it best that we sever our associations before we spirited away to America: she caused a row between the paternal Darlings (the descendants of Michael and John) which had something to

do over a bit of property in London. She freely admits that she was not in the right but needed some excuse to take her leave without fear of future contact. I'm not sure that Peter keeps tabs on the other branches of my family, but Grammie wasn't going to risk anything. When we left, we left lock, stock, and barrel, without forwarding address, without an unpaid bill or unanswered letter to our name.



Finding my mother's diary was not as tragic as it could have been for a teenage girl. It was stored in an large steamer trunk in the attic of our old house off Central Avenue. The trunk had been hidden in the back of the attic behind boxes and suitcases, an old wardrobe with a broken mirror, and a rack of Grammie's old clothes. It was October, and I had been sent up to the dusty annex to search out a Halloween costume suitable for a fifties sock-hop. Grammie never threw away her "good clothes," so there was a terribly nice selection of taffeta dresses and frilly petticoats, soft angora sweaters, and rhinestone jewelry from the period (why she carted it all the way from England I have no idea, but it certainly was the catalyst for my particular part in the "legacy" she so wished to avoid).

While searching through the taffetas, I bumped my sock-clad toe on something hard just behind the rack of clothes. Thinking I'd discovered another container of sweaters or maybe shoes, I pushed back the dresses and hefted the trunk forward into the center of the attic floor. There was no lock—which seems strange to me considering Grammie's insistence that I grow up without the interference or knowledge of the Pan—but it was still difficult to open the giant steamer due to layers of dust and years of disuse.



Papa Roger lost his life, and therefore his parental duties to Mirra in the spring of 1925. He was sitting in his favorite chair in front of a small fire and fell asleep. A gust wind of wind forced its way down the open flew causing some hot ash to blow out onto the stone

hearth. One of the ashes popped up and landed upon Roger's wooden appendage, catching it on fire. He was burned alive in his wingback.

By this time Jane had married a young man from Liverpool who kindly became the step-father to Mirra. (It never ceases to fascinate me that the men my sisters have chosen have all accepted the fact that their wives were mothers of illegitimate children fathered by a boy who could fly.) Jane was only six when she came to live with her real mother. By all accounts, Jane was a very good mother to her daughter/sister, and her husband (Philip) was an exemplary father. But the appearance of the Pan two days before Mirra's tenth birthday caused a row in the household that Jane described as "that most utterly terrible day when one's heart ceases to function properly, when one's brain turns to fog." Peter arrived late in the evening and stole away with Mirra leaving not a trace of his presence. When Jane insisted it was the Pan and not some Lindbergh-like kidnapping, Philip went into a rage:

He struck me first off and then began to throw the furnishings about the room in his anger. Try as I might, he would not understand nor accept the innocence of this visit. "They are only going for Spring cleaning!" is all I could manage to say. But Philip was convinced that Peter would steal dear Mirra's maidenhead there and then as he had mine, as he had my mother's. Of course, he does not know that my Wendy is also the sister of me as is our daughter. There was a time I thought I would be able to bring him this history, but now I know it is impossible. He sits in Mirra's now with a hunting rifle spread across his lap waiting for the pair to return . . .

Luckily for Peter, Philip had gone out to make water upon the return from Neverland. Peter did not reappear until the late summer of 1933 when Philip was two years dead, drown in a merchant boat off the coast of Cardiff. Jane had been left a sizable restitution from the company for which Philip had been sailing. It seems upon close inspection of the wreckage, the boat had been hauling over its cargo limit—as noted in the log by Philip.

Philip had insisted that the load be lightened, but the executive in charge had threatened termination if Philip did not comply with the company's wishes. To prevent a long legal battle, the said company paid Jane for her silence, and paid in spades—enough to support the family to this day.



The odors that rose from that steamer held the perfume of fairy dust. I am quite familiar with the scent now, but at the time I found it quite disturbing. It's impossible to describe the smell of fairy dust because there is nothing like it in the realm of the known world. Fairies carry a scent all their own which is easily recognizable and somewhat pleasant if one knows what a fairy is supposed to smell like. But if one does not, it tends to cause lightheadedness and nausea. Upon smelling fairy dust for the first time, I immediately ran down the attic stairs and vomited into the toilet.

After washing my face and brushing my teeth, I returned to the attic to inspect the contents of the steamer:



Contents

34 diaries of various sizes, colors, and condition

3 frocks made from leaves and berries—dried and at the point of complete decay

One bag of fairy dust

A book entitled *James Hook: A Pirate's Life* (there is only one entry which is not worth repeating here)

A red feather

A flute carved from dark wood

Numerous pictures of my "sisters" at various ages

A leather portfolio containing a poem written in longhand entitled: *The Song of Tinker Bell*:
translated by Wendy Darling

I think on that day often, for it somehow seems like the first day of my real life. I gathered the diaries together and brought them back to my bedroom. The first order of business was sorting the journals into chronological order. That took several hours as some diaries didn't include the year in their entries, only the day and month. Once that task was completed, I began to read the fairy tale that is my legacy: about Wendy and Michael and John, of Tinker Bell and the band of lost boys, of Hook and the pirates, of Tiger Lily and her tribe, and of the Pan.

All night and into the next day I read the history that had been denied me, and when I came to my mother's diaries, I reread every line. My *mother*. Not my sister. But yes, my sister *and* my mother. And Grammie was sister too as well as Grandmother. It was all very confusing and painful and thrilling.

In the morning I came down from my room carrying the first diary (Wendy's) and the last (Mother's) and set them on the kitchen table. Then I returned to my bed and dreamed of the Pan.



Mirra's pregnancy was a difficult one, and she delivered my Grammie prematurely in an abandon cottage near the Italian border. Jane was there, along with her second husband Paul, to assist in the birth and they delivered Jessica into the world at only four pounds. It was a risk getting the tiny preemie to the nearest town and a competent doctor, but it was the chance that had to be taken. Mirra and baby Jessica spent the next seven months in convalescence while Jane and Paul stood close watch.

Upon returning to the UK, the family purchased a large home in the country, away from peering eyes or questioning family. Although Grammie was raised on stories of the Pan, she was warned not to involve herself physically. Mirra's near death was cause for worry amongst the immediate family, and she did not want her daughter to suffer the same fate.

When Grammie was eleven, Peter came bounding through her bedroom window, not to be greeted by the joyful face of an expectant child, but by a suspicious face of a girl who had both good and bad about this boy. World War II was just about to come to an abrupt and sure end, and nerves were still running high. Jessica was taught to fear that which she didn't know or understand. And Peter, as charming as he could be, was one of those things:

He is strange, and his ways are strange and so is his speech. I cannot tolerate the smell of fairy dust, nor can I stomach flying. And yet, when he plays his flute, he calms me so. He has not made any overt gestures, but I am prepared . . .

But she wasn't prepared, in fact, from the entries in her journal, it seems she hardly understood the sexual process at all:

It was painful and messy. I will explain this situation to mother lest she scold me for soiling my dress. I did not know sharing a kiss would be so entirely unpleasant.

So Grammie learned fast. When Mother was born, she swore it would never happen again. Jane was not convinced that Grammie understood the power of the Pan, and Mirra could only sigh at the luck that Lindsey was born at the correct time and in a Swiss hospital. Mirra's husband Thomas was in agreement however, and made himself lord and protector over both Grammie and Mother. The name Pan was never to be mentioned to the girl, and Lindsey's room would have bars installed on the windows which could only be unlocked from the inside, and Thomas kept that key on a gold chain around his neck.

Young Lindsey was clever though. She had her ear to the wall and listened to the grownups talking about this fascinating boy who could fly and who knew fairies and pirates and mermaids. Mother would escape the confines of the house and of Thomas' (and soon George's) watchful eye and run into the gardens, crowing and crowing and crowing, hoping that the Pan would hear her.

I did it until I was horse and my throat burned from the crowing. But he came. He CAME! Oh there he was, magnificent and beautiful and full of light and life. He floated outside my window, staring through the bars. "Are you my mother?" And that voice, that voice. It took all my courage and cunning to sneak from my room to the room where Grammie Jane once slept. I stuck my head through the window and whispered, "Here." And the happy thought that I had was of this marvelous boy and myself flying on the wind. Next I knew, I was floating, and we sped off to Never Neverland.



Grammie wouldn't speak to me; mother was overjoyed when I called her to tell her I knew, and George . . . well George had washed his hands of it the night Lindsey escaped. "She was gone for two years!" was all he could say. Grammie reminded me that the shock of Mother's overdue stay drove Mirra mad to the point where she attempted flight. She sprinkled herself with fairy dust and was able to get as far as the east garden before plummeting to the trees below. Presumably she lost her happy thought. She died three days later in between floating and falling in her bed.



"Call him. Try." My mother whispered to me over the phone. "Don't let them stop you. And don't let ma start in on the evil legacy rubbish. You're on the Pill, right?"

I was. Had been since the day the school nurse called Grammie into the school infirmary to tell her I was "a woman." So I began crowing. Not a lot at first, and certainly

not in places where I might be observed, but I surely did do a lot of it. Grammie told it me it was of no use: "You're too old for him now. He has to win you over when you're young. You're almost over the hill by his clock."

For the next year I crowed and crowed into the air of this mid-western town. It got to the point where I considered Grammie's words as the truth. Not only was I too old, I was over an ocean and half way across a continent. Could the Pan hear me from that distance?



He came to me in the summer before my junior year in high school. He stood there in front of me, so small, and I'm only five foot, two inches. His eyes just met my breasts. "I've been looking for you." And his voice was like a million angels on the head of a pin. "Are you my mother?"

"Perhaps." And I knelt down to him, embraced him in my arms, breathed in the heavy sent of loam and fairy dust and what I would come to know as the taste of mermaid and the fury of wind. "Father," I whispered in his tiny ear, "take me home."

DR2k

I want to be Donna Reed:
Just woke up one morning to the sound of my hormonal alarm clock
Blaring away at me with a Bong
That rivaled Big Ben's Bell.

Don't get me wrong;
I tried to avoid it,
tried to reset that clock,
fool it into thinking I was a twenty-two year old nymphet
without a care or commitment in the world.
But you can't stop it from ticking like the bomb that it is
tick tick tick
KABLOOM

And suddenly . . .

I want to be Donna Reed:
But not the Black and White Donna Reed—
(Not the epitome of womanhood in a pearl choker and high heels—
Not that Donna Reed.
I want to be the Donna Reed in a pearl belly chain,
Thigh high patent leather boots
And a g-string.
I want to wield my spatula with unavoidable zeal
as both a cooking implement
and a possible object de l'amore.

I want to be Donna Reed 2000.
Driving around town in her station wagon,
or better yet,
A Mini Van.
Can you imagine me drivin around town in my mini van
Dressed to kill in my Donna Reed 2000 outfit
Stopping at the market to pick up some groceries
Then coming home to my perfect picket fence and
Crayola Green lawn
Comin home to bake a big ass all American apple pie for my . . .

OK, this is the part that I haven't gotten to yet because
HIS clock hasn't exactly gotten to the ringing stage.
I'm not even sure if it's at the ticking stage.

Here I am
Wanting to be bakin cookies
While simultaneously covering every square inch of my body in batter
and pinning my man to the kitchen table

So he can lick it off my boot-clad thighs.

Here I am

Wanting to be the Nouveau June Cleaver to his rock 'n roll Ward

(Honey, would you come upstairs and have a look at the beaver.)

And it scares the shit out of him:

(The way he avoids me when I run around the house wearing
nothing but a white bra and panties and a towel on my head . . .

I can tell . . .)

For him

Domesticity means settling down.

And settling down means sex once a week

(if he's lucky)

In the dark

Missionary position

With the same person

Forever.

For me

Domesticity means

Donna Reed 2000

The homemaker who has a copy of the Joy of Cooking

AND

The Joy of Sex on the same shelf in her pantry.

For him

It means the loss of freedom he craves.

For me

It means sharing my free spirit.

For him

It means facing mortality.

For me

It means enjoying life while I have it.

For him

It means facing the music.

For me

It means singing the song.

For him

It means growing old.

For me

It means growing up.



All These Pretty Boys

I

This one reminded me of a cat not accustomed to his size. A friend for cigarettes and long car rides,

the way he bites my neck or licks my boot. He left a tattoo of his perfect teeth in the flesh above my pubis

as a reminder to write. He fucks for hours—roughly, without smiling. He kisses hard and takes his coffee black.

II

This one was over before it started. It was those damn leather pants—the way he stood three feet away without speaking

until I pulled him along with a thick rope of rum and a promise of saki. Earnest backseat kisses exchanged through October streets

before he made his excuses. He had mass in the morning. Catholic boys are always such teases.

III

This one was fine and long. A dark flower, deep voice canyon echoes. A real seducer. And knowing this, fixated upon his own beauty.

I am suspicious of beautiful boys. Told him so in the yellow hotel light.

“You know you’re pretty. This makes me want you less.” I lit a cigarette, crossed my legs.

He smiled at me, let down his hair all black ocean water waves and ripples, spread it across me, drowning me with inky strands.

How was I supposed to say no to that?

IV

This one is another artist with bone dry hands and two faces both smiling with too many interesting teeth.

Relishing the chase, he prefers my retreat, wants me to meet his brother, had his heart broken, still doesn’t know

the difference between sex and love. He wants more from me than he’s willing to admit or I’m willing to give.

All These Pretty Boys

He's surprised when I give him drunken kisses. Surprised that I bite his lip. Surprised that I refuse his only invitation into his bed.

V

This one was too pretty. Fresh fruit.

Pretty thing with those giant brown eyes always staring right at me when I was speaking.

I want and want.

I'll leave him for a younger hand to pick, though.

No need bruising fresh fruit.

VI

This one took my fingers in his mouth; surprised me—the laziness of his sigh against my hand, his head upon the flesh of my thigh.

It was innocence to me. Kindness on my part to act as pillow, as mother to sleeping child—cradle, cradle in the plastic-lined seat

with his heavy head against me, breath (not far from my resting hand) became aimed as lips gently grazed knuckle.

The excuses I made: *perhaps he doesn't realize . . . he is only dreaming perhaps . . .* until his mouth pressed harder,

his tongue looped around my nail, precise and tight as a boa. "Oh, dear God." I tapped him gently.

Lips upon palm, his fingers circling my knee cap, my nipples puckering, thighs tensing, the wet between my legs. I made him stop.

This we do not speak of.

VII

This one I belong to with a voice like sandpaper on rusting tin cans. He owns me like the stray I am.

All these pretty boys I have, this one binds me with knots too thick and wet to untie. I am fascinated with the curve of his ass as he naps beside me. He holds me against him suddenly, hard.

He tells me I'm cute when I wear sneakers and a short dress. Tells me I snore and steal the blankets

but misses me in his bed all the same. He cut his magnificent hair when I suggested the change.

He bought a suit.

I want to let him keep me.

Afterthought: A Tinker Bell Story

Anonymous:

Note 1 Left on Front Door:

August 11, 19[REDACTED]

someone said you
were looking for
belle? she was at the
pit last night
do you have my
drill bit?

The Irishman:

Page torn from an old book

Given to me outside of Canter's

August 21, 19[redacted]

CHILDREN born of fairy stock
 Never need for shirt or frock,
 Never want for food or fire,
 Always get their heart's desire:
 Jingle pockets full of gold,
 Marry when they're seven years old,
 Every fairy child may keep
 Two strong ponies and ten sheep;
 All have houses, each his own,
 Built of brick or granite stone;
 They live on cherries, they run wild
 I'd love to be a Fairy's child.

*Saw her in Van Nuys feeding squirrels, I told her you were looking for her. She gave me this to give to The Boy.
 Good Luck S.*

The Girl:

Letter From W [REDACTED]

Includes photo: Jane age 5 with sheepdog

Received September 2, 19 [REDACTED]

August 29, 19 [REDACTED]

Dear S [REDACTED]

So very wonderful to hear from you after all these years. When I heard your voice on my answering machine, I almost cried. It's been too long.

What really shook me up was that I just saw The Boy last week! My little girl (Jane, remember?) and I drove down to L.A. to visit some friends in Glendale, and I took her up to the observatory in Griffith Park. We were staring through those scopes. The ones you can look through for a quarter. We were looking down on that yellow halo of smog that's perpetually floating above Hollywood, when the lens went black. "You can't really see it that way. Why don't you just take her down there?" It was him!

Damn that voice. You can't ignore it, can't turn away. But you know what I mean. Right? He was sitting up on the metal railing--poised, as if he had just landed there--beautiful and cocksure as always with that slight gap in his front teeth. "Good for spitting," is what he used to tell me, "And other things." Yes! (Ha Ha)

He looked so beautiful, S [REDACTED] I want to say pretty, but he always hated being called pretty. I swear he hasn't aged a day. He looks just like he did. How long ago is it now? I don't want to think that far back. But I'm not exaggerating. There isn't a crease or a wrinkle or a gray hair. He's absolutely the same. If I

didn't know better, I'd think he was still all of seventeen--although he never claimed to be anything above fifteen. I always thought that was a bit strange, didn't you? Then again, I never claim to be anything less than twenty-five. (Ha Ha)

He was all by himself. Now that's odd because he and Belle were constantly together, weren't they?. They always looked out for one another when I was around. Granted, she gave him hell all the time, but he wasn't the easiest person to live with. When I asked him where Belle was, he looked at me as though I was made of glass, as though I wasn't even there. Scary. When I was younger, I didn't really notice it the way I notice it now. He was so impressive to me back then. I always believed he was thinking some very deep thought, something I'd never be able to comprehend. What can I say? I was sixteen.

He offered to take me and Jane to Hollywood for the afternoon, but I just--you know how I feel about it now. There's a lot of great memories down there, but I'm afraid someone (the wrong someone) would recognize me and all hell would break loose. I can't go tramping along Melrose and Sunset and the boulevard like a teenager anymore. But I let him take Jane down for the afternoon while I went to see my friends. It was nice to have some grown-up time. You remember how great he is with kids. He's all she talked about on the way home. She's five now you know. She's the loveliest thing in the world; I can't imagine my life without her. I'm sending you a picture.

But to answer your question, no, I have neither seen nor heard from Belle (as if she would call me) since the last time I saw The Boy. That was before Jane was born. I was there for a month or so during the summer of 19█. Actually, that was probably the last time I was in Hollywood. Can you believe it? But Belle looked as gorgeous as ever. She is such a tiny thing, so delicate. I have to laugh though, because she was always screaming at him in French, so of course he didn't

pay one bit of attention to her except to translate for me. What a mouth she had on her! He made the trip up to Oakland just to get me--dragged her along and everything. He joked that she wasn't woman enough to keep the house. I didn't think that was really very fair. He was living there rent free.

It wouldn't surprise me at all if she just packed up and left him. Although, I do remember The Boy saying something once about there being some kind of cancer or something in her family. She was a little pale now that I think of it. That is, paler than usual. It makes me a little sad. She and I never got along very well--OK, so she hated me--but I wasn't very adept at that age. In fact, I still don't quite understand what kind of relationship they had. Were they lovers or just close friends? Maybe you can answer that question for me. I don't know. He didn't always treat her very well though.

Sorry I can't be of any help. But if I hear of anything, I'll let you know. Again, it was so nice to hear your voice. If you're up this way, you know you're always welcome. It's been too long. Let's not lose touch again.

All My Love,

We [REDACTED]

PS My new book is coming out in October, so I'll make sure you get a copy.

PSS Have you called Jo [REDACTED] or M [REDACTED]? Jo [REDACTED] is at 310-549-[REDACTED] and

M [REDACTED] is at 818-672-[REDACTED]

The Dealer:

From a message left on voice-mail

Transcribed by S [REDACTED]:

September 30, 19 [REDACTED]

MESSAGE BEGINS: 3:47:35 AM

H [REDACTED] It's his fuckin machine. He fuckin ain't home.

VOICE IN BACKGROUND: Well, leave him a message.

H [REDACTED] What if I don't want to leave him a fuckin message?
[Pause] Ah, shit. OK, so, this is H [REDACTED] as if you didn't know already.
At first I thought this was another one of The Boy's attempts to fuck
me over. He fuckin ruined me in Hollywood man. You all fuckin did.
Turned me into some fuckin gimp. Including that little foreign bitch.
But you're lucky man. I ran into Irish tonight at the Bow, and he
told me you were legit about all this. But what I'm sayin man is why
the fuck would I fuckin know where Belle is? Like she hangs with
me. Like I fuckin even give a fuck. Man, isn't it enough that you
freaks fuckin put me in the hospital? I ain't gettin near you cats or
your fuckin ladies. I thought we established that--what?--fuckin fifteen
years ago?--

VOICE IN BACKGROUND: Tell him what you told me H [REDACTED] What's
it going to hurt now?

H [REDACTED] Yeah, yeah. I'm gettin to it ya fat Irish fuck. OK. So you're lookin for Belle. Last time I saw her was in August, down in Marina Del Ray. She wasn't lookin so hot, if you know what I mean. I thought she had some kind of inheritance or something--ya know, some major cash laid back. But fuck if she didn't look like some fuckin homeless crack-baby. She wouldn't talk to me except in whatever fuckin dope language she speaks to The Boy in. I mean, fuck, I can't stand the bitch, but she looked so fucked-up I felt sorta sorry for her. I was gonna give her some money or a ride or something, but she fuckin kept screamin at me, so I bailed. So that's all I know man. So don't fuckin bother me again.

END OF MESSAGE: 3:49:26 AM

Anonymous:

Note 2 Left on Front Door:

October 2, 19 [REDACTED]

thanks for the drill
bit. saw her at the
barndance last tuesday

The Professor/Brother:

E-mail Message From J [REDACTED]

Subj: Re: Belle
Date: 10/7/ [REDACTED] 1:05:01 PM Eastern Standard Time
From: drdarling@usc.edu
To: noboy@neverland.com

It's difficult to keep up with you these days. My big sister tells me you're doing well-- but then I read about that in the Times along with the rest of California. Not running with the old crowd I see. Just as well for all of us these days if that period of our lives was forgotten. That's why I was surprised to get your e-mail about Belle.

I've done my best to live down those capricious days of my youth. It nearly cost me Harvard. W [REDACTED], she can live with the memories to one degree or another, but M [REDACTED] and I are a different story. We were all just boys back then. I would have thought all the kindness my parents showed you would have caused you to leave that particular past behind.

I remember Belle, but I do not think of her. In fact, there are days when I've questioned her existence.. I'm not sure if I'm relieved or flustered to find that there was such a person. With that said, you can understand why it seems ludicrous to me that I would have any information about the woman.

Leave well-enough alone, S [REDACTED]. You have a lovely wife to keep you happy. You should be working on new memories, not digging up old ones.

We should get together for dinner, bring along our significant others. I'm giving a lecture next month on the effects of flight on WWI German army strategies. I will put your name on the guest list. Perhaps we can have lunch then.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Dr. J [REDACTED] D [REDACTED]

----- Headers -----
Return-Path: <drdarling@usc.edu>
Received: from rly-za04.mx.neverland.com (rly-za04.mail.neverland.com [172.31.36.100]) by air-za04.mail.neverland.com (v56.24) with SMTP; Sun, 07 Oct 19** 13:05:01 1900
Received: from mailhost.cas.usc.edu (MAILHOST.CAS.USC.EDU [128.169.76.44])
by rly-za04.mx.neverland.com (8.8.8/8.8.5/NEVERLAND-4.0.0)
with ESMTP id NAA17619 for <noboy@neverland.com>;
Received: from moe.cas.usc.edu (MOE.CAS.USC.EDU [128.169.76.68])
by mailhost.cas.usc.edu (8.9.1a/8.9.0) with ESMTP id NAA05458
for <noboy@neverland.com>; Sun, 7 Oct 19** 13:04:59 -0500 (EST)

The Native American:

Message left on windshield

Written on back of Band Flyer (included)

November 12, 19[REDACTED]

Hey there sweet thing! Long time no see!

We got back from tour 3 weeks ago. Glad to be back here in
La La Land. What's this about Belle? I saw miss thing the
day we got back. I had lunch with her at Benito's. She said
she'd be at the show . . . so . . .
you ought to come out for it. I got a new drummer

(surprise?) He's all that. I'm getting too old for this shit.
Have you seen The Boy about? (YUM) If you do tell the Tiger's
back in town. Grrrrrrrrr I hope this is your car. If it's
not I hope it's not some psycho's.

CALL ME CALL ME CALL ME!!!! same number as always.

How could you forget?

Love ya darlin!!!



Me
Tiger Lily



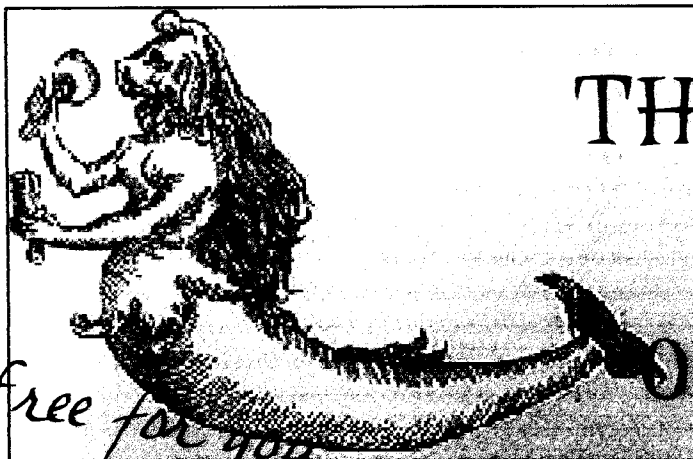
XOXOXOXOXO

XOXOXO

&

the Indians

9:00 PM



THE LAGOON

ON SUNSET

Free for you

babe

Friday Night

\$5 w/ this Flyer

Anonymous:

Note 3 Left on Front Door:

November 19, 19[REDACTED]

she's living in the
valley! oh by the way,
i'm moving to new
york next week good
luck in life

The Boy:

From a message left on voice-mail

Transcribed by S [REDACTED]

November 27, 19 [REDACTED]

MESSAGE BEGINS: 6:23:46 PM

THE BOY: Happy Thanksgiving ya big turkey! [pause] I guess you're not there are you? Shoulda figured that out. You're all probably sitting around some table eating like there's no tomorrow, glad to be off work until Monday. Yeah, well, I'm off today, tomorrow, the weekend and next week too. [laughs] [long pause] Um. I'm just wanting to say a few things about Belle 'cause I know you've been asking around about her. [pause] I really didn't want to do it on an answering machine. So, ah, I'll try again later. See Ya.

END OF MESSAGE: 6:24:53 PM

From a message left on voice-mail

Transcribed by S [REDACTED]

November 27, 19 [REDACTED]

MESSAGE BEGINS: 11:37:28 PM

THE BOY: You there yet? Hello? [pause] Hello?.

END OF MESSAGE: 11:37:39 PM

From a message left on voice-mail

Transcribed by S [REDACTED]

November 28, 19 [REDACTED]

MESSAGE BEGINS: 12:21:11 AM

THE BOY: You can't possibly be stuffing your face still. [laugh]
[pause] Look, I'm here at my place—Belle's old place. [pause] The
old place. Yeah, and, um, she's taken off on me. She didn't leave a
note or— [pause] I mean, this didn't just happen; it— [pause] It
was back over the summer, but I saw her around, you know. I mean,
we're friends— [pause] I guess friends. [pause] I think she wanted
more from me than— [pause] —well, you know. Right? It was
always some big fight, and me having to translate everything into
English for you guys. [laugh] [pause] I guess it's just that I haven't
seen her either now for—she's just not been around, you know. And
I'm getting— [pause] Look, she does this kind of stuff. That's who
she is. She's always been that way, and that's why I've always hung
with her. But she started gettin real serious about it all a few years
back. [pause] Whatever. So, um, look, I just thought you should
know. Later.

END OF MESSAGE: 11:23:48 PM

The Irishman:

Given to me outside of Canter's

January 3, 19[REDACTED]

December 11, 19[REDACTED]

I saw her again. Not good at all. She's as H[REDACTED] says she was, not herself. Sad little thing. So very small and pale. It was quite shocking. Lovely lass once. She asked me what I believed in. Good question. Certainly not H[REDACTED]. Certainly not this city. I was old when you were still a wee street punk. Now people call us both sir. The only one who seems to have gotten through this city unscathed is The Boy. I can't tell if he believes in everything or nothing or only what's in front of his face at the moment. I always thought he believed in Belle though. Or maybe it's she that stopped believing in him.

I'm sorry to wax poetic on you lad, but there comes a point in a man's life where he has to wonder what it was all for and who he can count on to help him in his old age. I could

say, "Well at least I've got my memories," but even they seem to get a bit fuzzier with the years. Perhaps it's the whiskey.

She told me to tell you something to remember in case you saw The Boy. She had me write it down.

A fairy only lives as long a time
as a feather is blown about the air
on a windy day.

Possibly this all makes sense to you? She said she was getting out of town while the getting was good. I'm tending to think she has the correct idea. She had a child with her. A little boy with a gap in his teeth. The little bugger spat at me! Imagine that!

S

PS. I believe she'll be ok, if that makes any difference, or if you trust my opinion at all...

Anonymous:

Postcard:

June 20, 19[REDACTED]



The mermaid parade at Coney Island, New York City.
New York. AP Photo

new york is
great. wish
you were here.
believe me...



St [REDACTED]
619 g [REDACTED]
hollywood, ca
90036

From: *The Song of Tinker Bell*

In the trees I would sit and listen to you play your flute. Remember the trees?
The banyans

or the rough oaks, the limbs' great strong arms, rocking us like your missing
mother? The light? the way it danced

off the lagoon when the moon was a half circle? The mermaids' tails slipping
in and out of the water, silver, iridescent.

You sat me in the soft waxy petals of a magnolia blossom, sprinkled me with
heady jasmine flowers—thick perfume

lacing my wings. *You are my best friend*, you whispered through the space in
your teeth. I will always hate you for this.

A pair of hands, palms up, holding a book. The hands are rendered in a halftone or stippled style. The book is held in the center, with its cover and pages visible. The text is printed on the book cover.

poetry
from

LADY

FRANZ STEN

Lady Frankenstein

She's alive, this creature as loyal as a dog, as precocious as a cat.
I lost her, turned her out; now all love parts company easily in her trembling arms.
They see her as terribly dangerous;
they can't place her in their memory.

She asks me why love parts her company so easily.
"I made you this way, for your own good,
so people won't place you in their memory and condemn me."
Now she's wearing on my nerves.

I made her tough for her own good,
although she stands here, tender, exposed and begging,
wearing nothing but her nerves,
demanding asylum—*doesn't God provide sanctuary to the penitent?*

What makes her terribly dangerous?
She's alive, this creature as loyal as a dog, as precocious as a cat.
 She's alive.

Body of Work

I. Dick-tation

All my life they've told me I'm a smart girl with lots of promise.
They told me I should have something to fall back on
like secretarial work or my ass.
They were the experts, so I guess they know best.

They told me I should have something to fall back on,
so I went to school and made good grades and made good contacts.
They were the experts, so I guess they knew best
when they told me I ought to find myself a good man.

I went to school and made good grades and made good contacts,
got my Ph.D., got made by men who wanted to make me make them, who told me,
"You ought to find yourself a good man, you ought to have drinks with me at six."
(Behind every good man is the Ph.D. making his coffee and going down on him at lunch.)

Like a good secretary,
I'm told I'm a smart girl with lots of promise.

II. My Body of Work

I have baby making hips, or so I've been told.
Hips that could carry the next president of the United States.
My body of work has come to this:
That I could be the mother of rulers.

These hips *could* carry the next president of the United States,
supposing I could keep you here long enough to help me with the job.
That I could bear the ruler of the world presupposes
my ability to bear the father of rulers.

But supposing I could keep you here long enough,
I'd let you trace the stretch marks of every failed diet and successful depression,
because my ability to bear the father of rulers
is something I'm infamous for doing.

My body of work has come to this:
I have baby making hips.

III: Nose to the Bump & Grindstone

In this iniquitous place known as a man's world the
most honest job I ever had was as a stripper in a topless bar.
They called us exotic as in rare tropical birds prime for the plucking or
the pink frothy drinks speared with colorful paper umbrellas.

The most honest job I ever had was as an exotic dancer.
Pressing my nipples against the eager faces of well tailored men
with cocks resembling pink frothy drinks or colorful paper umbrellas,
spurting off load after load in the sparkling tiled bathroom.

Pressing my nipples against their well-tailored cocks,
offering them a red gartered thigh as a flesh money clip
before the went off to spurt load after load in the bathroom,
going home to their well-preserved wives, claiming they were too tired to fuck.

I was exotic like a rare tropical bird . . .
in a man's world.

IV. The Difference Between Nude and Naked

As a girl I used to pull off all of my clothes and run around the house naked.
(I've seen pictures of myself wearing the oversized t-shirts of my older brothers.)
Standing in front of the mirror, I'd examine my hairless form
amazed at it's simple complexity, it's subtle prosaics, my tiny nipples

before mother would cover me in the oversized t-shirts of my older brothers
explaining to me how little boys and bad men weren't interested in
my simple complexity, or subtle prosaics, just my tiny nipples,
that I couldn't do this all my life, that it wouldn't always be the same when I grew up.

Boys and bad men were never interested in
the fine line between nude and naked—but they'll pay for either.
I learned I couldn't do this all my life without it hurting;
without the self criticism or shame.

Now I avoid mirrors, sidestep my hairless form
because I want to pull off my clothes and run around the house naked.

Write Your Name in the Space Provided

I been looking to free up some space, free up my hard drive,
make room for being alive and alone without regrets
or obligations. I'm looking to take a holiday from cohabitation
(although habit may take some getting used to
'cause I like the sound of your feet
walking through my door. But that's just my heart talking,
or maybe something just as warm, and soggy and sore.)

See, I've shared all I've got with you,
but you never put my stuff back where you found it.
I found myself walking through rooms trying to walk over it,
step around it because it wasn't my mess to clean up.
I put things back where they belong when I'm finished with them.
I haven't made a mess of things in a long time,
and I'm starting to feel downright sloppy.

I'm looking for the greatest wide open: a place
to leave my clutter, where I can putter about and think
other things. Think all my thoughts and dream all my hopes
close a door, open a window forget the sounds 'cept my sounds
my heart vibration and timpani creating
a visceral symphony that drowns out all you boys who get to me.

Space and time hooked up someplace and left me fending
for a table
the corner of a bed
an empty chair
or patch of grass
any place I could find that I could say was mine all mine
a place to stretch out,
spread my wings,
wiggle my toes,
scratch my ass
even if no one was looking at my ass.
I shared a room with my sister
shared a house with my brother
shared various spaces with each new friend and miscellaneous lover that had space to let.
Then I tried it with you (though I tend to forget that I promised myself
not to give up my spaces for tender voices and pretty faces).
I tried it with you and on a trial basis, and I didn't get off with a slap on the wrist.
Now I'm holding out for an acquittal
because this cell isn't big enough for both of us to exist.

I see space like American Airlines sees the friendly skies;

Write Your Name in the Space Provided

like Captain Kirk sees the final frontier:
a place to fly my enterprise.
I need space because I need to control it.
Like they say about virtue, I need to extol it.
Space is the only thing left I can claim;
it's the only thing left when there's no one to blame but myself
and everyone else and you.
I think of this space like a young girl's first diary:
This space is personal,
And waiting to inspire me.

Her-sterical

I. *The Rest Cure*

They told her she was hysterical fifteen years after she sailed into the shadow of Lady Liberty. Hysterical because she cried into her feather pillow at night, refused to enter the soiled corridors of the shoe factory off Main Street, refused to cook, clean or lay down and be fucked properly by her sunbaked husband.

The green fields and black dirt hills of this new country grew sour in her belly, the smell of oil and leather and refinement.

The new child cried in her crib, the boys went off to the corn and cabbage, and she was hysterical, dreaming about County Waterford, her mother's soda bread, sewing the buttons on her father's shirts,

making heavy lye soap in the iron pot near the herb garden—the usefulness of it.

Now she was hysterical on a heavy wooden table outside of Stafford, the ether dizzying, her arms leaden, her thighs strapped.

There would be morphine later and a strange sore scar, the assurance

that this would make it better as she nailed the wooden heels to the soft leather souls of shoes she would never wear.

II. *Sometimes a Cigar is Just A Cigar*

They told her she was hysterical after her refusal to marry a good Irish-Catholic boy from a good family,

with his own forty acres and fifty head of dairy cows. Her maiden aunt sent her away

to the man with the long face and dark green sofa after Father Patrick threatened her with the nunnery.

And she was hysterical because she hadn't a penis to fuck with properly there in the paneled

hysterical: characterized by, or suffering from hysteria or uncontrollably emotional, or agitated.

hysteria: marked by a fit of uncontrollable laughter or weeping. From the Greek, suffering in the womb.

Industrial Revolution: the shift, at different times in different countries, from a traditional agriculturally based economy to one based on the mechanized production of manufactured goods in large-scale enterprises.

Waterford: a city in the South Republic of Ireland on the Suir River, at the head of Waterford Harbour. Settled early in the Christian era, when it was known as Cuan-no-groith.

hysterectomy: surgical removal of the uterus, one of the most common of all surgical procedures. After hysterectomy, a woman no longer menstruates, and she is unable to bear children.

scar: a blemish remaining as a trace of damage or use. A mark indicating a former point of attachment.

Freud, Sigmund: (1856-1939), Austrian physician, neurologist, and founder of psychoanalysis.

psychoanalysis: name applied to a specific method of investigating unconscious mental processes to explain causes of neurotic disturbances.

penis envy: something that does not exist amongst women, only among men.

room
with the foreign gentleman in the heavy suit who
rolled his r's and kept his pointed beak
pressed
into the pages of a leather-bound book as thick
and daunting as Da's bible, who looked up
only to say

vagina, or penis, or ego. And she was hysterical
because she hated her mother,
because she wanted to put Da's shrunken cock be-
tween her pouting mouth.
The no sound of poetry dripping from her lips as
she said, "I do," in front of the boy, her Da,
mother, and God:

smell of incense, the sacraments, the asphyxiation
of the gold band. And now she never walked
past the Gothic turrets
of the university on her way to the market—even
though it was the shortest and best route.

III. Instant Pudding

They said she was hysterical after she refused to
hold the cocktail party. "C'm on honey and be
a good girl."

All those years studying turned into cocktail par-
ties, cocktail dresses, cocktail napkins, and the
search for the perfect meatloaf.

She was the most well-educated piece of ass in the
neighborhood—she knew 50 ways to prepare
JELL-O,

40 things to do with powdered milk, 30 ways to
prepare leftovers, 20 positions to please her
husband,

and zero ways to keep herself from going hysteri-
cal when she packed the boys' lunch every
morning.

And she was hysterical because, "*women have it so
much easier these days with all these new-fangled
gadgets . . .*"

as she pressed the pleats in her skirt, did her lips
up deep red, adjusted her pearls, took the yel-

*Genesis 19:35&36: and the younger daughter
went and lay with him. So both of Lot's
daughters became pregnant by their father.*

*ego: The "I" or self of any person; the con-
scious, rational component of the psyche.*

*Electra Complex: an unresolved, unconscious
libidinous desire of a daughter for her fa-
ther.*

*marriage of convenience: a marriage entered
into chiefly for social, political, or economic
advantage, usu. without love.*

*sacrament: any of several liturgical actions of
the Christian church, believed to have been
instituted by Christ and to communicate
the grace or power of God through the use
of material objects.*

*cocktail party: a social gathering, usu. held in
the early evening, at which cocktails and
light refreshments are served.*

*JELL-O Creamy Fruited Mold: Stir boiling
water into gelatin in medium bowl at least
2 minutes until completely dissolved. Stir
in cold water. Refrigerate about 1-1/4
hours or until slightly thickened
(consistency of unbeaten egg whites). Gen-
tly stir in whipped topping. Refrigerate
about 15 minutes or until thickened (spoon
drawn through leaves definite impression).
Stir in fruit. Pour into 5-cup mold.*

*Refrigerate 4 hours or until firm. Unmold.
Garnish as desired. Store leftover gelatin
mold in refrigerator.*

*Valium: Trademark name. A brand of diaze-
pam.*

diazepam: a member of the benzodiazepine

low pill
with a highball while fixing S'mores.

And she was hysterical because her girdle must be a little too tight these days, as she set her hair, baked a cake, vacuumed the living room, took the yellow pill with a highball as she thumbed through *Good Housekeeping*.

And she went hysterical because she had a library of books on the shelf in the attic that she never had time to read, but her hair was perfect and her figure was still as lithe as a twenty-year-old's, and what if her husband only liked twenty

of the 250 things she knew how to do with her body? She poured another drink, wriggled into her black cocktail dress, greeting every guest with a smile painted on jungle red.

IV. Her-sterical

They said she was hysterical when she wouldn't stop crying at dogfood commercials. She'd cry at the drop of a hat or a well-aimed hand on her cheek—which she kept turning.

The doctors laid it on her thick with each synapse pop-popping. She couldn't even look at the bulbous sky, all cloud roll white and edible blue, without tearing up.

She's become accustomed to her medicines like a lame duck to water. And she's hysterical. "I'd go down on you for a Xanax. Right here in front of all these people. Say yes."

Everyone's doing it, like aerobics or Tai food. Everyone's doing it like the Peppermint Twist. *C'm on baby*
Do the Loco-motion.

family. benzodiazepines are sedatives that cause dose-related depression of the central nervous system. They are useful in treating anxiety, insomnia, and muscle spasms.

Sloe Gin Ricky: 2 oz Sloe gin, juice of 1/2 Lime, Carbonated water, 1 wedge Lime. Pour sloe gin and juice of lime into a highball glass over ice cubes. Fill with carbonated water and stir. Drop the wedge of lime in glass and serve.

Greyhound: 1 1/2 oz gin, 5 oz grapefruit juice. Pour ingredients into a highball glass over ice cubes. Stir well and serve.

Slow Comfortable Screw: 1 oz Sloe gin, 1/2 oz Southern Comfort, Orange juice. Pour sloe gin and Southern Comfort into a collins glass filled with ice. Fill with orange juice, stir well, and serve.

fluoxetine—a.k.a.
PROZAC

an anti-depressant medication that affects the chemicals that nerves in the brain use to send messages to one another. Many experts believe that it is an imbalance among the amounts of the different neurotransmitters that are released that causes depression

paroxetine—a.k.a.

PAXIL
sertraline—a.k.a.
ZOLOFT

alprazolam—a.k.a.
Xanax

a member of the benzodiazepine family. See Valium
See Prozac. See Sally. See Sally take Prozac. See Sally run.

Her-sterical

And she's hysterical, because she laughs when she
ought to cry. Hysterical, what a laugh.
Because hysterical means funny these days.

*hysterical: causing unrestrained laughter; very
funny very funny very funny very funny
very funny*

Ha Ha Ha

Pump & Circumstance

She ran on automatic pilot, pump and circumstance—
too too human heart pieced together like an obscene quilt, riveted together with corrugated
stainless steel,
silver duct tape and Crazy Glue.
The metallic clang of its life-force announced her arrival long before she entered a room.

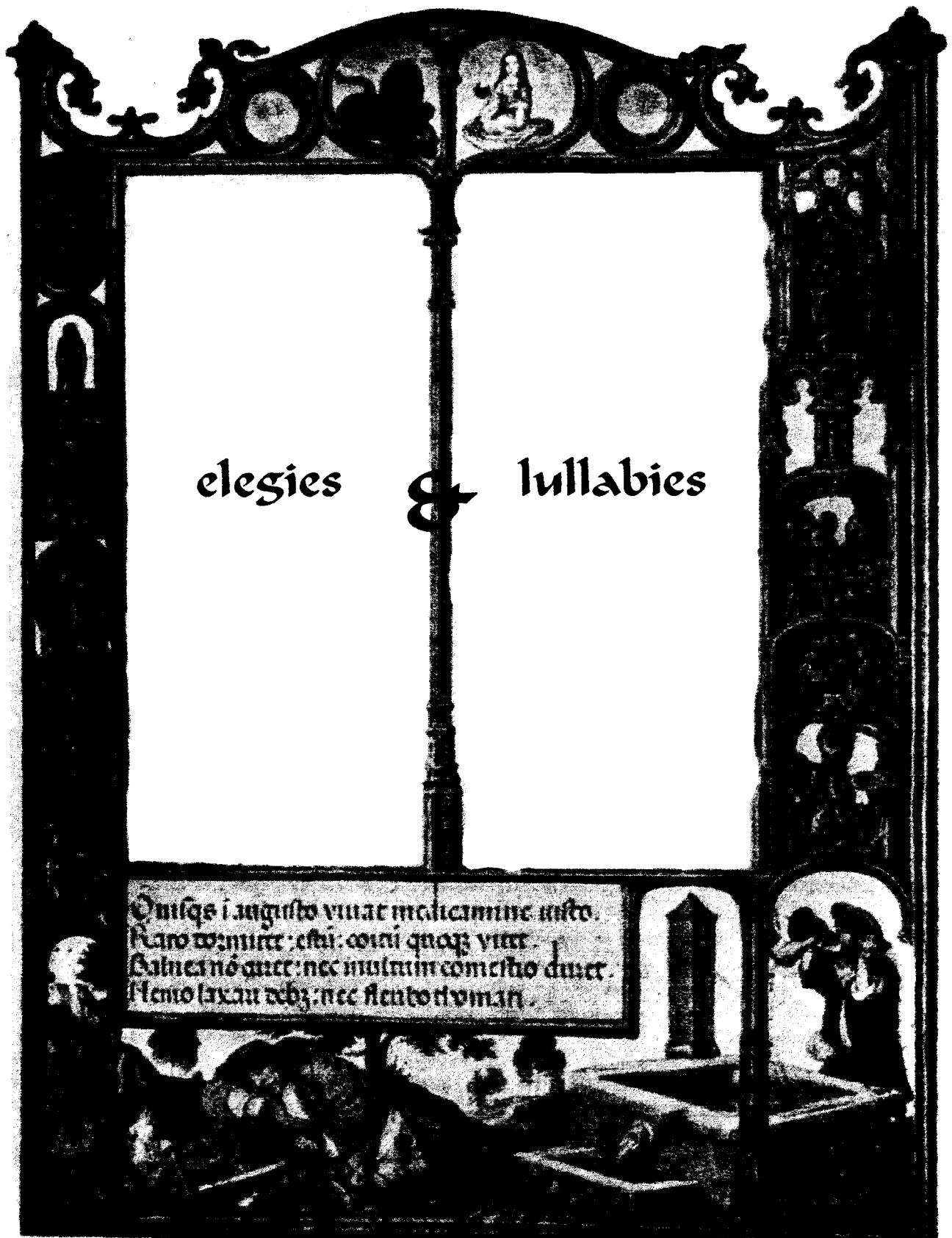
She was often mistaken for an explosive device.
The sinister rewirings of four gilded chambers baffled even the deftest fingers,
raising teardrop rivulets of briny perspiration on the unmarred brows of trained experts.

The muffled cowbell quality of percussion that sang from her breast set-off car alarms in all-
night parking lots,
Caused grimy forgotten mutts to bay at the new moon,
induced rhythm sections to alter their tempo from 3/4 to 6/8.
And if there is such a thing as vampires, they would have mistaken her asphyxiated alloy tick-
ing for an overzealous coffee percolator.

She could not lie, for the accentuated plunking pulsation eternally revealed her ruse.
She could not be IT in hide-and-go-seek, nor would she allow herself to be sought.
For though her feet tread as silently as a feline's, though camouflage was second nature, there
was no mistaking the muzzled tin pan report
Of the cardiovascular muscle.

Yet when her heart raced—palpating from the touch of one kind hand, vibrating at the joy of
a paramour's kiss—
It pealed intangibly like subdued chimes tinkling;
A hidden Glockenspiel performing a blithe melody, deep within the recesses of a cave where
no bold spelunker dare lay foot.

This made her dangerous.



elegies & lullabies

Quisq; i. iugusto vivat malicamine iusto.
Raro dormitet: esai: cotui quoq; vitet.
Salternò quere: nec multum comestio daret.
Nemo laxam rebo; nec fletu thoma.

Mad Dog and Dirt Weed

*careful poetry
and careful
people
last
only long
enough
to
die
safely*

~ Charles Bukowski ~

Five years now,
and how many times have I
walked past your old doors
and your numb dick and ass
and brain and heart,
not knowing which window is yours?

Five years now;
I want to haunt your haunts,
roll in your unwashed sheets,
still rank
with the last cum-cruised woman
you brought here.
I want to smoke the stale tobacco
forgotten in a Mexican ashtray
on the lip
of a junkshop coffee table.
Want to chew the skin away
from your wrinkled earlobe.
One chance
to open my legs
to your sharp whiskey viscera,
your cold hard and wet words,
sharper with the thwack
of each key beating
24lb paper,
writing a poem
you know will piss me off,
pressed in those iridescent black sparrow wings.
One chance
to pet that bitch from hell
we both get bitten by.

Mad Dog and Dirt Weed

One chance
to wash your piss-stained trousers
just so I can pull them off you
again
and again.

*Talk dirty.
We'll walk down Wilshire
to LACMA because
they've got Van Gogh there now.
And if you want,
I'll buy you lunch at Jerry's
or we can just drive up Mulholland
drink cold beer
and watch what might be
a perfect sunset,
while you carve,
Fuck Bukowski
into the oxblood dashboard.*

Five years now,
and I thought you'd die
as myth-ridden as Robert Johnson.
Thought some jealous husband
with his .44
cocked would . . .
I thought they'd find you
and some blue-eyed redhead
with nipples like
Pike's Peak
curled in sweat
and a pool of blood curdling screams
and your last words would be,
"Oh shit . . ."
Before you shit the sheets.

But it was just hospital gowns
and hospital food
and I wonder if they let you
listen to Wagner
or Beethoven
or if you tried to finger the candy stripers
who brought your orange juice
every morning.

Mad Dog and Dirt Weed

I want to show you the train tracks
where I used to sit
and read you out loud
to a pit bull puppy
and an English boy
with black hair and blue eyes.
I want to make your morning coffee,
close the door behind me,
leave you
before you leave me.
Maybe I just want to
bump into you at Ralph's,
between the liquor aisle
and the cottage cheese.

Five years now
and you're the only man—
creased with too many black bottles
of Mad Dog and dirt weed
and love that doesn't stay around
long enough to learn
your middle name—
Yeah,
you're the only dead man
with a pot belly
I'd ever fuck.

-February 5, 1999 -

Interlude

Your father sat at that
table with a pile of
crackers and a hunk of

cheddar—another snack
to keep him full until
he gets his supper. He

sat in there with his cheese,
crackers and a belly
so big he can't fit the

pants I bought him
last year. I'm going to
start calling him fat. (If

you want cookies, ask me
where I've hidden them—they're
on the second shelf down

behind the big atlas.)
He threw a fit when I
told him he couldn't eat

anymore. Stormed out of
here like a five-year-old.
I'm just trying to keep him

alive for one more year.
Sometimes I wonder why
I do it.

*It's always loud in this house:
he's trying to drown out something minatory that no
one else can hear—
the bluster of his own thoughts must stop him cold
sometimes.*

*Between his wheezing walk and the blockade of his
girth,
clatter of chatty prattle meant to entertain but falling
on deaf ears—
we squeeze ourselves against one another for
something resembling support.*

*We've gained an interlude, a pause,
an intermission from discord brief and surprising as
a first kiss.*

*Refrigerator door yawns at your stare. You're
looking for something:
the ham you bought this afternoon, the perfect
tomato, the milk or the butter.*

*Nana used to stare through that plate glass
window—
out past the crumbling barn where the old Ford sat
rotting over the root cellar—
staring right through Papa,
right through generations lost to her,
through the ghost of her twin sizzling in the burned-
out hull of a two-seat canoe,
staring until your somber eyes became foreign as
Egypt—
staring the same way you are now.*

Goodnight

My mother is sleeping
on the dull green sofa.
Knees to belly,
mouth wide -
a fly catching mouth.
Above her head,
framed in gold,
the family portrait
two years past.
I'm too fat;
she, wrinkled as forgotten laundry.
I never noticed
those lines until she pointed them out.
My mother is sleeping
while the TV whispers
sale and bargain
counting off the minutes
before time runs out.

lullaby #1

It came as a surprise to find myself sleeping.
Your gentle conviction: I would undress,
crawl beneath the blankets,
be all warm skin for you to press into.
How long did you sit there poised?
"Cm on, Reenie. Take your clothes off."
My eyes peering through skinny slits
uh huh, uh huh

You could have undressed me yourself.
after all this time, you're too polite
to pull my pants down without coital intention.
("Take your clothes off!")
But you try lifting my sweater over my ragdoll head,
giving up when I roll to the side, hiding like a wool-shelled turtle.

You try reasoning with me,
try to explain the logic of disrobing,
threaten me with your absence:
"I won't get in until you're naked!"
*You have the sweetest voice I've ever heard on a man
It's all lullaby and narcotic kiss
pushing me deeper and down into
instead of pulling me out of my socks and panties*

In the morning I awoke beside you,
my skin against yours,
wearing you like silk pajamas.