



(woman.)

poetry,
short stories,
essays & art about
the clash of the sexes

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Burn, Infamous In Their Prime, The Electronic Windmill, Contents
Under Pressure, Anais Nin: An Understanding of Her Art*

(i n t r o d u c t i o n .)

Recently I was at an academic Cultural Studies conference, and during a social gathering one evening, the subject of pornography came up in the conversation. I gave the standard "freedom of the press" argument, and also argued that since it is hard to draw the line between eroticism and pornography, how in any given instance can we be so certain that a picture or more grandly a "work of art" is degrading? A young woman who was present replied that her own experience told her that pornography was degrading and wrong.

It turned out that she had been married to a man obsessed with pornography, who insisted on taking her to porn films, and thence into bondage sessions, where he falsely promised he "wouldn't hurt her." It was, for me, a sudden glimpse into the Hell which had been her life. Finally, she escaped from the marriage, but for obvious reasons, she remains bitter about men, about pornography. She now directs a center for abused women and children.

Janet Kuypers has gazed into this Hell also, and is determined to preserve and transmit the lived record of its regions so that, perhaps, others can avoid pain and suffering. She insists that we resolutely examine the roots of our society's obsession with owning and buying and shaping and dominating, which much of the time is men ruling women. I often feel as if she is attempting, in her work, to exorcise the demons that grip America in the name of freedom and "family values."

I've argued elsewhere that America is in spite of its claims to be a democracy, an empire, that empires by their nature rot from within, and find themselves unable to reverse their decline. I still think that is probably the case, but surely telling the truth about our condition is worthwhile anyway. It is even possible that if enough truth is known, we might yet fulfill the promise of our nation.

The style of writing here is direct, honest and searching, but also illuminating. We anticipate that something bad is going to happen in the narrative, but we never know exactly what in advance. But that's not all. Sometimes a woman will find her way out to freedom, to love. Or there might be a revelation, as when a guy gets a cigarette put out on the back of his hand. This is a message, a warning, that there will be resistance.

The truth isn't always pretty. What we have done to women isn't pretty. The paradox is that women are socialized to make themselves as "pretty" as possible, according to the false standards of male fantasies. I'm especially impressed by Janet's designed texts, which demonstrate in graphic form how women are viewed in our culture. Pay attention to the language, to the images, and we can see. Yes, we can all see.

Fred Whitehead

(forward.)

When Janet first asked me to forward this collection, I felt honored. After reading it, I feel proud. Janet and I, as with so many women throughout time, are making our stand for equality through our writing. In that same estrological vein as our foremothers; Dorothy Parker, Anais Nin, Anna Akhmatova, to mention a extreme few, we have perpetuated that step beyond our dutiful roles bequested by society as a subservient species. Ignoring the flack for facing it head on, we persist, we prevail. We've seen a woman run for President, orbit the earth, partake in professional sports, win Peace Prizes, become the Poet Laureate and generally, hold our own. As with so much squelching of Black History, both have been enlightened to regular teachings in our school systems. Books have been printed heralding such accomplishments. There is a recognition evolving in our world. A recognition of Women as equals. Outspoken women have awakened an awareness of our unyielding presence. Frida Kahlo's evoking paintings, Mother Teresa's spirit, Eleanor of Aquitaine's perseverance and astuteness, the audaciousness of Jehanne Tarc (Joan of Arc), the defiance of Harriet Tubman, needless to say, the list is as endless as our possibilities as women are endless. Modern day audaciousites as Madonna, Annie Sprinkle, Lydi a Lunch, Susie Bright have all mocked sexism by flaunting sex. Not as an enticement as much as a natural. Yeah, we all have organs. Fact! The perversion of subservience is abating. We not only bring home the bacon, we can fry it up in that pan AND we can take that man's role and lead with it. Equal, yet individual.

Within these pages, Janet takes hold of everyday stereotypes, shakes them up, and throws them at your feet. She makes you look at the vile mess we have all helped to create and exist. "This is not a pretty picture" is quite intent in describing what you are

about to read...what you are about to see. Broken into appropriate chapters...for men & for women, Janet pokes your own pointing finger in your own eye. Blink again and look at the absurd labeling and phrases taken to task. She gives voice to a woman convicted of killing her boyfriend during a rape, chopping his body up and then being sentenced to an asylum. This story belongs in "WOMEN OF THE ASYLUM" as it is every bit as intensifying as those within that book's pages. The following phase is poetry relating to date rape, domestic violence, emotional abuse and recovery.

With more and more uppity women standing tall, unreserved, it just has to be inevitable the world is going to listen. I applaud Janet her stand and I will gladly stand beside her.

Cheryl A Townsend

(about the author.)

Janet Kuypers, born June 22, 1970, was born and raised in the greater Chicagoland area. Kuypers graduated with a degree in news/editorial journalism and a minor in photography from the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana in 1992, where she also worked as a freelance portrait photographer for a total of six years. Since then she founded the literary magazine *Children, Churches and Daddies*, currently in its fourth year. She has had three books previously published: *Hope Chest in the Attic*, *The Window* and *Close Cover Before Striking*, all collections of poetry, prose and art work. To date she has been published for writing on over 1,700 occasions and for visuals on nearly 200 occasions. During the day she is the art director for a magazine publishing company in Chicago, and in her spare time she sings with a band.

(a note from the author.)

As I grew up I did what I thought was expected of me. I didn't bring up unmentionable subjects to my parents. I didn't burp out loud. I didn't complain. And I didn't know why.

And it wasn't that my parents, or my teachers, or my peers, were trying to cram a certain lifestyle down my throat. It was just the norm, what was expected, what everyone was used to.

But the more time I spent on my own, the more I questioned how I was supposed to act, what I was supposed to say, how I was supposed to dress, what I was supposed to like. I saw the way men treated women in relationships, how women primarily reacted to the things men did instead of acting on their own. I also saw women feel like they were being pushed around, like they were being treated unfairly.

And then I saw some statistics about rape. That one in four women will be raped by the time they leave college; that one in three women will be raped in their lifetime. That over eighty percent of college-age rapes are committed by someone the victim knew.

Then I thought of how women are degraded and objectified in pornography, or how they are treated unfairly in the workplace. There is a different set of rules for women to follow versus men in society, and all of those rules are designed to let women know that their place is behind men.

I looked at history. Wedding ceremonies have had the father give away his daughter - his possession - to a man she could love, honor and obey, in a ceremony conducted by a man under the rule of a male god. Virgin women have even been sacrificed throughout history to assorted gods. Ancient Chinese adolescent women had their feet bound for months so their feet would be petite, but deformed and useless for walking, because the inability to move was considered attractive to rich men. Some tribes have made it a custom to add tight rings around women's necks, continually adding more, to elongate the neck, while other tribes pierce women's

ears and put successively larger rings inside the holes, to stretch the ear lobe down past the shoulder. Women were hunted and killed in colonial America for being witches - when they were in fact no more than individuals who practiced independent, rational thought in a society that didn't like their women to think.

I looked at the way our parents were raised. The woman was expected to work only during war time, and then only to assist men or to work in menial tasks. They were otherwise expected to cook for the family, to clean the house, and to please the husband. The man was the owner of his castle, worked during the day to make this life possible for his family, and expected to be pampered by his wife and children when he got home.

Then I looked at the way I was raised. I was given dolls and pretty pink dresses and was encouraged to play with my best friend indoors instead of roughhousing outside with a group. My hair was long, and curled for special occasions. I had to listen to my elders, especially the male ones.



Then I looked around me. Advertising and Hollywood demanded beautiful bodies in their brainless women, who blindly followed their leading man. The workplace had female secretaries serving the male CEOs, wearing skirts and make-up and pantyhose and high heels and being called "babe." Speaking of language, even the language I heard around me - from being called a pumpkin to a tomato to a peach - made me feel like I was placed on this earth to be consumed, not to be a human being.

So I started to work for acquaintance rape education groups, running seminars, making posters and brochures and the like for women who were in pain and felt like they had no place else to turn. And the

more I saw this pain on such a wide scale, the more angry I got. I'm an intelligent woman, I thought, and I as well as all women don't deserve to be treated like this.

Although I am no longer working for any women's groups, I still feel like I am fighting. But what I am fighting for and how I am fighting for it is different from how the average person thinks of a woman "crusader." I am fighting for people to look at women as people first, before they assume we are less intelligent, less strong, or less valuable. I am fighting, through my writing, through the way I think, through my example, for men to think of women as being on the same level as them, to look at women as their equals. I am fighting for feminism.

The definition of feminism, according to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, is "the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes." That's it. It doesn't mean women should get a job before a man just because she's a woman and has had bad breaks. It doesn't mean women have to dress and look like men if they don't want to. It doesn't mean pornography should be made illegal, and it doesn't mean all women should hate all men.

In practice, it means we should have the same opportunities as men. The choice to take these opportunities is up to the individual - not up to their sex. In theory, it means we should not be looked at as inferiors solely because we are female. In other words, we should not be treated unfairly because of the choices that we as individuals make, if we have every right to make those choices.

It is because of the way that women are looked at in society that there are political economic and social disparities between the sexes. It is because of ideas, not laws. These ideas create a spectrum of sexism that starts at things as innocent as jokes and cute nicknames, moves to catcalls in the street to harassment in the workplace to unequal pay for equal work, and then moves on to things as cruel and as painful as wife-beating and rape. All of these

things, severe or tame, stem from the idea that women are inferior and all of these things contribute to the inequality between the sexes. They all are manifestations of the same idea, only at different degrees.

A friend of mine told me about how in the Soviet Union, after the revolution, Stalin and the government wanted to make sure all people were equal - that women were free from their economic dependence on men - so they enacted laws to make women work and industrialize the country. But ideas about the role of women in society did not change, and in the post-revolution economic crisis, not only then did the women have to work, but they also had to stand in line for rations of bread. Household chores were still women's tasks; the rules changed, but the ideas stayed the same. When women were asked whether they were happier after the revolution or before, they said before, because at least then they didn't have to work as well as do their expected chores.

I'm not trying to enact any laws. I'm not trying to twist anyone's arm. A change doesn't occur in a free society by forcing rules down people's throats.

This book is a collection of old as well as new poetry, short stories, essays and art, all about different parts of this spectrum of sexism. What I'm trying to do, in this book as well as in my life, is make both men and women think about the conflicts between the sexes in all of their manifestations, why they occur, and what effect they have on our society. To think. And then to act.

Janet Kuypers

right there, by your heart

I

i had a dream the other night that i was in a bathroom, sitting on the toilet seat, i think it was the one in florida, but it could have been anywhere. it was a small bathroom. i was stretched over this seat, and i think the lid was up. i was naked. there was a wall right next to me, and i felt cramped, like i couldn't move. and then kurt was there, with me, in the bathroom, naked, standing over me, screwing me. i was sitting on a toilet seat and he was fucking me, and in the entire dream i couldn't get comfortable, i felt very awkward, it felt like he was pressing on my chest, i couldn't breathe, it felt like there was a rock in my stomach that would stay there forever, but the entire time i didn't complain.

II

have you ever had that feeling before, you know, the one when someone is telling you something you don't want to hear, like if someone was about to tell you that someone died and you knew what they were going to say and you still didn't want to hear it, or if someone did something to you you didn't like, like when you were little and the kids at the bus stop shot pebbles and spit balls at you every day because you were smart and you still had to go to the bus stop every morning and just try to ignore them? and when that happens it feels like a medium sized rock just fell into the bottom of your stomach, and you don't want to move because you're afraid that the rock will hurt the inside of your stomach and so you just have to sit there and hope

the rock goes away? or else you get the feeling
in your chest, right between your lungs, it feels
like someone is pressing against the bone there,
right there by your heart, and you've got to
breathe, you're not going to be able to take
that pressure, that force any longer?

V

i needed to talk to someone, so i threw my bathrobe on the
floor, pulled on some sweats, and walked over to his
apartment. steve was supposed to be coming home
from work soon, and i needed to talk to somebody,
i couldn't keep everything bottled in. i must have looked
like an idiot standing on his stairs looking like i
was about to cry. i felt like an idiot there, too, not
knowing why the rock in my stomach wasn't going away.
i wanted to ask him if he ever felt that rock, felt
that pressure, even if there didn't seem to be a
reason for it at all except for maybe life itself, which
everyone was supposed to manage through
anyway, i mean, everyone has stress, what's your
problem if you can't take it? i wanted to figure it out,
whatever the hell it was that was bothering me, i
really wanted to. this panic was driving me crazy, and i
couldn't even explain why i was panicked in the first
place. i didn't tell him i wanted to light a candle and some
incense and just curl up in the corner of my bed,
holding one of my pillows, probably the black one,
and cry for a very long time. i sat there in his
apartment when he got home, but i didn't speak. what
could i say? that the rock in my stomach wasn't going
away?

VI

i don't know how many times the idea of seeing him
went through my mind. at least once a week i'd imagine
a scene where he'd confront me, and i'd somehow

be able to fight him back, to show him that he didn't bother me any more, to show him that the rock wasn't there any more. to somehow be able to prove that i wasn't a victim any more. i was a survivor. that's what they call it now, you see, survivor, because victim sounds too trying for someone who has been raped. so i keep saying i'm over it but i keep imagining mark all over again, not raping me, but following me on the street, coming to my door with flowers, or sending me a valentine. but once, when i saw him walking out of a record store as i was walking in, the rock fell so hard that i thought i was going to be sick right there by the cash register, right there by those metal things at the doorway that beep when you try to take merchandise out of the store, you know what those things are, i just can't think of what they're called. but if i did that, then he'd know he was still winning, to this day. how many years has it been? how many years since he did that to me? how many years since i've been wanting to fight him, since i've been feeling that rock in my god-damned stomach? i managed to hide my face from him in the store so he didn't see me as he walked out. when i saw he was gone, i wondered why i still felt the pressure in my chest. i thought the pressure was going to turn my body inside-out. i reached for my heart, grabbed at my shirt. maybe the pain was always there, right there, by my heart, but i try not to think of it until i go through times like those.

confident women

I met up with an old friend of mine for drinks last week. I knew her in high school, although we weren't close friends then. In those days she needed therapy, had problems with drugs, I think, or else it was just family problems. I was a bit insecure myself, shy, meek, scared of life. Since those days we matured, we're now more independent, self-confident, self-assured women. It was good to see her again. She just came back from camping in Australia; although physically I had gone nowhere, we both had our stories to tell over a bottle or two of wine. And we gossiped, she told me of the handsome Australian man she fell for, I told her of the roller-coaster I call my romantic life. And we laughed. And then the gossip changed, her voice lowered, and sounding stern but quiet, she told me of how a man

broke into her apartment one night last summer and he tried to rape her, and after kicking and screaming in her underwear she managed to break free and her attacker escaped. She told me they found the man, and the trial is scheduled for later in the month. And she sat there, with her wine glass in her hand, looking so confident, as if she knew she won this battle. Trying not to sound corny, I told her I could give her a hug. And she leaned on my shoulder, and she cried, hiccuping as she tried to catch her breath. They would make her recount everything on the stand, she said, and the defense lawyers would try to make her sound promiscuous because she slept alone in her underwear. I told her I would go with her to the trial. I told her she is winning by speaking out. Self-assured women. Confident women. How confident are we supposed to be?

the apartment

"Could you pull out a can of sardines to have with lunch?", he asked me, so I got up from my chair, put down the financial pages, and walked into the kitchen. The newspaper fell to the ground, falling out of order. I stepped on the pages as I walked away. I realized he hadn't been listening to a thing I said.

He had to look for a job, I had told him before. This apartment is too small and we still can't afford it. I put in so many extra hours at work, and he doesn't even help at home. There are dishes left from last week. There is spaghetti sauce crusted on one of the plates in the sink. I opened up the pantry, moved the cans of string beans and cream corn. There was an old can of peaches in the back; I didn't even know it was there. I found a sardine can in the back of the shelf.

I saw him from across the apartment as I opened up the can. "We have to do something about this," I said. "I can't even think in this place. I'm tired of living in a cubicle."

He closed the funny pages. "Get used to it, honey. This is all we'll ever get. You think you'll get better? You think you deserve it? For some people, this is all they'll get. That's just the way life is."

I looked at the can. I looked at the little creatures crammed into their little pattern. It almost looked like they were supposed to be that way, like they were created to be put into a can. The smell made me dizzy. I pushed the can away from me. I couldn't look at it any longer.

growing up female

Some argue that men and women have inherent differences - whether described as physical or genetic. However, a lot of the differences between men and women in general are taught to us by society, by all of the people and things that influence us daily.

When women are born, they are given pink dresses and bows in their hair. Little boys are given light blue jumpers. Even when they are infants, even if other adults can't tell what the sex of the child, this is done - precisely to insure that the rest of the world will know what the sex of the child is. As they are raised, they are given toys to play with - girls the infamous Barbie, and boys the popular G.I. Joe. Girls progress to baby dolls they can dress and feed and burp, with accessories such as baby bottles, strollers and blankets. Boys progress to model cars and trucks, then on to guns and weapons, then the prized bicycle, then sports equipment, then building and erector sets.

As they grow, parents decide what clothes the children will wear, and what their hair will look like, and what toys they will play with, and how they will go about playing. Girls are clothed in little dresses, fully equipped with tights and buckled shoes, and are given little bows to hold back their longer, more cumbersome hair. They are encouraged to have a best friend to stay in the house with, to play house with, to play quietly with, to put make-up on, and to maintain a one-on-one, more intimate relationship. They role-play, and even in their play define roles for themselves - or at least define that there are roles that exist in the world.

As boys grow they are encouraged to go outdoors, to be rowdy, to find new friends, explore boundaries, play sports where they learn cooperation and competition, and even learn to battle in play fights. They are dressed in comfortable pants and t-shirts and athletic sneakers. Their hair is short and manageable. They learn to get dirty. They learn to win. They learn to lead other boys in play - larger numbers of children than women are accustomed to dealing with.

Each sex interacts with other children of primarily the same sex, but these same-sex children have been taught like them to do the things their sex is supposed to do. They reinforce the behavior of other children - the behavior taught to them from their parents, their siblings, their toys, their television, their movies, their fairy tales. Each sex learns about interactions with others, but they learn entirely different things. The traits each sex take from these experiences are vastly different from

the traits of the other sex.

Girls learn the importance of intimacy and trust, fostered by their female best friend. They learn not to be rowdy - they learn a more sedentary form of play. They learn the value of taking care of others. They learn to pretend and role-play the position of mother. They learn the value of their physical looks. They learn from their physical idol - the Barbie doll. If Barbie was a real woman, at 5' 10" her measurements would be 38, 18, 32, and she would weigh 110 pounds - an almost unattainable figure at best.

Boys learn the importance of working with other people toward a common goal. They learn to get along with a large number of people. They learn to win - they learn the American notion of competition, and they also learn the harder lesson of not trusting others, especially when other children are working toward the same goal as they are. They learn to explore new things and not be afraid. They learn to stretch themselves physically. They learn to work toward their goals. They learn about pain, about losing, and about winning. And although boys do not necessarily gain close relationships in the same way girls do, they gain a common bond between other boys - any and all boys that can jump in and join the game with them.

Some of the values both sexes take from their childhood are valuable - in fact, most of the traits taught to both sexes are admirable. However, it is important to remember three things:

1. Both sets of traits are particularly one-sided. One learns the value of competition, but doesn't learn how to interact on a personal level. The other learns deep trust, which can be detrimental when in a battle, such as a sport. One learns to build and create, but not interact. The other learns to imagine, but only on the level of interaction with a significant other.

2. These differences are taught to us, given to us, by our parents, commercials on television, by other friends we meet, by our siblings, by the colors that surround us, by the toys given to us, by our idols from our toys - from the likes of Barbie and G.I. Joe, by our cartoon role models, by our clothing purchased for us. Boys are expected to go outside to play and get dirty. Girls are expected to keep their pretty clothes clean, even if they were comfortable in their dress, tights and patent leather shoes to go outside and play.

There may be genetic or physical differences between the sexes, there may not be. I won't even address that point; it is irrelevant. The differences that are present in the values the sexes distinctively possess are not exclusive to any one sex. They are taught to us by male and female role models everywhere in our society. They are imposed on us from the day we are born to long after we are adults.

3. These two separate sets of traits, when placed with each other, one on one, face to face, are suddenly in great conflict.

First of all, boys are taught to hate girls, and girls are taught to hate boys. Girls are taught to trust and develop an intimate relationship, boys are taught not to get close, but to win, whatever the cost.

As they grow up, the woman looks for a long-term relationship, the man looks for sex. The woman is taught to keep sex from the man, and the man is taught to feign a relationship to gain sex. The woman is taught to trust, the man is taught to use that trust against her.

It is a power that society influences over each and every one of us. It is a power that each and every one of us as members of society play into and reinforce in each other, as well as teach to our children. It is taught, shown to us by ads in magazines, by commercials, by children's toys and clothes, by the way girls associate with their mommy and boys disassociate from their mommy and run to daddy. It is evident by the way women are taught to make themselves look beautiful while men are taught to look rugged. By the way women are calming and men are forceful.

It is taught to us and perpetuated in this society by everyone in it that accepts it - women as well as men. Our mothers teach us this as well as our fathers.

But it is taught to us.

And these separations of personalities are not specifically inherent (genetically) to one sex or another - they have been arbitrarily placed in these positions because they worked for so long in keeping the sexes separated. And although women are making changes toward being more equal in this society, they are fighting not only against a work place that may not react to her so kindly, but they are fighting against everything they have been taught, against all the forces that have influenced them in the past.

And when some women do succeed in making these changes, they are looked upon by some (male and female) as strange because they do not possess what this society considers "normal" traits for a woman.

The problem is not with the people in this society. They are doing only what is expected of them, what has always worked in the past. That is to be expected. The problem is with what the society as a whole accepts as normal. They are created roles which further drive the sexes apart.

Only when we notice these things can we understand why we have been raised to differently, why there is so much conflict between the sexes. And only when we notice these things can we learn to accept that there are other choices for how to raise our children, and how we ourselves should live.

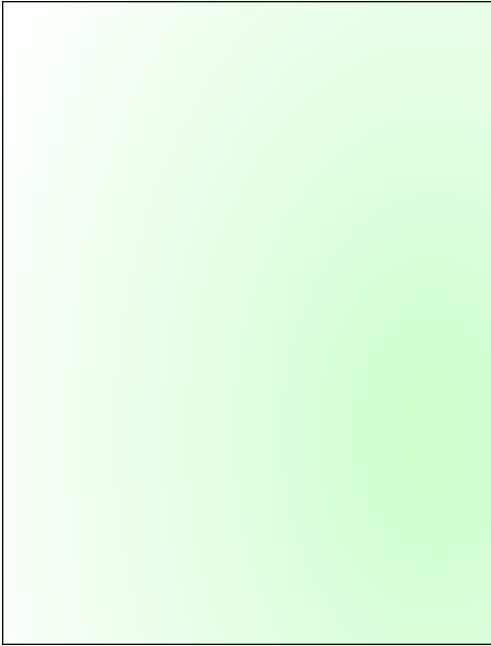
photograph, nineteenth century

that woman that picture
the images of beauty and softness
of something that shouldn't be touched
that couldn't work that can't work
the sepia toning oh how ancient
oh the dependency oh the degradation

my mind has been cluttered
society's a bastard
I can't see the women
I see the hat the feather
the adornments of beauty
the preposterous impractical way
she has been made to be seen
and not heard

she's only an image
she was forced with an image
is it a shame is it a sin
and now I've been tainted
with the knowledge of society
with the knowledge of it's motives
and now I can't even see the beauty
I can only see the oppression

"oh, it's not like that anymore" they say
as I wipe the make-up off my eyelids
and wonder who I'm trying to impress



ways women hurt themselves to make themselves beautiful

long hair: hair brushes, hair dryers, hot rollers, curling irons, crimping irons, flat irons, perms, hair coloring, hair clips, barrettes, banana clips, rubber bands, hair spray, hair gel, hair mousse, shampoo, conditioner, hot oil conditioning treatments

tweeze their eyebrows

remove via electrolysis a moustache

washing the face: soap, astringent, toner, moisturizing cream, wrinkle treatments

makeup: foundation, touch-up stick, powder, rouge, lipstick, lip liner, eye shadow (up to four shades), eye liner, eye brow pencil, mascara, eyelash curler, eyelash brush, eyebrow brush

growing fingernails: pushing back cuticles, applying creams, lotions, painting nails

applying fake fingernails: press-on plastic nails, powder and chemical sculpted nails, gel and ultraviolet light hardened nails

painting and manicuring toe nails

perfume: at neck, at wrists, at backs of elbows, at knees, at ankles

underarm deodorant

feminine deodorant

shaving hair on the legs

shaving hair at the bikini line: via a razor, via hot wax, via electrolysis, via tweezers, via rotating coils

suntanning

tanning cream, lotion, hand cream, elbow and knee lotions, foot creams

jewelry: earrings, clip on, pierced (putting holes in your ears and hanging metal from them), necklaces, bracelets, rings, watches, ankle bracelets

clothing: brassieres, decorative panties, corsets, teddies, slips, short or tight-fitting dresses, tight-fitting tops, sleeveless tops, strapless tops, tight-fitting pants, tight-fitting shorts, tight-fitting skirts, short shorts, short skirts, cinched belts, garter belts, garters, panty hose, heels, pumps, shoes with pointed toes

gasoline

The stench of gasoline
makes me ill
as the song
pounces through my brain
“I want you to want me
the way that I want you:
and I’m tired of fighting
I don’t think I can fight anymore
but I have to
I can’t let you do this
these are my rights
and you can’t hurt me like this
“Then maybe I’ll just force you”
you say
I push you away
I try to stop you
and all I keep hearing
is that damn song
I can’t escape it

a book for men

It occurred to me when I decided to do this project in 1991 that there were so many more derogatory terms for women than there were for men. Then I started to think about the actual names themselves and I noticed a few themes:

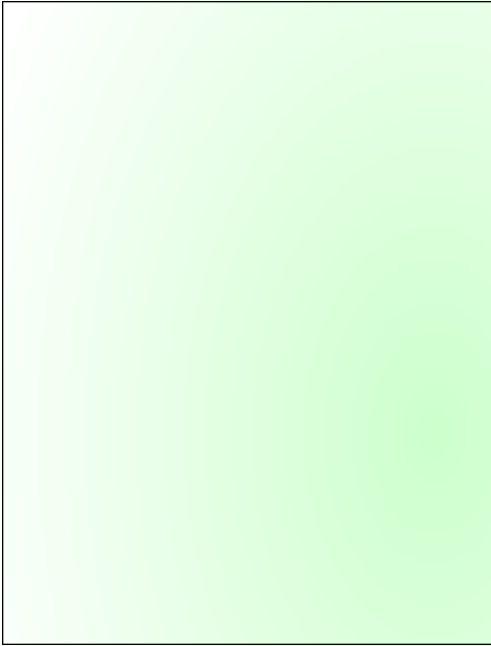
1. Many terms, both terms considered "nice" and terms considered "rude," were less-than-human, whether they be inanimate objects, animals, foods, or what have you, that somehow became descriptions for women.

2. There was a much greater number of "mean" slang terms for women who were promiscuous than for men (for men, it was something to be proud of, so slang terms were not derogatory but complimentary).

3. There was a much greater incidence of jokes and phrases about women being either stupid or promiscuous than men.

4. Terms for sex with women (terms used predominantly by men) were often sports analogies, references to power tools and other historically masculine objects, or by nature violent.

I originally thought of taking photographs of what



hey, all you **men** out there - do you
remember the time when life was
simple - when a **man** was a **man**
and a **woman** knew her place?

well, we think it's time you had your say.

introducing the **man'S** guide
for **derogatory**
terms for **women!!**

be **vi ci ous!** be **mal i ci ous!**

put **women** in their place!

now, the key to **degrading women** is to call
them names that are **less than human.**

you can easily do this by calling **women**
anything from **animals** to **plant life**

to **food** to **inanimate objects.**

(we know they're thinking adults, but by calling them
names that are less than that, they will eventually
feel like less than human beings.)

to **start off,**
you can call **women** names
that are **less than adults**

(by referring to them as children, like baby, babe
or girl. terms like these are less effective, since
they are so commonplace, but can still degrade
women, so use them liberally)

(and they can even sound like **compliments**
so they won't **compl ai n!**)

(like **baby** or **babe**, for example)



(or call someone a **girl**)

how about degrading women by calling them

animals

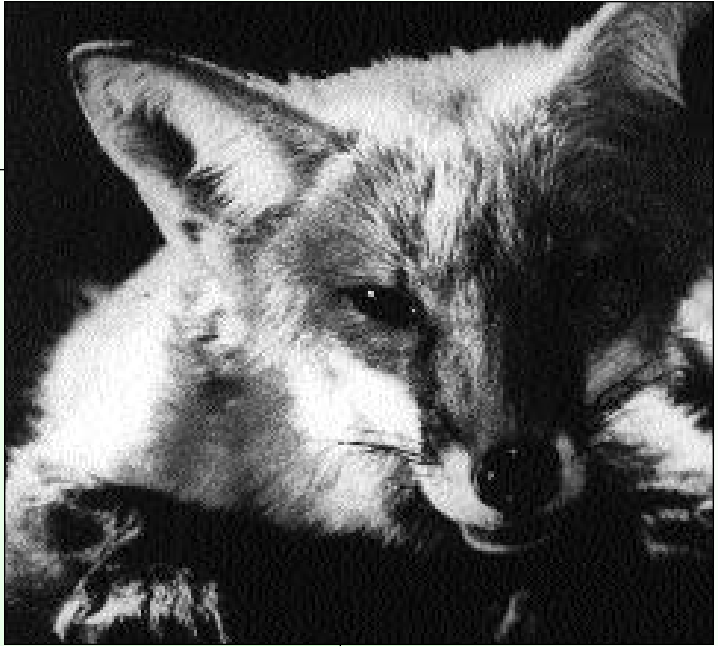


(pussy)



(chi ck)





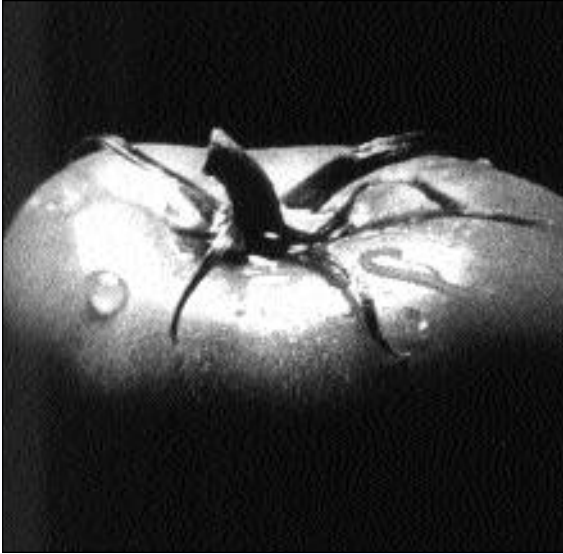
(fox)

or refer to their body parts,
like their **hooters!**

or to be cruel, try calling them a
**cow, heifer, sow, pig or
horse!**

how about degrading women by calling them

kinds of food



(tomato)

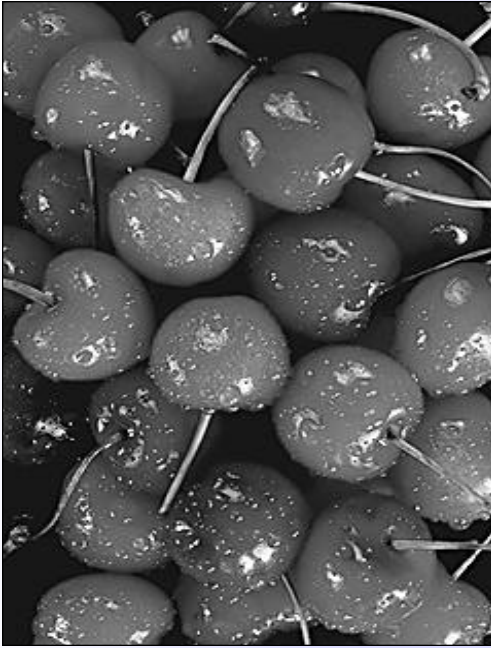


(peach)

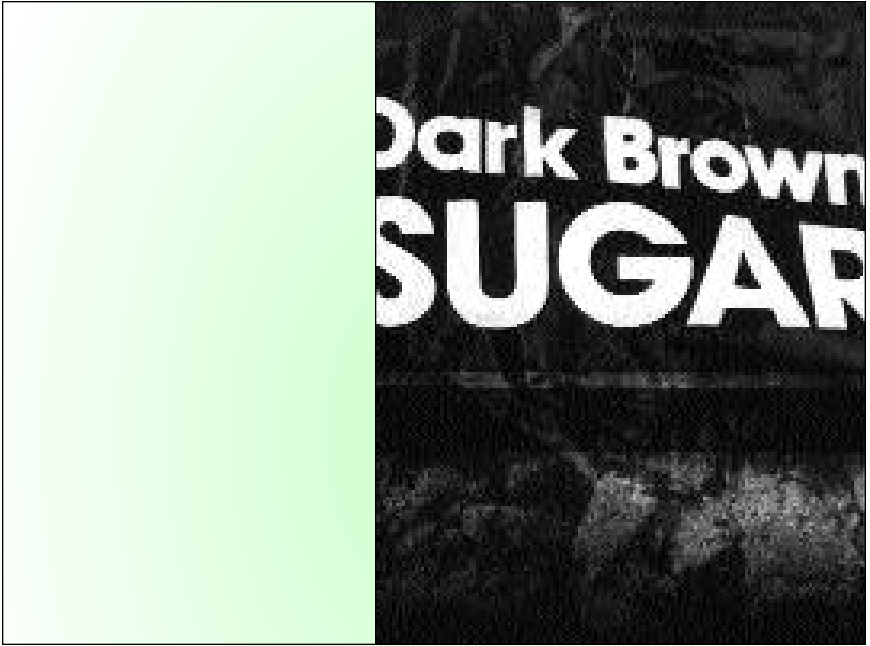




(pie, or cherry pie)



(cherry)



(sugar)



(honey)

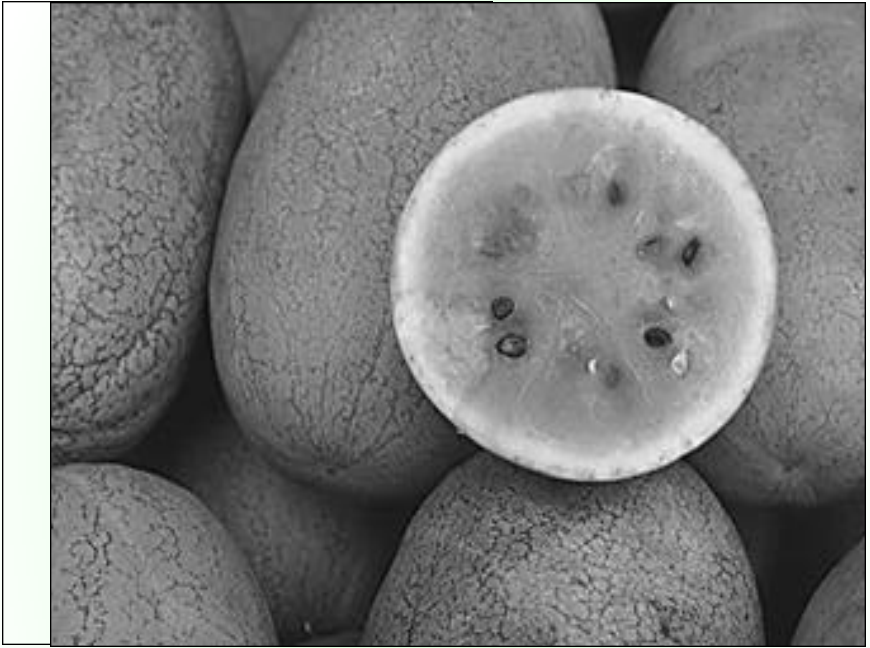


(a piece of meat)



(pumpki n)

this is a good one because it has become an affectionate term, but still refers to **women** as non-thinking items for human consumption!



(or refer to her body parts as food,
like **melons**)

can you think of any others?

like sweet pea, or muffin
or cheesecake

call her a dish and it sounds like she's to
be consumed instead of treated with respect!

...but degrading women

by calling them kinds of animals or kinds of food
only begins to scratch the surface

there are other ways

to turn women into objects

other names you can have for women

or you can refer to their body parts

instead of them as a whole human being

or you can even objectify the act of sex!

how about degrading women by calling them

i n a n i m a t e o b j e c t s



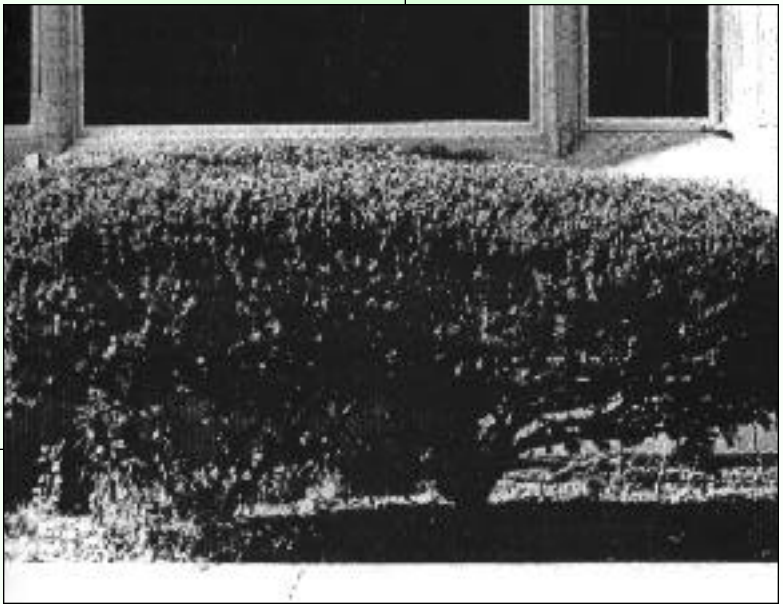
(doll)



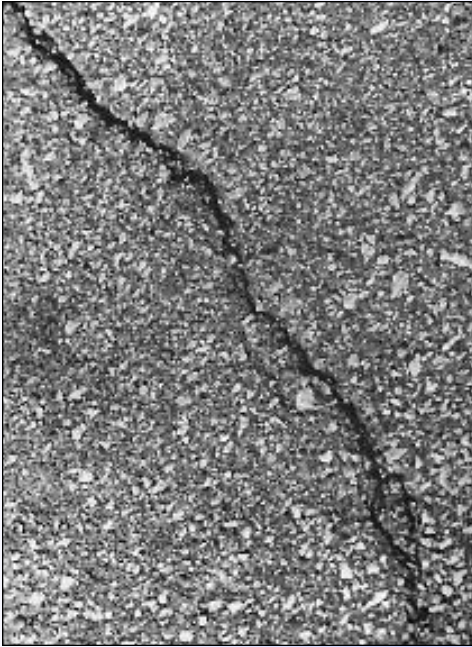
(hoe)

how about degrading women by defining them by their

body parts



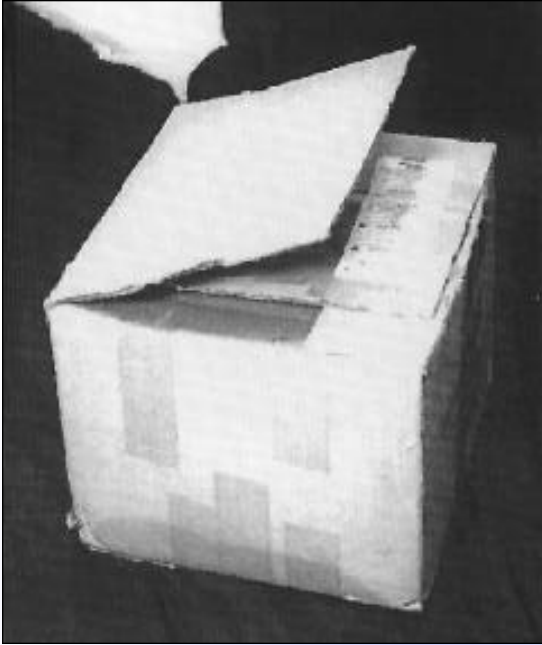
(her bush)



(her crack)



(her hole)



(her box)

or refer to her knockers,
her hooters, her beaver, her jugs,
her rack or her slit!

how about degrading women by making sex with them

vi ol ent



(bag)

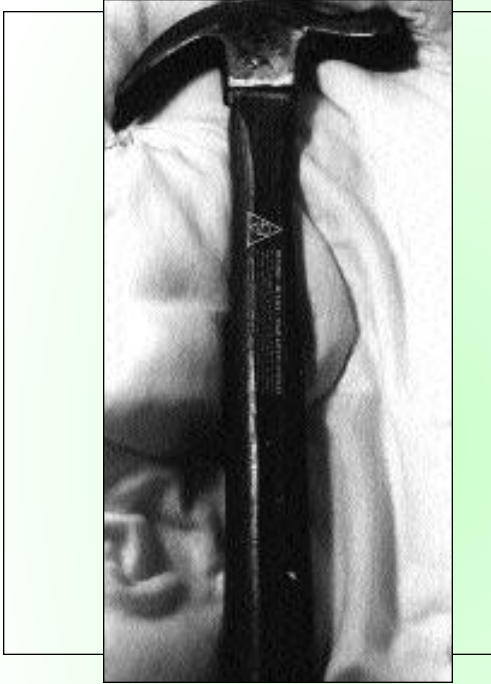


(bang)

...or try **bop**, or pop!

how about degrading sex with women by using

workbench slang



(hammer)



(pump)



(screw)

...or try **nai l**

how about degrading sex with women by using

sports analogies



(like score)

separate the women from the sex with
sports, power tools and
violence

and then the women won't matter at all!

make **women** feel stupid!

make **women** inadequate!

make **women** inferior!

then they will be!

try some degrading **jokes** about women!

what do **women** and beer bottles have in common?
they're both empty from the neck up!

why do **women** wear panties?
to keep their ankles warm!

what's the difference between a **woman**
and a bowling ball? you can only put
three fingers in a bowling ball!

what do you call a prostitute and three
blondes walking down the street?
regular price, four bucks, four bucks, four bucks!

why is a beer better than a **woman**?
it will always give you a head
and will never talk back to you!

what makes a perfect **woman**?
a flat head, three feet tall and no teeth!

what is the flabby skin around a vagina? a **woman**!

try some degrading **phrases**
for **women!**

call them sluts!

she can't wrestle, but you should see her box

call them whores!

call them rags!

liquor in the front, poker in the rear

call them bimbos!

call them cunts!

smells like fish, tastes like chicken

call them skanks!

call them anything that defines them
as a **sexual object!**

and remember, **men** - degrading **women**
isn't just for **fun.** it's **tradition,**
it's the way we **stay ahead.**
it's our way of life! so keep up the good work!

a man calls a woman

every time a man calls a woman a "bitch"
the threat of rape lies behind his hostility
every time a man calls a woman a "witch"
he reminds her of the slaughter of millions
whose independence and medical
knowledge threatened male dominance
every time a man makes a joke about rape
or wife-beating he issues a warning to women

Bob Lamm, 1976

**every time a man calls a woman a "babe"
he tells her he thinks of her as a child
every time a man calls a woman a "fox"
he tells her she is to be treated like an ani-
mal**

**every time a man calls a woman a "honey"
he tells her she is meant to be consumed
every time a man calls a woman a "doll"
he tells her she is something to be played
with**

**every time a man calls a woman a "bag"
he tells her she is something to be used
every time a man calls a woman a "slit"
he tells her she's a body part, not whole
every time a man calls a woman a "screw"**

**he tells her she is what he does to her
every time a man calls a woman a "girl"
he tells her she can't think like an adult
every time a man calls a woman a "whore"**

**he tells her she is wrong for having sex
every time a man calls a woman a "lay"
he tells her she is no good on her feet
every time a man calls a woman anything
less than woman he tells her who's the boss
so yes, we all know who the boss is, boys
you've done such a good job of telling us**

the measuring scale

Here's an addition for your degrading terminology of women list. In the construction field they (men) have devised another form of measurement. When something is being lowered or fitted into place they will often refer to an inch or so as: up or down about a cunt hair. They have gone so far as to determine that blonde pubic hair is the smallest increment and at the other end of the measuring scale is black pubic hair.

Pam, via the internet

why don't you dissect me,
take every single part of me
and equate it with power tools,
sports and violence?
bang me, screw me, nail me,
hammer me, bag me, pump
me. shoot it in me. maybe you
can even score.

if we're talking about
measuring scales, what about
the scale that defines the way
you treat us:
on one end is the minor stuff,
calling us "baby" and "sugar,"
whistling as we walk by, but
then move along the scale, get to
the blonde jokes, yes, they're so
funny, then how about a pinch
in the rear at the office,
well, that's harmless enough
and while you're at it, porn
movies and magazines, what harm
do they do, and hey, women
have always worked at home,
so you should have all the jobs
and get the better pay anyway
and since we're just your pro-
perty, fuck us whenever you
want, i mean, hey, you're doing
it already in every other aspect
of our repressed, oppressed lives
so rape us, smack us around
knock us down a flight of stairs
that's what we're here for

god, i don't even know how to
measure these things any more

the room of the rape

For almost two years when I walked up the nine stairs,
held on to the wooden railing whose finish was worn,
I'd pass the first door on the right.
My bedroom door was closed for one year, ten months and seven days.
I slept in the den across the hall.

One morning I woke, walked into the hall
and looked at the door. I turned around,
knowing I couldn't take it anymore,
walked into the den, folded the bed back into the couch,
and then walked into the hall, squarely facing
the door of the room.

A room in my house, that I let him go in to.
But when I woke up that morning, I told myself
that I wouldn't let him stop me today.

I turned the handle of the door. I heard a snap.
I slowly pushed the door open,
slowing it down to hear the hinges creak.
The shade to the small window in the corner was drawn,
so I stepped onto the parquet floor and turned on the light.

I felt the walls jump back in fear,
 fear of having to see the light again,
 then rush in on me in anger.
I saw the bed sheets rustle, get kicked
 and tossed to the ground again.
I tasted the sweat and I wanted to spit,
 but I couldn't. Something told me
 that wasn't what I was supposed to do.
My bedroom.
I saw the fists reach out from the walls
 and thought of the poster I drew
 of rebellion and rage

that is tucked in the back of my closet.
I felt the muscles tense behind my eyebrows
I pursed my lips
I swallowed the sweat
My bedroom.
I felt the fists punching my stomach,
 grabbing my face, my arms, my hair,
 pulling my legs apart.
I felt my head against the pillows again
 as I tried to just push my face
 into the salt and the sheets
I heard the screams I never made
 echo inside me
 the screams that haunted me
I closed my eyes from the pain and the light
My bedroom.
I thought of the fist, the symbol for the
 communist work ethic
 to do what you're told,
 to disappear into society.

I opened my eyes.
The room was mine --
the sheets on the floor, the stains on the bed, the smell of Hell
and the photographs on the dresser.
I looked at the pictures
and found one of him, with his arms around me.
I picked up the frame,
ran my hand along the gilded edges.
Flakes of paint fell to the floor.
I opened the drawer of the dresser
and gently set it face down.
I turned around,
shutting off the light on my way out.
My bedroom.

how to please a woman

i saw a movie once
can't remember what movie it was, but
i remember this one scene:
it was after the protagonist couple made love,
and it was the middle of the night,
and the man got dressed and went outside,
and no, it was not to leave
(i know half of you were thinking that, admit it)

but he went outside, into the garden
and picked a bunch of flowers
and put them all over the bed.
So in the morning, when the woman woke up,
she was still alone, but she was surrounded in flowers.

now, i know it's just a movie,
but i have these visions in my head
of how perfect life is supposed to be.
okay, okay, call it being raised on Cinderella
and Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, but
in the back of my mind i still have this vision in my head
of being swept away. Wake me with a
kiss. Ride me off into the sunset.

i don't want to tell someone how to
sweep me off my feet, how to be romantic.
Part of romance is the element of surprise.
yes, i know, this is the age of communication
and we're supposed to tell each other how we feel
but i guess, as unreasonable as this is
about to sound, i want you to be able to read my mind.
Or don't read it, and completely catch me off guard
(and i mean that in a good way - don't catch me

off guard, for instance, by watching baseball
instead of celebrating my birthday).

sure, it could be flowers, i guess, but don't think
that we're trying to get you to spend your money or
that we're trying to milk you for all you're worth
because flowers picked from your garden -
or someone else's - are often better than the ones from the store.
Maybe a bath. a picnic. those are even better
than flowers, because they give the gift
we really want - time. we want to know you
are not only taking time out to be with us,
but that you took the time to plan it to make it perfect.

we want you to tell us we look pretty
when we need to hear it. you don't know
when we need to hear it? just look into our eyes.
you'll know. we want you to look excited to
see us when you come home from work,
even if you're tired and just want to eat. we want
to feel like we mean the world to you, like we
mean more than a beer does to you while you're
sitting on the couch watching sitcoms.
we want foreplay to mean more than "oh, i've
grabbed her chest, now it's time to insert."

we want poetry written for us: the sun rises
and it means nothing without us, that kind of stuff.
okay, you're not a poet: maybe you could
write us a letter every once in a while. oh,
i know, it's that damn time thing again,
but that's what it takes, remember? even a note
just saying "i love you" on it would be enough.
here's an idea: drop it in the mail. i know you
see us every day; that's what makes it special.

trying

trying to revitalize
this old, tired marriage

once I wore a black teddy
thong back
beaded front

walked up to him while
he was watching
a basketball game
on the couch

sat on his lap
straddled him

and he looked at me
and reached his arm around
and tried to
grab his drink

too far

*When he met me
he told me
I looked like
Kim Basinger
long blonde locks
but as time
wore on I knew
I wasn't her
and I could never
be her and I was
never good enough
thin enough
pretty enough
I got a perm
straightened my
teeth
bought a wonder
bra but it wasn't*

*doing the trick
I bought slimfast
used the stair
stepper ate rice
cakes and wheat
germ but I wasn't
thin enough I
only dropped
twenty pounds
so I went to the
spa got my skin
peeled soaked
myself in mud
wrapped myself
in cellophane
bought the amino
acid facial creams
but I knew they*

*didn't really
work so I went to
the doctor got my
nose slimmed
my tummy stapled
my thighs sucked
thought about
getting a rib or two
removed
like Cher
but I figured
they've got to
be there for
something
and hey, that's
just going
too far*

a microcosm of society

No one appeared in the back half of the courtroom. Thoughts raced through Steven Kohl's mind as his eyes darted across the room. How did this happen? Was he really to blame? Will the jury members decide whether there is enough evidence against him to warrant a trial? Why are there cuts on his hands? Why can't he remember the last three weeks of his life?

Steve thought he might wake up soon, and discover that none of this had ever happened. That he wasn't trying to defend himself. That Erica wasn't dead.

He shifted in his chair. The wet cotton of his shirt collar burned against his neck. Like the branches of the trees in the ravine where Erica was found, the wool of his suit scratched his legs, his hands. He wanted to wipe the sweat from his forehead, but he was afraid that he would seem too nervous to the jury if he moved. He wanted to run out of the courtroom, stand in the February snow and feel his tears freeze as they rolled down his face.

He looked over at the papers in front of his lawyer. The names Stonum, Smith and Manchester embossed the top of the page. Steve couldn't bring himself to look at Stonum's face.

Stonum's face was chiseled and sharp. There was no room for emotion, unless closing remarks in a case called for a strong emotional appeal. The same thought kept going through Stonum's head: this boy couldn't remember who he was, much less where he was, for the last three weeks of his life. When Stonum suggested that Steve go to Dr. Litmann for a psychological examination, Steve broke down. He told Stonum that his cocaine use became daily about six weeks ago, and he started mixing drugs shortly before he lost his memory.

It was the beginning of the fourth day. The prosecutor stood.

"I would like to call to the stand a Miss Kathleen O'Connor."

Stonum jumped. "We have testimony from a Doctor Litmann, with whom she has been seeking therapy, that Miss O'Connor should not be able to testify in this case. I submit his report to you, your Honor, which outlines the fact that Miss O'Connor has been known to compulsively lie and that her perception of the truth is often distorted. We believe that it would be inappropriate and possibly detrimental if Miss O'Connor testified."

The testimony for the case was beginning to rely on character witnesses, and

because no specific reason was mentioned for having Kathleen O'Connor testify, the judge said he would review the report and decide whether or not to allow her to testify the next day.

Kathleen looked at Doctor Litmann seated next to her, then bowed her head. Her letters to him were in a pile on his lap. She stood up, adjusted her dress and solemnly walked away.

Dr. Litmann stared at the chair where she had sat. When he gained the strength, he looked at the letter at the top of the pile.

Dear Doctor Litmann:

I just had a session with you, and you asked me to start writing letters to a friend every day so that I could start to open myself up and understand myself more. Well, I don't have any friends. I don't know if I'll ever let you see these letters, but I'll write them to you.

You were asking me about my childhood in session today. Do all doctors ask about a person's childhood? I guess you must figure that any patient of theirs must have been abused by their father or wanted to kill their mother or something. No, I wasn't beaten, or starved, and I didn't even know what the word "incest" was until I was checking the spelling of "insect" in the dictionary.

I know, I know, I'm avoiding the subject. Open up, you said. Open up, God-damnit.

Fine.

As a child I wasn't liked by other kids. I was too smart, you see, and I had been taught at an early age to respect author-

ity. Actually, I don't think I was ever taught that, because my parents didn't seem to teach me much of anything. I just knew I had to listen to them when they yelled at me.

All of my life I was afraid of my father. He never really was a father to me, for he wasn't home often, but when he was home, all he seemed to do was yell at me. I always figured that I must have done something wrong, because he was never happy with me. Hence the self-esteem problem, I guess. I think that's why I got messed up with all these other men, too, doc. But you said we'd get to that in a later session.

The thing is, they always told me that I had to act a certain way, and that I had to do all of these things, but I never knew why I had to do them. If it was to be a good person, then I wanted to know who the hell decided what was good. From what I understood, good wasn't fun. It wasn't even self-fulfilling.

But I was going to do what they wanted. I got into a good school, and decided to study in a field that I didn't like. But, you see, that would get me a job with good pay -- even if I didn't like it -- and would make everyone in society think that everything was good in my life. If I just went through the

otions, people would think I was happy, and then they might leave me alone.

But that didn't work.

Doc, I'm tired. The medication you make me take at night really knocks me out. I'll write later.

She never signed her letters, and she always typed them so that they could never be traced to her. She made sure she covered all of her bases.

Litmann pressed his right hand over his eyes, almost in an effort to hold his face together.

Dear Doctor--

Hi. I'm back. It's night again. I like writing at night. I write at the desk in my room by two candles. I could turn on the lights, but the candles make shadows on the walls. I like the shadows. They make me think of everything out there that I'm not supposed to do.

In our session today you wanted me to tell you about the turning point of my life. You figured out that there was some sort of event in my life that made me want to rebel against all the empty values my parents tried to shove down my throat. That event was a man.

You see, he was a boyfriend of mine -- a boring one that fit into my plan of having a boring future. I'd get a boring job, and I'd marry that boring man and we'd live in a boring house with boring children and act happy. I thought it would all be simple enough -- I mean, the man seemed

harmless and all. But he wasn't.

He went away to school with me, and at the first chance he got, he got me drunk. And he raped me.

It occurred to me then that my boring life wasn't going to happen. Dec, I thought I could just float by life, going through the motions without feeling anything, whether it be pain or happiness. The rape tore me apart inside. This man was supposed to be the security in life, and he killed any security I thought I could ever feel. I knew that what he did wasn't right, but I also knew that there was nothing I could really do about it, because society seemed to ignore things like rape. Nothing seemed right anymore.

I looked into different religions. I read the new testament, and I tried to go through the old one, but the reading was just too dry. God just seemed like a joke to me. I deduced that religion was just a means to keep the masses in their place. But it wouldn't hold me down.

I wonder why I don't tell you all of these things while I'm in session with you. Maybe it's because you're trying to make me "normal" again -- normal in the eyes of society. Well, their rules don't make sense.

Dear Doc --

I can't love unconditionally.

I think everyone thinks I'm just very cold. But it's just that I can't love someone that I can't respect or admire. I don't think I love my family, because I can't respect their values, and I can't love other people because I can't trust them. That's where my value system comes in. I decided that the only person I could trust and love is myself. So my goals should be to make myself happy, right? If I do that, what more could I want? Why should I want to please others?

And I liked having these one night stands. I liked the power I felt when I could make a man want me so much and I had the power to do with him whatever I wanted. You could say that I wanted to get back at the man who raped me, you could say that I was looking for someone to care for me the way I wanted my father to when I was a child -- but I wanted the power. I wanted the control of others -- and it was an emotional control, which was even stronger than a physical control. I felt an emotional high from making them weak. I don't know which high was stronger.

Dear Doc--

I'm not afraid to tell you the next part, for even if I do give you these

letters, you can't tell anyone about them. I've checked into the laws, and because of the nature of the case and client confidentiality privileges, you couldn't utter a word.

Now, I never got into drugs. I drank a lot, which I guess I get from my father, but I never touched drugs. But I had ways of getting a hold of them, and cheap. So I started selling stuff to some of the college students -- particularly the good looking men. If my plan was going to work, I had to pick the right kinds of people. I'd go to the men in the elite fraternity houses -- the ones that you needed not only good looks, but also a lot of money and a lot of connections to get in to.

Then I found the man. Steve. Gullable bastard, isn't he? Then I found the woman. A typical bitch -- bleach blond, sorority, stupid as all hell. The type that makes me look like something is wrong with me for not wearing designer clothes. I knew I could make Steve do something he normally wouldn't -- and maybe this would be my little way of destroying a microcosm of the society. It's destroying Steve. And it destroyed Erica.

Litmann looked up. He pulled his glasses from his face. He didn't know if the steam on the glass was from his sweat or his tears. He got up, clenching the letters. He left the room.

middle-class husbands and fathers

rapists are not peculiar, abnormal men
rapists are very normal masculine men
rapists come in all sizes and shapes
all races and nationalities
all ages and social classes
many are white middle-class husbands and fathers
Bob Lamm, 1976

rapists are not all convicted prisoners
rapists are not all psychopaths
rapists are not all welfare recipients
rapists are not all foaming at the mouth
rapists are not all abused by their parents
rapists are not all sex-depraved
rapists are not all gun-toting criminals
rapists are not all undereducated
rapists are not all jobless
rapists are not all beaten as children
rapists are not all minorities
rapists are not all criminally insane

rapists are in your office
rapists are in your convenience mart
rapists are in your local tavern
rapists are in your school
rapists are in your restaurant
rapists are in your car pool
rapists are in your grocery store
rapists are in your country club
rapists are in your church
rapists are in your family reunion
rapists are in your living room
rapists are in your bed room

they come in all shapes and sizes
they're everywhere

best friend

"I had a best friend once,"
I said matter-of-factly,
as I stared into the palm of my hand.
You laughed my remarks off a sarcasm.
So I waited for a silence
so that I would have the thrill
of breaking it.
"I had a best friend once--
and he raped me."
There. You wanted to hear it.
How can you break the silence
now? I've taken away your weapons.
Have I taken away your compassion, too?
Tell me what good this knowledge
does you now.
Reminding me doesn't help,
and there's nothing you can do
to make the pain go away.
As you sit there in silence,
I wonder if there must be someone
who can say what needs to be said to me.
A best friend, maybe.
But if only a best friend
can help me now
then I would prefer
not to be helped.
I don't ever want to find
a best friend again.

the burning

I take the final swig of vodka
feel it burn it's way down my throat
hiss at it scorching my tongue
and reach for the bottle to pour myself another.
I think of how my tonsils scream
every time I let the alcohol rape me.
Then I look down at my hands --
shaking -- holding the glass of poison --
and think of how these were the hands
that should have pushed you away from me.
But didn't. And I keep wondering
why I took your hell, took your poison.
I remember how you burned your way
through me. You corrupted me
from the inside out, and I kept coming back.
I let you infect me, and now you've
burned a hole through me. I hated it.
Now I have to rid myself of you,
and my escape is flowing between the
ice cubes in the glass nestled in my palm.
But I have to drink more. The burning
doesn't last as long as you do.

Coslow's

I am back
at my old college
hang-out

years later
sharing some beers
with an old friend
then i remember
being there
with a friend
who used to
work there
she told me about the,
women's bathroom
in all my years

I had never
been there
she said
women write on the wall
at the left
of the stall
women write
that they've been raped
they name names
there were arrows
pointing
to other women's

messages

saying

"i've heard this before"

first names last names

when she told me

of this

years ago

i walked in

read the names

and wrote down one

of my own

i forgot about that wall

until now

and i am back

just yards away

from the

bathroom door

i get up

walk

open the door

years later

all the names are still there

jake jay josh larry matt scott

i can even still see

my own writing

it didn't take long

to find it

a woman talking about her rapist friend

He was my friend, and we had been
through a lot together, our psychological
ups and downs,

but he mixed drinks exceptionally well
at his college frat parties, and his
ice-blue eyes

always spoke the truth to me. It's amazing
to think that the only reason we ever met
was because one day

he wore a turtleneck that perfectly
matched his eyes, and I had to tell him.
I don't know why

he put up with my mood swings, with my
self-destructive social life and man-hating,
normally he didn't

care about women, never gave their opinions
much thought, just tried to get them
drunk at parties,

maybe he knew that and that's why he
listened to me. Then for a few years
our friendship

drifted, we didn't see each other much,
I heard through the grapevine that he was
failing in school.

Then one day, out of the blue, he comes
over and he has two black eyes. And he
says to me

that when he was in the parking garage
two guys came and beat him up, and one
of them said,

you raped my girlfriend. And then he looked
at me and said, and you know, looking back,
he was right.

I raped her. And I know he wanted sym-
pathy, he wanted to hear me say something,
but I couldn't.

And he said, I know this has to be hard for
you to hear, but I wanted to tell you. I know
it was wrong.

A part of me wanted to hate him. A part of
me thought that if he was my friend I would
be condoning

what he did. And a part of me thought that
our friendship made him realize what he
actually had done.

I tried to be there for him. I wasn't much
good at it. Eventually, he moved away.
I didn't try

to lose touch with him. But it's just that a
part of me is still trying to figure out if I
can be his friend.

Sometimes you just lose touch with some-
one, sometimes that's all you can do.

nonfiction

Let me tell you a story about a woman. I can't tell you her name, because the law prevents me.

You see, this woman is the typical victim of a stranger rape. She was walking down the street after getting off of a late train from work and she was cornered by a man with a knife. She was violated, she was hurt, she had the blood stains and bruises to prove it. And she decided she wanted to report it.

She went to the hospital the next morning, after she put on an extra layer of clothing and huddled in her bed the night before, trying to sleep. The doctors took her clothing for evidence, and then they took samples.

She leaned back in a cold chair half-naked in a doctor's office, feet in straps three feet apart, and then they took samples from inside her to see if they could prove who was there. They pulled fifty hairs from her head and twenty-five pubic hairs with their fingers to compare them to what they brushed off her.

She then talked to the police. Because she couldn't identify him, because he had time to flee, because the police couldn't match the evidence to anyone, she couldn't find justice.

But her friends helped her through this. They slept in her room with her at night, when she didn't want to be alone. They listened to her. They accepted her. And she was able to take the first steps toward recovering.

It's a sad story, isn't it? She didn't deserve it. But it seems, especially with her attempts to find her attacker and with the support she received, that she may be able to eventually get over the pain.

Now I would like to tell you the story of another woman. I could tell you her name, but I told her I wouldn't.

She begged me not to.

She's a junior at a state university. The first day she came to college, the day she moved in, her boyfriend raped her.

He gave her roommate so much alcohol that she passed out, and wouldn't know what was going on. He gave his victim so much alcohol that she could barely think or move. During the course of the evening she wondered why her boyfriend was pushing alcohol on her roommate. Now she knows, hindsight is 20/20, and now she feels guilty. She should have said something to him, she thought, but what could she have said at the time? And why should she have suspected anything?

She didn't go to the hospital. She thought something was wrong with her only because she didn't want him. She thought what happened was normal. She couldn't understand why she was so hurt.

She didn't tell anyone. She didn't talk to her boyfriend about it --- in fact, she didn't even break up with him until weeks later, when she couldn't take it anymore

and had to come up with an excuse to avoid him.

No one understood why she was acting so strangely. No one understood her mood swings. No one understood why she would break into tears for no reason. She would stand in the bathroom of her dormitory, look in the mirror, and cry before she took her morning shower. She looked so tired in the mirror those mornings, like she had been attacked just the night before.

She waited about six months before she told anyone. She told one friend. He did everything he could to help her. But there wasn't much he could do. She never told her family. She felt ashamed. She felt alone.

And as she told more people, she received more support. But it only came one year, two years later.

You see, even though it wasn't her fault, and even though she had help from her friends, she still couldn't help but think that she could have done something to stop it. She teased him. She was drunk.

He was her boyfriend.

Now, these are two pretty depressing stories, I know. But when people hear the word "rape," they tend to think of story number one first. The man could have been jumping out from a bush, an alley, or breaking into her home in the middle of the night, as long as he was a stranger. He had a weapon. It was a crime. But both of these stories are similar, because they both are rape. Pure and simple. According to Illinois law, for example, if a woman is intoxicated, she cannot consent to sex, just as she cannot consent to driving a car. That alone defines what the second woman went through as rape. Her feelings, her pain, also define it as such. But still, the endings to these stories are very different.

Let's imagine that the woman in the second story pressed charges against her boyfriend. Better yet, let's take another crime, like a mugging in an alley, and ask the victim the same types of questions the woman in the second story, or even the woman in the first story, would be asked.

We'll set the scene: A man leaves a bar that he entered after work, took a short cut home and was mugged in an alley. He is now at the stand, testifying, being questioned by the defense.

"Now, let me understand this - you were in a bar, drinking."

"Yes."

"And you were talking to strangers, you even flashed around your money around."

"I bought a few people a beer. That's all."

"You bought a few strangers a beer. And what you were wearing - it was a nice suit. And your watch - it had to cost a lot. What were you doing in a neighborhood like that wearing clothes like that if you didn't want to be mugged?"

"That's not the point. I -"

"And you left the bar, and it was late. What time was it, sir?"

"12:30 in the morning."

"Did you think it was safe for you to be walking alone at night, especially looking the way you did, in the neighborhood you were in?"

"Well -"

"Let me ask you another question. Have you ever given money to a charity?"

"Yes, but I don't see how that -"

"Now if you're just giving it away freely, you've done it in the past, hey, you even bought drinks for complete strangers at the bar just hours before, then why wouldn't this man think you were giving it away now?"

"Because, he was robbing me -"

"Well, did you see a weapon? Do you know for a fact that he had a weapon? And did you scream, yell, fight back at all?"

"He had something in his pocket, I thought it was a gun. I didn't want to yell, I thought he'd hurt me. I panicked."

"But you didn't see a weapon, you didn't yell, you were wearing that suit and flashing your money, you were in a bar and you were walking alone in a bad neighborhood late at night. Really, sir, some people would say you were asking for it."

Society tends to blur the lines between sex and violence when the attacker is someone you know. The sexes are antagonistic toward each other: this is just an extreme. Men are taught to chase women, to try liquor or money to get a woman in bed, and women are taught to hold out sexually, which naturally puts the sexes against each other.

Women in society are taught to be "feminine", to be giving, and to be weak instead of assertive. They are taught to look good for men, and they are taught that they are nothing unless they get married. They are taught that all they have is intuition, but it is usually wrong and they shouldn't stand up for it. If a woman doesn't feel comfortable in a situation, it is probably all just in her head and she should just get over it.

Men in society are taught to think of sex as a competition -- by "scoring" and "getting some" -- instead of thinking of it in terms of love and affection. Looking at terms for sex in today's society shows this perfectly: scoring, banging, bopping, hammering, nailing, pumping, bagging. All are violent terms, and half of them are related to either hunting or building, typically male dominated activities.

Men are taught to look at women as objects - making them feel less than human, making them feel as if they should serve men. Harassment at the workplace, obscene phone calls, stalkers, wife beating, pornography, cat calls and whistling at woman on the street - none of these things would happen if this wasn't the case.

And women are taught to make themselves objects for men, to bend over backwards to make themselves beautiful. Make-up, long styled hair, shaving their hair, wearing skirts, or high heels - half of these things are painful, and the other half are time-consuming, yet women are taught to do these things for men.

And maybe the woman in the second story knew she had friends she could trust, but still couldn't break free from what society taught her.

If you want a happy ending, you won't find one. Not for these two women.

But maybe it would be easier for women to heal from rape if men and women began to see each other as people and not as just sexes.

Maybe then rape would end, too.

And then there would be a happy ending for everybody.

It is reported in some surveys that one out of every four women will be raped before they leave college, and that one out of three women will be raped in their lifetime. And 90% of these crimes are by someone they know (either someone they know well, like a boyfriend, husband or family member, or by someone they know, but not well, a coworker, a classmate, someone they met at a party or a bar earlier that night).

A University survey in Illinois reported that the three most common places for a rape to occur were: (1) in a dormitory, (2) the man's house/apartment, or (3) in a fraternity house. In other words, it doesn't happen in back alleys or behind bushes. It happens because the woman knew the man, and felt comfortable with going to his house. It happens because the man won the woman's trust.

Or it happened because the woman didn't really like the idea of going over to his place, or letting him in to her apartment after he walked her home, but felt like she couldn't tell him no, that she owed it to him. That maybe after a while he'd just leave. She wouldn't want to sound rude.

Women, as a rule, don't "cry rape," or falsely accuse someone of raping them. Most are frightened so much by the system that they don't even report it, and the incidence of "crying rape" is currently at about 2%, which is comparable to national averages for robbery. It is estimated that as many as 90% of all rapes go unreported, which is drastically higher than other violent crimes.

And why are so many women frightened by the judicial process? Because many times women are blamed for the rape, by men as well as women. Because men still equate this act of violence with the act of sex. Because on the stand, a woman has to defend her past, defend what she was wearing, explain why she went to his place, why she was alone with him, why she kissed him. The accused's past is protected, and in essence, the woman becomes the one on trial.

Many people want to blame the woman, however, because it's simply the easiest way. No one wants to go through life believing that a violent crime like this can just happen to them, for no known reason. If the woman is at fault, then she can change her behavior and not be at risk of being raped again. And other women can feel safe if they just don't let the wrong things happen. And men can feel safe that they're not doing the wrong thing. When in fact they may be.

And the effects of rape are longstanding. Some women leave the city they lived in, worked in, had friends and family in, because they are afraid they will see their

attacker again. Some women have extreme difficulty ever sustaining an intimate relationship with a man again. Some women never tell their experience to another person, keeping their feelings bottled inside, eating away at them.

The world is a difficult place to live in for a person who is a rape survivor. Their values no longer make sense to them: if you can't trust a boyfriend, if someone you cared about could do this to you, what else could happen?

Different women react to rape in different ways, and the time it takes to recover from it varies greatly. Some will say you never recover. Many go through denial. After admitting it to herself, a rape survivor then begins to face those difficult questions: why did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this? How could he do this? Can I ever tell anyone? Can I ever be close to another man again? Can I ever trust again? Telling others also helps, because positive support from her friends will make her feel that her feelings of anger or hostility are justified, that it wasn't her fault, that she can get over it. But she may still harbor ill feelings for years, she may shy away from all relationships, she may become a man-hater, she may go on "sex-binges," using men the way she felt she was used, taking her revenge on others, and still not feeling any better.

The thing is, something can be done to stop this. Attitudes about women in general have to change, for sexism as a whole gives some men the mentality that this really isn't a crime. I mean, I bought her dinner, and what do I get for it? She's been holding out on me for so long, what is she trying to do? I gotta get some, and I know she wants me. It's not a crime, it's sex.

On the following pages are some of what I have written and created because of sexism and rape. It's a shame to have to see this work exist. Hopefully in time we as a culture will be able to make a change.

Most seem to feel that an act of rape, acquaintance or stranger, is just too bizarre to actually have no reason for happening, so most will look for a solution to the puzzle - an action that caused the rape, something to safeguard people from it. It may seem too strange to think that a man you've never met before could just come out of a bush, pick you out and attack you. It may seem too strange to think that a friend, or a boyfriend, or someone that you thought you could trust, could turn on you in such a way for no apparent reason and hurt you so much. In this world, things don't just happen - there's a reason for things, and there is sense in the world. Besides, the victim probably brought themselves the trouble and therefore deserved what they got. If we as onlookers just don't make the same mistakes that they did, we won't have the same problems that they did. In this way unexplainable, traumatic acts such as rape can be explained and therefore be easier to handle.

This is the line of reasoning many people go through, and it is commonly called "victim blaming." It seems to make sense at times, but there is a note that we as a society have to remember: just as a robbery victim doesn't ask to be mugged, a survivor of sexual assault doesn't ask to be raped. No matter what reasons people come

up with to defend a rapist, she was wearing provocative clothing, she was drunk, she kissed him - none of those things means that she consented to sex with him.

If a woman can victim blame another woman, then she can eventually say to herself, "That has never happened to me, so it must have been something she did. Well, if I don't do what they did, then I will be safe." Since women have to live with the fear of rape all the time, victim blaming makes them feel better about the irregularities of the world. If a man blames a woman, it may be because he can't understand that another man - possibly someone that he knows, possibly a friend - can do what the accused did. If another man has the capacity to do that, than that male onlooker may have that capacity, too. It's a frightening thought to think that you could be a rapist. The man may eventually say, "I couldn't do that, and therefore that other guy couldn't do that. It must have been something that she did."

Many victims will even blame themselves for what happened. I should have been more explicit in what I wanted. I shouldn't have had so much to drink. I shouldn't have been so nice to him. I should have said something afterwards: to him, to the police, to myself.

If there is a reason for everything, then there must be a reason for something as insane as rape - even if the reason doesn't seem immediately apparent. Maybe, as many come to think, maybe the reason that it happened is because the victim led her attacker on or didn't do enough to stop him. When someone blames the victim, the behavior is then correctable, and when the victim corrects that 'wrong' behavior, then they feel not only safer, but also a better person for correcting their own faults. If one keeps looking over the pieces of the puzzle, something will fall into place and make it all understandable, all comprehensible. If you keep looking for what the victim did wrong, you'll find something, and then you will be able to explain away what happened. If the victim is blamed for what happened, then the problem of rape is solvable, avoidable, and correctable. It makes the world make sense again.

Victim blaming may, however, give women a false sense of security, if they feel they are safe by taking certain precautions, but not others. It is possible to be more aware of what is happening around you, to always stay with friends in social situations, to avoid walking in bad neighborhoods at night, but that doesn't mean that you are at fault if something happened to you. And it doesn't mean others are at fault if they were attacked.

When a woman speaks at a trial about someone who attacked her, instantly her past becomes important, her sexual history, what she was wearing, and so on. And the defendant's criminal history is barred from use in the case, even if he was convicted of sexual crimes in the past. Instantly the woman is on trial, and the survivor of the rape is tried and not the rapist.

It's hard to understand something like rape. But that's exactly what a survivor of an attack needs.

a socially accepted target

rape is connected
to the frustration produced
by living in this society

rape is anger
misdirected towards
a socially accepted target:
women

Men and Politics Group, East Bay
Men's Center, Statement on Rape

i didn't get the promotion i deserved
i work in a cubicle
the boss doesn't know my name
i put in too much overtime
this tie makes it hard to breathe

this traffic is always in my way
there's all these bills i have to pay

i'm angry all the time

and the damn kids are banging
their toys when i come home
and dinner is never on time
and your looks have just gone to hell
and i hate you

i just want a fucking beer, you bitch

it's all your fault

in their homes or in the streets

some women are raped
in their homes or in the streets
by men whom we call "strangers"

some women are raped
in their homes or in the streets
by men we call psychiatrists,
doctors, college professors,
friends, lovers,
husbands and fathers

and some women are raped
in the streets or in offices
by men who merely sit there
and commit rape with looks
with smirks
with insults
with threats

Bob Lamm, 1976

you'll never understand

have you ever felt
that everything you did
from the clothes you chose to wear
to the way you styled your hair
to the way you walked down the street
to the way you sat at your desk

to whether you looked at people
as they passed you
in the grocery store
when you picked up the food
for the family

have you ever felt
that everything you did
was under the scrutiny
of half the world

that a stare could haunt you
if you looked too confident
or your eyes wandered for too long
and actually caught someone's gaze

or your skirt was too short
or you didn't cross your legs

or if you ate a banana
or happened to lick your lips

have you felt it
well, you're not a woman

rape education one

I sat in on a seminar
being held at a university
about acquaintance rape

when the woman behind the podium
asked if there were any other questions,
a woman raised her hand

she was a pretty woman

she asked what a woman
could do through the university
to prosecute the man

she sounded tough
she sounded professional

and the woman behind the podium
asked if this woman was raped

and she said yes

and the woman behind the podium
empathized with her,
told her she was raped
when she was thirteen

told her that she could tell this
certain department at the university
and they would bring a hearing on him

and then the woman behind the podium
asked, well, if you don't mind my asking,
when did this happen to you

and by the tone of the woman's voice
she was so calm so collected
I expected her to say
a few years ago

and her response was
six days ago

now, I know the healing process for rape
I've studied it in books
first there's denial, then anger, fear
some of these steps last for years

and here was this woman
so calm so collected
so tough so professional
and I just knew
that one day

all of her defenses would fall
and it would all hit her
and she would fall
apart

I felt like her mother

she was my baby
and I wanted to deliver her
from the pain
but there was nothing I could do
I felt so helpless

nothing I could have taught her
would prepare her for this

rape education two

I told a friend
that I worked for
acquaintance rape action groups

she confided in me
told me that she was raped
when she was sixteen

you see, it went like this:
her boyfriend was 23
she was just in high school
and she was drunk
and she didn't know what to do

and all I could think
was that more and more people
are telling me
stories like this

rape education three

I told a friend
that I worked for
acquaintance rape action groups

she told me she tried
to start a group of her own
at her college

her catholic college

and they told her she wasn't allowed
to do it
because acquaintance rape
is not a problem
here

she tried to write an article
about it for her paper
they wouldn't print it

what else was she supposed to do

pornography

The language of sex that is forbidden used to be a language like this:

Bitch," he snapped, pulling away from her, yanking his dick out of her mouth. "You're trying to make me come before I'm ready..." She ate up that kind of talk.

John Stoltenberg, "Pornography and Male Supremacy - the Forbidden Language of Sex," "Refusing ... Essays on Sex and Justice."

Think of some woman in a porn magazine or movie. You probably be able to think of one in particular, so just think of the general notion of a woman in porn.

Here's a woman, which you probably wouldn't even think to call a woman, doing whatever the said man in the movie wants her to do, on film, for others to derive pleasure from. Now in general, when men or even women look at her, they don't wonder about her intellect, her personality, even the sound of her voice. You don't even wonder if she's a good cook. When it comes to the viewers of this woman, all they're thinking about is sex - her body parts and what she does with them. That's all you're supposed to be thinking about when you watch it - that's the whole point of porn. Okay, so now you're looking at this woman and you're thinking of her as, well, not even as a human being as much as some sort of object with legs and tits and other things. You're not thinking of her on any other terms, you don't want to think of her on any other terms. Her express purpose is your sexual satisfaction. You begin to objectify this woman - you don't even know her name, and you are shown to think of her as an object derived to fulfill your needs.

Now, you watch a porn more than once, you see different porn movies, you see these naked women more than once, you see them in magazines as well as in movies. For your purposes, they could even be all the same person - they're just legs and tits anyway, right? For all you know, you could have been looking at the same woman on numerous occasions without even knowing it. They have no personality to you in this form, in pornography. And you may even become accustomed to seeing them this way - seeing the women in these videos and pictures as objects of pleasure for the male viewer.

Now tell me, who is to say that on some levels there aren't men who don't begin to look at women in general in terms of the images they're seeing of women - as objects, as sexual creatures? Do men begin to think of all porn stars as women whose personality doesn't matter to the male, then think of all naked women as objects without feelings, then think of all women in general as tools for men's satisfaction?

Skin flicks and porn reading matter market women as commodities, denying

physical uniqueness, women are presented as "tits and ass" with bulging breasts and painted-on smiles. This caricature of the female body and its reduction to a few sexual essentials is presented undisguised in the "hard core" material and covered up with sophisticated packaging in Playboy, Penthouse, and "soft core" porn films. Whether explicit or implied, the underlying message is the same: women are to be treated by the consumer (the male reader) as pieces of ass.

Michael Betzold, *How Pornography Shackles Men and Oppresses Women*, Male Bag, March, 1976

This woman in the porn movie, on the pages of the magazine, she's probably not even the type of girl the average guy would want to take home to introduce to mom and dad. For some reason she is acceptable for sexual purposes, but not for relationships. She's acceptable for what men, in general, prefer for interactions with the opposite sex, but she is the opposite of what women in general want for interactions with the opposite sex.

Pornography promotes our insecurities by picturing sex as a field of combat and conquest. The sex of pornography is unreal, featuring ridiculously oversized sexual organs, a complete absence of emotional involvement, little kissing and no hugging... Besides reinforcing destructive fantasies toward women, porn promotes self-destructive attitudes in men. By providing substitute gratification, it provides an excuse for men to avoid relating to women as people. It encourages unrealistic expectations: that all women will look and act like Playboy bunnies, that "good sex" can be obtained anywhere, quickly, easily, and without the hassle of expending energy on a relationship.

Michael Betzold, 1976

The male viewer is turned on by her, but these men wouldn't want to actually have to spend time with her. Now why? Because what she does is unacceptable? Why is it acceptable for her to make these movies, take these photos for the pleasure of men, but because of that she is not respectable enough to date?

But how to chart the pressure sensed by women from their boyfriends or husbands to perform sexually in ever more objectified and objectifying fashion as urged by porn movies and magazines?

Robin Morgan, *Pornography: Who Benefits*

Now tell, me, what is to say that men don't begin to look at women in general in terms of the images they're seeing of women - as objects, as sexual creatures, as legs and tits, but as something they don't respect?

I want the world to know that I have a brain. I want the whole damned

world to know that I have ideas, and talent, and intellect, that I'm hard-work - ing, that I'm interesting. But how am I supposed to fight these notions that men have of how women are? Of how I am, or am supposed to be, according to their standards?

Do you have any idea how sick it makes me feel when I see some guy leer - ing at me in the street? But you have no idea why. No, the typical male response of "She just doesn't want to be flattered" doesn't make sense, because you're not flattering me by reducing me to something you can abuse. To tits and legs. To something like an object in a porn magazine or movie, someone who wants to solely be a vehicle for the man's pleasure. No, I don't think finding someone attractive is a bad thing, in fact, it's a very good thing. But that isn't all there is to a human being, and that surely isn't all there is to me. If someone is going to stereotype me into one category, I would rather be thought of as smart, or hard working, than a potential fuck.

Every time I see a pornography magazine, I wonder if the owner, or the men looking through it, expect me to look like that, or expect me to perform like that for them. Or if they think I like the submission and degradation. I don't. Most women don't.

Janet Kuypers, *How Pornography Affects Me*, 1994.

"But the women who are porn models and actresses like it, I mean, they're not being degraded, they're being paid for it."

Would you enjoy having a photographer take pictures of you so everyone could fixate on your penis? (maybe you would.) Let me put it this way: would you like it if every interaction you had in the world related and depended only - and I mean only - with your penis? That the only way you could achieve anything in life was only if you exploited your sexual organs? If your brain didn't count? If your abilities didn't count? If you as a person didn't count?

Would you enjoy it if you were trying to apply for a job and all through the interview your potential employer was more interested in how you looked naked than your skills applicable to the job? It would be so frustrating, because that wouldn't matter to the job, and you wouldn't be able to prove to these people that you are qualified for the job. It would be so frustrating, because there would be nothing you could do to make these people see you as a person. You probably think it sounds funny, but in all honesty, these things all relate. Pornography objectifies women, and these views of objectification translate to other parts of society, from looking for a job to walking down the street. And in my opinion, it's just not fair that women should be treated that way, simply because that's the way it is, simply because that's the way men and women have been taught in this society think.

Many men, knowing intimately the correspondence between the values in

their sexuality and in their pornography - share the anxiety that the feminist anti-pornography movement is really an attack on male sexuality. These nervous and angry men are quite correct: the movement really does hold men accountable for the consequences to real women of their sexual proclivities. It is really a refusal to believe that a man's divine right is to force sex, to use another person's body as if it were a hollow cantaloupe, a slap of liver, and to injure and debilitate for the sake of his gratification.

When one looks at pornography, one sees what helps some men feel aroused, feel filled with maleness and devoid of all that is non-male. When one looks at pornography, one sees what is necessary to sustain the social structure of male contempt for female flesh whereby men achieve a sense of themselves as male...

John Stoltenberg, "Pornography and Male Supremacy - the Forbidden Language of Sex," "Refusing ... Essays on Sex and Justice."

"But women like porn movies, too, and there's naked men in the pictures. It's eroticism, it turns everyone on, not just men. What's wrong with that?"

First of all, the way pornography depicts sex is different from eroticism - the difference is that pornography is by nature degrading towards women. How? By her submissiveness, her subservience. Is she tied up? Is her aim to please the man? Is rape a common fantasy in pornography, or physical pain, or very young women (even more weak than full adults), or more than one woman serving a man? Eroticism does not rely on one sex submissive and subservient to the other. Pornography relies exactly on just that degradation of one sex.

statistic: 75% of all women involved in pornography were victims of incest.

statistic: it currently is legal to sell tapes of real rapes in this country.

Think about this, which is one of the most common fantasy scenes when the tables are turned: would you, as a man, like to be naked with another man, the both of you working to satisfy one woman? Would you really feel comfortable being with another man in that situation? No, I'm sure you wouldn't want to compete. And I'm sure you'd want to know that you are capable of bedding a woman and don't need to share the responsibility of satisfaction with another man. Would you want the woman deriving pleasure from another man while she was with you? No, I'm sure you'd want to know that she was dependent on you, and not someone else, for her satisfaction. Imagine that situation, really think about it, and tell me honestly that the fantasy of two women having sex with one man is fair, or accurate, or considerate, or even enjoyable for women.

Both law and pornography express male contempt for woman: that have in the past and they do now. Both express enduring social and sexual values; each

attempts to fix male behavior so that the supremacy of the male over the female will be maintained.

Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography and the First Amendment*.

Pornography supports, encourages these situation if submissiveness, like multiple women, or bondage, or rape. And in my opinion, any medium that eroticizes rape is completely inaccurate. Women don't like it. No women do. A woman may fantasize about rough sex, which could be played out in the bedroom like a rape scene with a trusting partner, but that is definitely not rape, and it doesn't feel like rape. Why would men want to fantasize that women actually enjoyed an actual rape? To feel secure that women enjoy their oppressed place in the society? Because the men want to rape someone? That's hard to believe, but if that's really a possible answer, then where do they get the fantasy of raping a woman? Pornography.

And if women like pornography, it might be because they have grown to like it. It is one thing to be sexual, and it is entirely another to support this kind of degradation toward women. In our culture, pornography exists, but eroticism barely does. Women don't have the choices for pleasure in this society that men do. *Playgirl* and other similar magazines are designed mostly by men - and revolve around the same fantasies that men have. It is assumed that women enjoy the same fantasies. No one questions whether or not they do. And in fact, the vast majority of readers of *Playgirl* are gay men.

Pornography contains hidden messages. For example, the recent surfacing of sadomasochistic material in more respectable publications such as *Penthouse* illustrates how reactionary sexism gets mingled in with the turn-on photos. The material suggests that women should not only be fucked, but beaten, tortured and enslaved—triumphed over in any way. *Penthouse* gets away with this murderous message by casting two women in the S/M roles, but it's no problem for a man to identify with the torturer—the victim is provided.

Michael Betzold, 1976

Does pornography produce these subservient, submissive, sexual, non-human notions about women in men, in all different levels in society? It may be one of many forces that produce these notions - and all these different factors feed upon one another. Sexism pervades every pore of our culture, and pornography reinforces these barriers, as do other forces in our day-to-day lives.

There is little understanding that pornography is not about sex but rather is a fundamentally misogynist expression of patriarchal rights...

Gary Mitchell Wandachild, *Complicity in the Face of Patriarchy*, Win, January 22, 1976

Women are portrayed as sexual objects in almost every form of media today. There are so many more strip joints for men than women, and there are so many restaurants and bars with female employees wearing next to nothing. Women make 63¢ for the man's dollar in the work place. Women are abused in marriages and relationships, physically and sexually. A single 30-year-old man is considered sexy while a 30-year-old woman is considered a hag. One in three women in their life times will be raped, one in four before they even leave college. Over 80% of the rapes that do occur are committed by a man the survivor knew, a friend, a relative, a boyfriend - someone they trusted. Playboy and Penthouse outsell Time and Newsweek twenty times over. And the word misogyny exists - it means "to hate all women" - and a similar term does not exist for hating men.

No, I don't believe that pornography should be banned - I also believe in the First Amendment, and I believe in freedom of expression. I just wish that people didn't support it so much. I wish that these notions weren't forced on to me by men I interact with, by society in general.

No, I suppose I can't change the world, but I'll do what I can to make people understand me. Because every day I have to live with these notions in society, these stereotypes about me. And I don't like them, and I don't want to live by them. Most women don't want to live by them, but they figure it's easier to go along with it than fight the system. I can't go along with it. That is who I am - a person who cannot be submissive, who has her own thoughts, her own brain. And if these notions are in my way, then I'll do what I have to to get rid of these things. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't.

Janet Kuypers, 1994.

The rallying cry of porn dealers is freedom of speech and the press ... Yet we would be appalled if movies showed blacks being lynched or castrated, Chicanos being systematically beaten and tortured, and we would quickly protest. But we say nothing when the same activity goes on with women as the victims.

Michael Betzold, 1976

"Women don't like pornography because they're afraid to say they really like it. Women are just jealous of better looking women being sexually active, doing what they think they cant."

Women don't like pornography because as human beings they don't like being reduced to an object for men's pleasure, a receptacle for a man's penis. They don't like being reduced, and in such a graphic way, to a non-thinking, non-feeling pile of rubble. And they don't like the fact that men can go into many newsstands or video stores and get something commonly sold, or even popular, that supports this. That harbors this. That encourages this.

most accurate metaphors

rape is one of the most savage
one of the most accurate
metaphors for how men
relate to women in this society

it is a political crime
committed by men
as a class
against women
as a class

rape is an attempt by men
to keep all women in line
Bob Lamm, 1976

now there's two ways
this can happen, little girl
you can keep fighting me,
and if that's the case, i'll
have to keep my hand
over your mouth and
this knife at your neck,
or you can relax, enjoy
yourself, make this easier
on the both of us

you know you want this
so stop fighting it

i saw the way you were
looking at me earlier,
the way you stared at me
the way you were dressed
i know what you were thinking
so don't say a word

did you think those drinks
were free

how long did you think
i could wait
it's my turn now
you owe it to me

just do as i say
and no one gets hurt

the men at the construction site

a woman told me
that scientists did an experiment
where a woman
first walked past a construction site
with her head down

no one bothered her,
no one noticed her
everyone at the site left her alone

then, later in the day,
she walked past again
in the same outfit, with the same stride
but this time she walked with
her head up,
more confidently

and that's when she got
the calls, the whistles
from the men at the construction site

and you tell me it's not deliberate
and you tell me it's not an effort
to keep women in their place

crazy

This dialogue is transcribed from repeated visits with a patient in Aaronsville Correctional Center in West Virginia. Madeline*, a thirty-six year old woman, was sentenced to life imprisonment after the brutal slaying of her boyfriend during sexual intercourse. According to police reports, Madeline sat with the remains of the man for three days after the murder until police arrived on the scene. They found her in the same room as the body, still coated with blood and malnourished. Three doctors studied her behavior for a total period of eight months, and the unanimous conclusion they reached was that Madeline was not of sound mind when she committed the act, which involved an ice pick, an oak board from the back of a chair, and eventually a chef's knife. Furthermore, she continued to show signs of both paranoia and delusions of grandeur long after the murder, swaying back and forth between the two, much like manic depression.

For three and a half years Madeline has stayed at the Aaronsville Correctional Center, and she has shown no signs of behavioral improvement. She stays in a room by herself, usually playing solitaire on her bed. She talks to herself regularly and out loud, usually in a slight Southern accent, although not in a very loud tone, according to surveillance videotape. Her family abandoned her after the murder. Occasionally she requests

newspapers to read, but she is usually denied them. She never received visitors, until these sessions with myself.

The following excerpts are from dialogues I have had with her, although I am tempted to say that they are monologues. She wasn't very interested in speaking with me, rather, she was more interested in opening herself up to someone for the first time in years, someone who was willing to listen. At times I began to feel like a surrogate parent. I try not to think of what will happen when our sessions end.

* Madeline is not her real name.

I know they're **watching me**. They've got these stupid cameras everywhere - see, there's one behind the air vent there, **hi there**, and there's one where the window used to be. They've probably got them behind the mirrors, too. It wouldn't be so bad, I guess, I mean, there's not much for me to be doing in here anyway, but they **watch me dress**, too, I mean, they're watching me when I'm naked, now **what's that going to do to a person?** I don't know what they're watching for anyway, it's not like I can do anything in here. I eat everything with a spoon, I've never been **violent**, all I do,

almost every day, is sit on this bed and play solitaire.

Solitaire is really relaxing, you know, and I think it keeps your brain alive, too. Most people think you can't win at solitaire, that the chances of winning are like two percent or something. But the thing is, you can win at this game like over half the time. I think that's the key, too - **knowing you can win** half the time. I mean, the last four rounds I played, I won twice. Now I'm not saying that's good or anything, like praise me because I won two rounds of solitaire, but it makes a point that as long as you know what you're doing and you actually think about it, you can win. The odds are better.

I think **people just forget** to watch the cards. Half the time the reason why you lose is because you forget something so obvious. You're looking for a card through the deck and the whole time it's sitting on another pile, just waiting to be moved over, and

the whole time you forget to move it. People just forget to pay attention. They got to pay attention.

You know, I'd like to see the news. I hate t.v., but I'd like to see what acts other people are doing. Anything like mine? Has anyone else **lost it** like me? You know, I'll bet my story wasn't even on the news for more than thirty seconds. And I'll bet the news person had a tone to their voice that was just like **"oh, the poor crazy thing,"** like, "that's what happens when you lose it, I guess."

But I want to see what's happening in the real world. I just wanna watch to see what, you know, the weather is like, even though I haven't seen the sun in a year or two. Or, or to hear sports scores. They won't let me have a t.v. in the room. I think they think that I'm gonna hot-wire it or something, like I'm going to try to **electrocute** the whole building with a stupid television set. They let me have a lamp in the room,

like I can't hurt someone with that, but no t.v. They won't even let me have a newspaper. **What can a person do** with a newspaper? Light in on fire or something? If I had matches or something. But it's like this: I've never been **violent** to nobody in all of the time I've been in here. I haven't laid a hand on a guard, even though they're tried too many times to **lay a hand on me**, and I haven't cause one single little problem in this whole damn place, and this is what I get - I don't even get a t.v. or a newspaper.

You know, I don't really have a Southern accent. **See?** Don't I sound different with my regular voice? I picked it up **when I started sounding crazy.** See, I'm not really crazy, I just know the kind of shit they do to you in prison. I think it's bad enough here, I would've had the shit kicked out of me, I'd've been sodomized before I knew what hit me. I think this voice makes me sound a little more strange. I'm actually from

New York, but I mean, changing the voice a little just to save me from going to prison, well, I can do that. Here it's kind of nice, I don't have to deal with people that often, and all the crazy people around here think I'm some sort of tough bitch because I mutilated someone who was **raping** me. Oh, you didn't hear that part of the story, did you? Those damn lawyers thought that **since I wasn't a virgin I must have been wanting him.** And he wasn't even my boyfriend - he was just some guy I knew, we'd go out every couple of weeks, and I never even slept with him before.

What a **fucked up** place. You see, I gotta think of it this way: I really had no choice but to do what I did. In a way it was self-defense, because I didn't want that little piece of shit to try to **do that to me**, I mean, what the Hell makes him think he can do that? Where does he get off trying to take me like

that, like I'm some **butcher-shop** piece of
meat he can buy and abuse or whatever? Well any-
way, I know part of it all was self defense and all,
but at the same time I know I flipped, but its
because of, well shit that happened in my past. I
never came from any rich family like you, I never
even came from a family with a dad, and when you got
all these boyfriends coming in and **hitting you** or **touch -**
ing you or whatever, you know it's got to mess you up.
Yeah, I know, people try to use the my-parents-beat-
me line and it's getting to the point where no one
really believes it anymore, but if a person goes
through all their life **suppressing** something that
they shouldn't have to suppress then one day it's going
to just come up to them and punch them in the face,
it's going to make them go crazy, even if it's just
for a little while.

Society's kind of **weird**, you know. It's like they teach you to do things that aren't normal, that **don't feel right down deep in your bones**, but you have to do them anyway, because **someone somewhere decided** that this would be normal. Everyone around you suppresses stuff, and when you see that it tells you that you're supposed to be hiding it from the rest of the world, too, like if we all **just hide it for a while**, it will all go away. Maybe it does, until someone like me blows up and can't take hiding all that stuff anymore, but then the rest of the world can just say that we're crazy and **therefore it's unexplainable** why we went crazy and then they can just brush it all off and everything is back to normal again. It's like emotion. People are taught to hide their emotions. **Men** are taught not to cry, **women** are taught to be **emotional** and men are told to think that **it's crazy**. So when something really shitty happens to

someone - like a guy loses his job or something - and he just sits in front of a friend and breaks down and cries, the other guy just thinks this guy is crazy for crying. Then the guy rejects the guy that's crying, making him feel even worse, making the guy bottle it back up inside of him.

I think people are like Pepsi bottles. You remember those glass bottles? Pop always tasted better in those bottles, you could just like swig it down easier, your lips fit around the glass neck better or something. I wonder why people don't use them anymore? Well, I think people are like Pepsi bottles, like they have the potential for all of this energy, and **the whole world keeps shaking them up**, and some people lose their heads and the top goes off and all of this icky stuff comes shooting all around and other Pepsi bottles want to hide from it and then the poor guy has no Pepsi left. And how can

you do anything when you have no Pepsi left? Or maybe you do lose it, but you still have some Pepsi left in you, and people keep thinking that you don't have any left, and then they treat you like you shouldn't be allowed to **tie your own shoelaces** or you should be watched while you're getting dressed.

Can't you turn those cameras off?

I heard this story in here sometime about Tony, this guy that was in here for murder, and after he was in here he went crazy and cut off his own scrotum. I don't know how a man survives something like that, but I guess he did, because he was in here, and from what I hear he was using the pay phones to call 800 numbers to **prank** whoever answered at the other end. Well, I guess he kept calling this one place where **these women** would answer the phone, and they got **fed up** with it, I guess, and traced it or something. They got the number for this hospital, and

domestic violence in america
nashville, tennessee

i have had my cheek bone
and nose reconstructed twice

we're divorced now
but he still keeps calling me

he keeps denying it in court

domestic violence in america nashville, tennessee

according to accounts, her husband
allegedly locked her and their
four-year-old son in their house

for about forty hours. They were
essentially hostages. The husband
then allegedly beat the woman

while the son watched. This is the
stick he allegedly used to keep her
in line, it looks like a metal broom

or mop handle, it's hollow, and you
see, here is a bend in it from the
hitting. The bend looks like a twist

of a garden hose. And this bloody
knit glove, it was tied on here, at
the end of the stick, so that when he

allegedly hit her it didn't scar her.
Isn't that funny? You can tell that
the son was there for it all, too, he

doesn't talk much at all, and he never
leaves his mother's side. She limps down
the hallway now, and he follows.

gabriel

She had lived there, in her fourth floor apartment on the near north side of the city, for nearly three years. It was an uneventful three years from the outside; Gabriel liked it that way. She just wanted to live her life: go to work, see her new friends, have a place to herself.

But looking a bit closer, it was easy to see what a wonderful life she had. Her apartment was impeccable, with Greek statues and glass vases lining the hallways, modern oil paintings lining her walls. She was working at her career for a little under two years and she had received two hefty promotions. She served on the board of directors for the headquarters of a national domestic abuse clinic and single-handedly managed to increase annual donations in her city by 45%, as well as drastically increase the volunteer base for their hotline numbers. She managed a boyfriend, a man who was willing to put up with her running around, working overtime for her job, visiting clinics. A man who loved and respected her for her drive. Not bad for

a woman almost twenty-five.

Yes, life seemed good for Gabriel, she would dine in fine restaurants, visit the operas and musicals travelling through the city. And she had only been in the city for three years.

Eric would wonder what her past was like when he'd hit a nerve with her and she would charge off to work, not talking to him for days. She had only lived in the city for three years, and he knew nothing about her life before then. In the back of his mind, he always thought she was **hid-
ing something from him**, keeping a little secret, and sometimes everything Gabriel said made him believe this secret was real. She told him her parents lived on the other side of the country, and even though they dated for almost two years there never was talk about visiting them. She never received calls from her old friends. There were no old photographs.

This would get to Eric sometimes; it would fester inside of him when he sat down and thought about it, all alone, in his apartment, wondering when she would be finished with work. And then he'd see her again, and all of his problems would disappear, and he'd feel like he was in love.

One morning he was sitting at her breakfast table, reading her paper, waiting so they could drive to work. "Hey, they finally got that mob-king guy

with some charges they think will stick.”

Gabriel minded her business, put her make-up on in the bathroom mirror, hair-sprayed her short, curly brown hair.

“Hey, Gabriel, get a load of this quote,” Eric shouted down the hallway to her from his seat. He could just barely see her shadow through the open door to the bathroom. “‘My client is totally innocent of any charges against him. It is the defense’s opinion that Mr. Luccio was framed, given to the police by the organized crime rings in this city as a decoy,’ said Jack Huntington, defense lawyer for the case. ‘Furthermore, the evidence is circumstantial, and weak.’ What a joke. I hope this guy doesn’t get away with all he’s done. You know, if I—”

Gabriel stopped hearing his voice when she heard that name. She had heard Luccio over and over again in the news, but Jack. **She didn’t expect this. Not now.** It had been so long since she heard that name.

But not long enough. Her hands gripped the edge of the ceramic sink, gripping tighter and tighter until she began to **scratch the wood paneling under the sink.** Her head hung down, the ends of her hair falling around her face. He lived outside of the city, nearly two hours. **Now he was here,** maybe ten minutes away from

her home, less than a mile away from where she worked, where she was about to go to.

She couldn't let go of the edge of the sink. Eric stopped reading aloud and was already to the sports section, and in the back of her mind Gabriel was wondering **how she could hurt herself** so she wouldn't have to go to work. She would be late already, she had been standing there for over ten minutes.

Hurt herself? What was she thinking? And she began to regain her senses. She finally picked her head up and looked in the mirror. She wasn't the woman from then, she had to say to herself as she sneered at her reflection. But all she could see was long, blonde straight hair, a golden glow from the sun, from the days where she didn't work as often as she did, when she had a different life.

She had to pull on her hair to remind herself that it was short. **She pulled it until she almost cried.** Then she stopped, straightened her jacket, took a deep breath and walked out the bathroom door.

Eric started to worry. As they car-pooled together to work, Gabriel sat in the passenger seat, right hand **clutching the door handle**, left hand grabbing her briefcase, holding it with a fierce, ferocious grip. But it was a grip that said **she was scared**, scared of losing

that briefcase, or her favorite teddy bear from the other kids at school, or her life from a robber in an alley. If nothing else, Eric knew **she felt fear**. And he didn't know why.

He tried to ask her. She said she was tired, but tense, an important meeting and a pounding headache. **He knew it was more**. She almost shook as she sat in that car, and she began to rock back and forth, forward and back, ever so slightly, **the way a mother rocks her child to calm her down**. It made Eric tense, too. And scared.

Work was a blur, a blur of nothingness. There was no meeting, the workload was light for a Friday. But at least the headache was there, that wasn't a lie. **She hated lying**, especially to Eric. But she had no choice, especially now, with Jack lurking somewhere in the streets out there, winning his cases, **wondering if his wife is dead or not**.

She never wanted him to know the answer.

Eric called her a little after four. "Just wanted to check if we were still going to dinner tonight. I made the reservations at the new Southwestern place, you said you wanted to go there. Sound good?"

Gabriel mustered up the strength to respond, and only came up with, "Sure."

"Do you still have the headache, honey? Do you want to just rent a movie

or two and curl up on the couch tonight? Whatever you want to do is fine, just let me know.”

She knew at this point he was doing all he could to make her feel better. **She didn't want to put him through this.** He shouldn't have to deal with her like this. She searches for her second wind. “No, Eric, dinner would be fine. We can go straight from work to save the drive. Thanks, too. You really have a knack for making my days better.”

Eric smiled at the end of the line. And Gabriel could feel it.

They got off the phone, she finished her work, turned off her computer, started walking toward the elevator when it finally occurred to her: Jack might be there. **She can't go.** Even if he's not there, she could see him on the street, driving there. **She just couldn't go.**

She pressed the button for the elevator. And he could just as easily see me walking out of work, getting in Eric's car, she thought. I have to stop thinking like this. **This is ludicrous.** And he won't be there, he won't see me, because, well, the chances are so thin, and Hell, it's a big city. I have to try to relax.

But she couldn't. And there was no reason she should have.

At the restaurant, they sat on the upper level, near one of the large Roman columns decorated with ivy. She kept looking around one of the

columns, because a man three tables away looked like Jack. It wasn't, but she still had to stare.

The meal was delicious, the presentation was impeccable. She was finally starting to relax. The check arrived at the table right as the place began to get crowded, so Gabriel went to the washroom to freshen up before they left. She walked through the restaurant, feeling comfortable and confident again. She even attracted a smile from a man at another table. **She walked with confidence and poise.** And she loved life again.

She walked into the bathroom, straight to the mirror, checking her hair, her lip stick. She looked strong, not how she looked when she was married. She closed her purse, turned around and headed out the door.

That's when she saw him.

There he was, Jack, standing right there, waiting for a table. He had three other men with him, all in dark suits. She didn't know if they were mob members or firm associates. Or private eyes he hired to find her. Dear God, she thought, **what could she do now?** She can't get to the table, he'll see her for sure. She can't stare at him, it'll only draw attention to herself.

And then she thinks: "Wait. All I've seen is the back of him. It might not even be him." She took a breath. "It's probably not even him," she thought,

“and I’ve sat here worrying about it.”

Still, she couldn’t reassure herself. She took a few steps back and waited for him to turn around.

A minute passed, **or was it a century?**, and finally he started to turn, just as they were about to be led to their table. She saw his profile, just a glimpse of his face. It was him, it was Jack, it was **the monster** she knew from all those years, the man who made her lose any ounce of **innocence or femininity** she ever had. She saw how his chin sloped into his neck, the **curve of his nose**, how he combed his hair back, and she knew it was him.

By the washrooms, she stared at him while he took one step away from her, closer to the dining room. Then she felt a strong, pulling hand grip her shoulder. Her hair slapped her in the face as she turned around. Her eyes were saucers.

“The check is paid for. Let’s go,” Eric said as he took her jacket from her arm and held it up for her. She slid her arms through the sleeves, Eric pulling the coat over her shoulders. She stared blankly. He guided her out the doors.

She asked him if they could stop at a club on the way home and have a drink or two. They found a little bar, and she instantly ordered drinks. They sat for over an hour in the dark club listening to the jazz band. It

looked to Eric like she was trying to **lose herself** in the darkness, in the **anonymity** of the crowded lounge. It worried him more. And still she didn't relax.

And she drove on the expressway back from dinner, Eric in the seat next to her. He had noticed she had been tense today, more than she had ever been; whenever he asked her why she brushed her symptoms off as nothing.

The radio blared in the car, the car soaring down the four lanes of open, slick, raw power, and she heard the dee-jay recap the evening news. **A man died in a car accident**, he said, and it was the lawyer defending the famed mob leader. And then the radio announced his name.

And she didn't even have to hear it.

Time stopped for a moment when the name was spread, **Jack**, Jack Huntington, **like a disease**, over the air waves. Jack, Jack the name crept into her car, she couldn't escape it, like contaminated water it **infiltrated all of her body** and she instantly felt drugged. **Time stood still in a horrific silence for Gabriel**. Hearing that mid-night talk show host talk about the tragedy of his death, she began to reduce speed, without intention. She didn't notice until brights were flashing in her rear view mirror, cars were speeding around her, horns were honking. She

was going 30 miles per hour.

She quickly regained herself, turned off the radio, and threw her foot on the accelerator. Eric sat silent. They had a long drive home ahead of them from the club, and he knew if he only sat silent that she would eventually talk.

While still in the car, ten minutes later, she began to tell him about Andrea.

“Three years ago, when I moved to the city, my name wasn’t Gabriel. It was **Andrea**.

“Seven years ago, I was a different person. I was a lot more **shy, insecure**, an eighteen year old in college, not knowing what I wanted to study. I didn’t know what my future was, and I didn’t want to have to **go through my life alone**. My freshman year I met a man in the law school program at school. He asked me out as soon as he met me. I was thrilled.

“For the longest time I couldn’t believe that another man, especially one who had the potential for being so successful, was actually interested in me. He was **older**, he was **charming**. **Everyone loved him**. I followed him around constantly, wherever he wanted me to go.

“He met my parents right away. **They adored him**, a man with a future, he was so charming. They pushed the idea of marrying him. I didn’t see it happening for a while, but I felt safe with him.

“And every once in a while, after a date, or a party, we’d get alone and **he’d start to yell at me**, about the way I acted with him, or what I said in public, or that **the way I looked was wrong**, or something. And every once in a while he would **hit me**. And whenever it happened I thought that **I should have looked better**, or I shouldn’t have acted the way I did. This man was **too good for me**. And I had to do everything in my power to make him happy.

“Less than eight months after we met, he asked me to marry him. **I accepted.**

“We were married two years after we met; it was a beautiful ceremony, tons of flowers, tons of gifts—and I was turning a junior in college. My future was set for me. I couldn’t believe it.

“And as soon as we were married, which was right when he started at the firm, he got **more and more violent**. And instead of thinking that it was my fault, I started thinking that it was because he

was so stressed, that **he had so much work to do**, that sometimes he just **took it out on me**. I was no one's fault. Besides, if he was going to climb to the top, he needed a wife that was perfect for all of his appearances. I **had to be perfect for him**. Take care of the house and go to school full time.

“Money wasn't a problem for us, he had a trust fund from his parents and made good money at the firm, so I could go to school. But he started to hate the idea that I was going to college in marketing instead of being his wife full time. But that was one thing I wasn't going to do for him, stop going to school.

“He'd get more and more angry about it the longer we were married. After the first year he'd hit me at least once a week. I was physically **sick half of my life** then, sick from being **worried** about how to make him not hurt me, sick from trying to figure out how to **cover up the bruises**.

“I'd try to talk to him about it, but the few times I ever had the courage to bring it up, **he'd beat me**. **He'd just beat me**, say a few words. Apologize the next morning, think everything was better. I couldn't take it.

“I threatened with divorce. When I did that I had to go to the hospital with a **broken arm**. I had to tell the doctors that I fell down the stairs.

“A long flight of stairs.

“When it was approaching two years of marriage with this man, I said to myself I couldn’t take it anymore. He told me over and over again that **he’d make me pay** if I tried to leave him, I’d be sorry, it would be the worst choice I could ever make. This man had power, too, he could hunt me down if I ran away, he could **emotionally and physically keep me trapped** in this marriage.

“So I did the only thing I thought I could do.

“I wrote a **suicide note**. ‘By the time you find my car, I’ll be dead.’ I took a few essentials, nothing that could say who I was. I cut my hair—I used to have **long, long hair** that I dyed blonde. I chopped it all off and dyed it dark. Then I drove out to a quarry off the interstate 20 miles away in the middle of the night, threw my driver’s license and credit cards into the passenger’s seat, put a brick on the accelerator, got out of the car and let it speed over the cliff. Everything was burned.

“So there I was, twenty-two years old, **with no future, with no identity.** My family, my friends, would all think I was dead in the morning. And for the first time in my life, I was **so alone.** God, I was so **scared,** but at the same time, it was the best feeling in the world. It felt good to not have my **long hair brushing against my neck.** It felt good to feel the cold of the three a.m. air against my cheeks, on my ears. It felt good to have no where to go, **other than away.** No one was telling me where to go, what to do. **No one was hurting me.**

“I found my way two hours away to this city, came up with the name Gabriel from a soap opera playing in a clinic I went to to get some cold medication. I managed a job at the company I’m at now. Did volunteer work, rented a hole for an apartment. Projected a few of the right ideas to the right people in the company. **I got lucky.**”

She told him all of this before she told him that her husband’s name was Jack Huntington.

She brought him home, sat on the couch while he made coffee for her. He tried to sound calm, but the questions kept coming out of his mouth, one after another. Gabriel’s answers suddenly **streamed effortlessly** from

her mouth, like a river, spilling over onto the floor, covering the living room with inches of water within their half hour of talk.

She felt the cool water of her words sliding around her ankles. And she felt relieved.

Gabriel, Andrea, was no longer Mrs. Jack Huntington.

Eric told her that she could have told him before. “I’d follow you anywhere. If I had to quit my job and run away with you I would.” It hurt him that she kept this from him for so long, but he knew he was the only person who knew her secret. He smiled.

There was a burden lifted, she felt, with Jack’s death, the burden that she didn’t have to **hide who she was** anymore. She didn’t have to worry about public places, **COWER** when she felt his presence, following her, **haunting her**. It’s over, she thought. She can walk out in the street now, and **scream, and run, and laugh**, and no one will come walking around the corner to **force her** back to her old life, to that little **private hell** that was named Andrea.

But sitting there, she knew there was still one thing she had to do.

She put down her coffee, got on her coat, told him this was something she must do. Gabriel got into her car, started to head away from the city. As she left, Eric asked where she was going. She knew she had done what

she could for the last three years of her own life to save herself; now it was time to go back to the past, no matter what the consequences were.

He thought she was going back to her family. She was, in a way.

She drove into the town she had once known, saw the trees along the streets and remembered the way they looked every fall when the leaves turned colors. She remembered that one week every fall when the time was just right and each tree's leaves were different from the other trees. This is how she wanted to remember it.

And she drove past her old town, over an hour and a half away from the city, passing where her parents, her brother could still be living. She didn't know if she would ever bother to find them. Right now all she could do was drive to the next town, where her old friend used to live. Best friends from the age of three, Sharon and Andrea were inseparable, even though they fought to extremes. And as she drove toward Sharon's house, she knew she'd have to move quickly, **if her husband was still there.**

She double-checked in a phone book at a nearby gas station. And she turned two more corners and parked her car across the street. Would she recognize her? Would she believe she was there? That she was alive?

Gabriel saw one car in the driveway, not two; she went to the window, and looking in saw only Sharon. She stepped back. She took a long, deep

breath. She was a **fugitive** turning herself in. She was a fugitive, asking people to **run with her**, running from something, yet running free. She knocked on the door.

Through the drapes she saw the charcoal shadow come up to the door. It creaked open. There they stood, looking at each other. For the first time in three and a half years.

Sharon paused for what seemed a millennium. Her eyes turned to glass, to a pond glistening with the first rays of the morning sun.

“Andrea.” She could see her through the brown curls wrapping her face. Another long silence. Sharon’s voice started to break.

“You’re alive,” she said as she closed her eyes and started to smile. And Gabriel reached through the doorway, and the door closed as they held each other.

They sat down in the living room. In the joy, Sharon forgot about the bruises on her shoulder. Gabriel noticed them immediately.

They talked only briefly before Gabriel asked her. “Is Paul here?”

“No, he’s out playing cards. Should be out all night.”

“Things are the same, aren’t they?”

“Andi, they’re fine. **He’s just got his ways,**” and Sharon turned

her head away, physically looking for something to change the subject. There was so much to say, yet Sharon couldn't even speak.

And then Gabriel's speech came out, the one she had been rehearsing in her mind the entire car ride over. The speech she gave to herself for the years before this very moment. "Look, Sharon, I know what it's like, I can **see the signs**. I know you, and I know you'll **sit through this marriage**, like I would have, this unending cycle of trying to **cover the bruises** on your arms and **make excuses**—"

Sharon moved her arm over her shoulder. Her head started inching downward. She knew Andrea knew her too well, and she wouldn't be able to fight her words, even after all these years.

"I went through this. When Jack told me I'd never be able to leave him, that I'd be sorry if I did, that I'd pay for trying to divorce him, that's when I knew I couldn't take it anymore. **No man has a right to tell me—or you—what you can and can't do**. It hasn't gotten better, like you keep saying, has it? No. I know it hasn't. It never does.

"I know this sounds harsh, and it is. If I was willing to run away, run away so convincingly that my own family thought I was dead, then it had to be serious.

Do you think I liked leaving you? My brother? Do you think this was easy?"

Gabriel paused, tried to lean back, take a deep breath, relax.

"No. It wasn't easy. But I had to do it, I had to get away from him, no matter what it took. In spending my life with him I was losing myself. I needed to find myself again."

They sat there for a moment, **a long moment**, while they both tried to **recover**.

"You don't have to run away," Gabriel said to her. "You don't have to run away like I had to. But **he won't change**. You do have to leave here. Let me help you."

Within forty-five minutes Sharon had three bags of clothes packed and stuffed into Gabriel's trunk. As Sharon went to get her last things, Gabriel thought of how Sharon called her "Andi" when she spoke. God, she hadn't heard that in so long. And for a moment she couldn't unravel the mystery and find out who she was.

Sharon came back to the car. Gabriel knew that Sharon would only stay with her until the divorce papers were filed and she could move on with her life. But for tonight they were together, the inseparable Sharon and Andi, spending the night, playing house, creating their own world where everything was exactly as they wanted.

And this was real life now, and they were still together, with a **whole new world to create**. They were both **free, and alive**, more alive than either of them had ever felt.

“I want you to meet Eric. He’s a good man,” Gabriel said.

And as they drove off to nowhere, to **a new life**, on the expressway, under the viaduct, passing the projects, the baseball stadium, heading their way toward the traffic of downtown life, they remained silent, listened to the hum of the engine. For Gabriel, it wasn’t the silence of **enabling her oppressor**; it wasn’t the silence of hiding her past. It was her peace for having finally accepted herself, along with all of the **pain**, and not feeling the hurt.

Andrea. Gabriel.

The next morning, she didn’t know which name she’d use, but she knew that someone died that night, not Jack, but someone inside of her. But it was also a rebirth. And so she drove.

women's very existence

rape is neither a sex crime
or a crime of passion

rape is not an isolated brutal crime
against women

rape is often premeditated
rape is a crime of violence
rather than sex
it is a crime of violence
against women

it is an attack by men
on women's bodies
on women's feelings
on women's very existence

Bob Lamm, 1976

í still have to take showers a lot. í mean, every once in a while, no matter how clean í am to the rest of the world, í have to go take a shower. í lock all the doors, í close the shades on the windows, í put a towel over the bathroom mirror. turn the water on, piping hot, so steam is billowing out of the bath tub. í finally undress, open the curtain, put my foot in, burn my foot with the water. í wish í could hold my foot there, just a little longer. í turn down the water. wait for it to cool down, then step in. then í just put my head under the shower head. hold it there for a while. catch my breath. get the soap. start scrubbing. í use the soap first, then í get the bath brush. scrub off a layer of skin. í know this makes no sense. my skin is red, from the heat, from the scrubbing. but í know í'm still not getting it off, it's down there, the molecules are embedded deep inside of me, and í'll have to rip my skin off, pull out my organs before it goes away. but for now all í can do is take showers.

medicine

A few years ago, I felt so much pain in my joints that I couldn't walk or pick up a carton of milk in the morning. At age 21, I limped and ached; my right ankle, left knee, and right hand were swollen. I was also sore in my back and shoulders. I cried in pain daily.

I went to the first doctor. He x-rayed my hand, told me that I may have a jammed thumb, but that there would be no evidence of it in an x-ray and that the pain and swelling would just go away. Then I went to the second doctor. There may be a stress fracture in my right foot, he said, but it was nothing serious. There were no drugs prescribed for the pain, and he handed me an ace bandage and a pair of crutches and headed me out the door.

I went to my third doctor, who happened to be the first female doctor I saw. She put all the symptoms together and thought I may have a form of arthritis. She referred me to a specialist at a nearby hospital.

She was the first doctor who listened to me. Every other experience of mine was of a doctor addressing only one of the problems I mentioned, then brushing the problem off as minor. I felt as if I was getting nowhere in discovering the root of my illness. I felt as if no one wanted to help me.

•••

A friend and co-worker was recently hospitalized with an ulcer. When she came back, the pain still remained—especially during menstruation. She always had severe menstrual cramps, and with the ulcer present there would be days at the office when she would have to lay down underneath her desk until the pain went away.

Sometimes the pain would make her cry at her desk. Once I had to help her walk to her train station in the middle of the day, because she had to be bed-ridden and she didn't know if she could walk the block to her train without collapsing.

She didn't want to go back to the hospital after being admitted for days with an ulcer. She told me about how uncomfortable she felt with her male doctor. That the doctors she had never listened to her. That she felt they dismissed her problems as all in her head. I told her to see someone else, and to tell them how she felt, even if she had to be belligerent. She was paying for

and had the right to proper treatment.

She finally saw a doctor. Then another. A few times it was suggested to her to go on the pill, since hormonal therapy may reduce the cramps. But she took that advice from a doctor years earlier, and she knew the pills made her more violently moody, and often didn't help with the pain. No one suggested other alternatives to her. She followed her doctors orders.

• • •

My grandmother was a feisty and strong woman in her mid-eighties. Her bowling average hovered around 176. She lived alone in a condominium. Our family had dinner together weekly with her.

While I was away at school, I started getting phone calls from my family about how grandma hadn't been feeling well. She went to a doctor complaining of stomach pains, and his diagnosis was that she had a yeast infection. She told him she knew her body well enough at this point in her life to know that she did not have a yeast infection. That a yeast infection wasn't causing this pain. She thought his diagnosis was ludicrous. The doctor brushed her off.

She told us this. We told her to get a second opinion. She saw another doctor. The stomach pains persisted, and due to the cold weather her asthma was acting up. She was always out of breath. Tired. In pain.

Still no answers from this doctor. He told her it was probably a stomach flu and that she would be fine soon. He gave her a prescription.

Within two weeks she was in the hospital with a laceration in her stomach. The laceration was worse because she had it for a while and it wasn't treated. Strong acidic fluids were seeping through her body and infecting other organs. She was admitted to the hospital on a Friday; by Saturday morning, she was dead.

• • •

I told friends about my grandmother's experience with the doctors. More than one person mentioned that my grandmother's next of kin could probably win a lawsuit against the doctor who misdiagnosed her, especially when she complained to us when she was alive that he didn't listen to her. But the

problem was deeper than that.

That doctor, like the ones myself and my friend had been to, didn't think he was doing a poor job. If you asked him, he probably would have thought that he was doing a perfectly good job.

The problem was as simple as not listening. Those doctors didn't take us seriously. Simply put, they didn't listen to us.

Why? Is it that all doctors are callous? No, from my experience alone I knew that the female doctor was helpful and took me seriously. Was it that male doctors didn't listen to anyone and female doctors did? Not from what I knew. Stories like these of doctors ignoring patient's feelings and statements are relatively foreign to men I talked to. In fact, often when I mention stories like these to a woman, she usually has another story like it to add to the list. It almost seems that most women I know don't feel comfortable with a male doctor. But men don't feel that way at all.

Most men don't feel that way because they have never had that problem. They have always been listened to. They have had doctors pay attention to them. They have received better treatment, on the whole, than women.

I decided since that last bout with the doctors that from now on I would see a female doctor whenever I could. But that doesn't solve the problem either. I should be able to go to a doctor, no matter if the physician is male or female, and feel confident that I will get the medical attention I need.

But I don't feel that confidence. Neither do a lot of women.

the fourteenth

grade school, lace and construction paper cut outs -
mimicking our hearts with school glue, a
sixty-four pack of crayons,
a doily, perhaps, and a child's scribbles,
"Be My Valentine." The beginning of every cold February
the classes of children are taught to make enough little hearts
for everyone, so that no one may be disappointed,
so that everyone can be your Valentine.
Nonetheless, one little child's construction paper mailbox
come February fourteenth
always had less than everyone else's.

And then it gets easier as the years go on
mommies buy little packs of Valentine cards
for their children to sign and give away to all the little
children at school. Saves them from having to
make all those cards,
the glue and the glitter and the cut-outs are messy.

Every fourteenth, second month
when I was little
I remember daddy bringing heart-shaped boxes
home for all the girls -
myself, my sister, my mother. I can remember mother now,
her candy box on her ironing board, thanking him once again
for the lovely gift. And so it goes.

And the card shops get fuller this time every year
husbands saying "my wife will kill me
if I don't get her a card" or young women complaining
"my boss told me to get a card for his wife"

And the flowers seem the same, don't they? Carnations
arranged in a big ball atop a little basket. Red,

yellow, pink, white. Lovely.
All the adornments of the holiday. Don't stop short of the best.

A girlfriend said to me once
she's sure boyfriends break up with you by the
beginning of February so they don't have to
buy you anything. So they don't have to say they love you.
Last year I spent Valentine's Day
taking those chalky hearts with messages on them
and scribbling my own on the back.
"Screw You", "Go Away", "Leave Me Alone." I never
liked the taste of those candies.
And the Valentine's Day party,
where all the single people were thinking,
"Please give me someone to go home with. Don't let me
be alone tonight."

And the women getting lonely
and the married couples arguing
and the suicide rate going up

And the woman looking at the carnations on her
dining room table
holding the card in her hand that says "love, Jake"
wondering why it doesn't feel good yet

the Wrath of Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is here again, and like most unattached women in the United States, I'm filled with a vague sense of panic, fear and dread. What was meant to be a holiday to express your love for the one you care about has now become (a) a contest between coworkers for who can get the best flower arrangement delivered to their office, (b) a month-long guilt session from one half of an unhappy couple to the other, using the holiday as an excuse to vent their anger for being in a loveless relationship, (c) one more occasion for single men to skirt the constant badgering for a commitment (they already have birthdays and Christmas to contend with, this holiday makes winter pure Hell), or (d) a day-long seminar on depression where women sit at home alone, over-eating, watching must-see-TV, wondering if they will ever find someone to love and honor and cherish them and save them from the horrible fate of becoming the dreaded "old maid."

Valentine's Day is supposed to be a heart-felt holiday all about love, but has instead become a commercial holiday about either desperately trying to not feel alone or desperately trying to spare yourself from getting a guilt trip from the one you're supposed to love.

Half of the confusion, I think, is from how men and women interact on a romantic/sexual level. The other half rests on how people define love.

The Battle of the Sexes

What do women think of when they think of love? Commitment, finding a soul mate, having someone romantically sweep them off their feet. What do men think of when they think of love? Being tied down, finally giving in, getting the old ball-and-chain, or else something to fake to get sex. Speaking of sex, women generically think of sex as the greatest connection between two people, something sacred, while men jokingly refer to the act with analogies to power tools or sporting games (see the cover, which is from the art series, "What Sex With Women is Called").

Imagine a woman, looking for commitment, having what was most sacred to her taken away because a man thought he earned it by buying her dinner.

Granted, these are brash generalizations, but the fact that these examples exist gives an inkling to the differences between men and women, and the

potential conflict between the two when it comes to relationships. How is love supposed to flourish when the two halves come in with such distinct ideas and plans?

The Definition of Love: Altruism Versus Respect

Love, by a dictionary's definition, is rooted in three different ways: from kinship or personal ties, from sexual attraction or from admiration or common interests.

Think about that for a minute. From the first way, you'd love someone because they're your family. Not because you like them, but because you've grown up with them. From the second way comes the more spur-of-the-moment feelings, none of which usually last. From the third way, you love someone because they share interests with you and you admire them.

Admire comes the closest to defining respect, and as a result, it comes closest to defining permanent and earned love. Unlike a religious-based altruistic love which tells you to love people even if they are not worth it - especially if they are not worth it, a love based out of respect and admiration, as well as common interests, is a strong, earned (therefore not easily lost) love.

The altruistic "give everyone in your class a valentine because everyone deserves to be loved" doesn't even fool grade-school children - usually someone is left valentine-less. The question children haven't at that point figured out how to ask is "Why do they deserve it? They haven't earned it."

People claim to fall in and out of love sometimes with amazing turn-around, it seems, and I think the reason for that is that they were never actually in love in the first place. Unless someone you once admired and respected revealed that their life and your perception of it was all a lie, or else drastically changed their life so as not to be respectable any longer, the admiration and respect probably wouldn't die. Real love is a strong, earned (therefore not easily lost) love.

In my lifetime I have met only a handful of people that deserved respect. Imagine how difficult it must be to find someone to respect so highly, to have common interests with, and to be attracted to - that feels the same way about you.

Imagine a woman, looking for a soul mate, someone she could respect and admire, looking for a man who wants the same things in a relationship, finding men that are looking for a mate that will do their laundry for them, that will be subservient to them.

Images of Romance in an Unromantic World

Even to those in a happy relationship, Valentine's Day has lost some of its appeal. If you're in a happy relationship, you don't need an occasion to celebrate it. And flowers and candy are hardly good symbols for true admiration and respect - real love. Who needs us as consumers to spend the money on these items anyway, other than businessmen?

So what place does Valentine's Day have in our world? It helps conjure up the language of poetry, the beauty of flowers, the romantic notions of a world long gone... and sometimes you get a heart-shaped box of candy to boot. But in our world, considering the different ways men and women are raised to view themselves and their mates, there are a lot of other issues that have to be taken care of before we can make a valentine card out of a doily and pink and red construction paper hearts and have it actually mean something.

a (fe)male behind bars

January 29, production room, Seattle
Magazine

For only two weeks she had been preparing for this interview. She struggled to get it approved at the magazine she worked for. See, Chris Hodgkins was a flash from the past, there was no current interest, no timeliness in doing an article on her. In fact, she knew from people who have checked on her whereabouts that she was just living in an apartment on her own, occasionally working, usually not in politics or her usual seminars. The public forget about her anyway - no one wanted to hear what she had to say anymore. Not that she had fallen out of favor with the American public - in fact, she was loved by most

women when she decided to leave the public eye. If anything, the American public had fallen out of favor with her.

But Melanie wanted to write about her, find out why she left, why she really left. The editors knew Chris didn't grant a single interview since she decided to leave her work in the women's rights movement. Besides, even if she got the interview, Chris knew how to deal with the media, with audiences, and she would probably manipulate Melanie into asking only what she wanted asked.

But the writer said she was sure there was something more, she could feel it in her bones, and the editors always told her to follow that feeling, so please let her do it now. So the editors and the higher-ups told her to try to get the interview, and get back to them with her progress at that task.

They expected to never hear about the matter again.

Bet she came back to them not one week later, saying one phone call was all it took. She called Chris directly, and not only did this elusive leader grant her an interview, but in Chris' own home. Editors were a bit stunned. They let her go ahead with the interview, told her to focus on the "where are they now," "why did she leave" angles, and they'll put together a long piece for a future issue. A long

fluff-piece, they thought, but they had to let her go ahead with it, after having no faith in her ability to get an interview.

Maybe it was just because no one tried to get an interview with her anymore, the writer thought. Maybe the editors were right, that there's no story here, at least not anymore. But now, even after feeling this fear which began to grow into a dread, she had to go through with it. She had to research this woman, inside and out, and talk to her. **See what makes her tick.** What made her decide to give it all up.

And the more she looked, the more questions she had. Maybe it was the journalist inside her, to question everything put in front of you, but she couldn't get those questions out of her head.

writer's tape recorded diary entry, February 11

I didn't know what I was getting into when I decided to interview her, Chris Hodgkins, **feminist leader**. I did all the research I could, but for some reason I still don't know where to start, and I have to walk into her apartment tonight.

The more I studied her, the more I was interested. She became a prominent figure in the **women's movement** when she wrote her first book, **A Woman Behind Bars**. The theory was that all women in our society were behind bars, in a sense, that they were **forced into a role** of looking beautiful, into the role of **mother for children**, servant for husband, employee for boss, **sexual object** for single (well, probably all) men.

The chapter that interested me the most was the one on how women adorn themselves in our society in order to please men. Women put on **make-up**, they grow **long hair** and **long nails**, both difficult to work with. They **shave their legs**, they **shave their armpits**. They **tweeze their eyebrows** - they pull hair out of their face from the follicle. Perfume behind the knees, at the ankles, at the chest and neck, in the hair. **The list goes on.**

But that's not even the point of all of this. The thing is, a few years ago she managed to pull together the majority of twenty- and thirty-something women out there into her cause. **Everyone loved her**, in a strange sort of way. She had a **great command over audiences**. She would

hold rallies in New York, then San Francisco, then Chicago, and before you knew it, everyone was talking about her, she was running seminars all around the country, she was appearing on morning talk shows. She was the first real leader in the feminist movement, a movement which for years was felt in everyone but laid dormant because it had no Hitler.

Did I say Hitler? I just meant he was a good leader. I didn't mean she was Hitler, not at all, she's not like that, she's not even calling anyone into action, she's just telling people to educate themselves. She's not even telling people to change, because she figures that if she can educate them, they would want to change anyway. And usually more radical feminists and lesbians are leery of that, they want more action - and she doesn't do that, and they still support her. A movement needs a strong leader, and she was it.

Chris is an interesting looking woman. You'd think she was a lesbian by her appearance - she was tall, somewhat built, but not to look tough, just big. She had chin-length hair, which seems a little long for her, but it looks like she has just forgotten to cut it in a while, and not like she wants to look sexy with it. She almost looks like a little boy. Sharp bones in her face, and big, round eyes.

That was all I knew before I started doing research on her. I started looking into her childhood first, found out that her parents were killed in a robbery when she was fourteen, so she started high school in a small town where her aunt and uncle lived. Her aunt died a year later, and she lived with her uncle until she moved out and went to college. Her uncle died a year before she began to gain fame. In essence, there was no family of hers that I could talk to, to find out from if she played with **Barbie Dolls** with her best friend in her bedroom or played in the ravine in the back yard **with the other boys** from all over the neighborhood. To see if her **theories** were right - even on her. All of that was lost to me.

She took honors classes in high school, kept to herself socially. In fact, most of her classmates didn't know **whether or not she was a girl**, she looked so boyish. Even the other girls in her gym class didn't know sometimes, I mean, they knew she was a girl because she was in gym class with them, but she never even changed in front of them. She wouldn't take a shower and she would change in a bathroom stall.

So I started hearing things like this, little things from old classmates, but as soon as they started telling me how they **really felt** about her, how

they thought she was **strange**, they would then clam up. But it was in my head then; I started wondering what happened in her early childhood that made her so **introverted** in high school. Maybe the deaths of her parents did it to her, made her become so anti-social. Maybe the loss of her aunt, the only other maternal figure in her life, made her become so masculine. It was a theory that began to make more and more sense to me, but how was I supposed to ask her such a question? How was I supposed to ask her if her parents **molested** her before they died, and that's why she's got this **anger** inside of her that comes out seminar after seminar?

the interview, Friday, February 11

The apartment building was relatively small, on the fringes of some rough neighborhoods. Not to say that she couldn't take care of herself, she had proven that she could years ago. The interviewer followed the directions explicitly to get to the apartment, and Chris' door was on the side. She knocked on the door.

Snap one, that was the chain. Click one, that was the first dead bolt. Another click, and the door was free. With a quick jerk the door was pulled open half-way by a strong, toned forearm. Chris stood there, waiting for the interviewer to make the official introduction.

"Hi, I'm Melanie, from Seattle Magazine," she blurted out, as she tried to kick the snow off her boots and held out her hand. Chris nudged her head toward the inside and told her to come in. The interviewer followed.

She followed Chris down the stairs, looking for clues to her psyche in her clothes, in her form. Grey pants. Baggy. Very baggy. Button-down shirt. White. Sleeves rolled up, make a note of that. Not very thin, but not fat - just kind of there, without much form. Doc Maartens. She had big feet. She was tall, too - maybe five feet, ten inches. But her feet looked huge. The interviewer stared at her feet as they walked down the dark hall. I'll bet no one has looked at her feet before, she thought.

Chris lived in one of the basement apartments, so they walked past the laundry room, the boiler room, and then reached a stream of tan doors. Hers was the third. Chris opened the door, the interviewer followed.

She looked around. A comfortable easy chair, rust colored, worn. Walls - covered with bookshelves. Books on Marx, Kafka, Rand. History Books. Science books. No photos. No pictures. A small t.v. in the corner on a table, the cord hanging down, unplugged. Blankets on the floor. Keep looking, the interviewer thought. A stand-

ing lamp by the chair. The room was yellow in the light. Where were the windows? Oh, she forgot for a moment, they're in the basement. Sink, half full.

"May I use the washroom?" she asked, and without saying a word, Chris pointed it out to her.

Check the bathroom, the interviewer thought. **No make-up. Makes sense.** Generic soap, organic shampoo. Razor. Toothbrush. Colgate bottle. Hairbrush. Rubber band, barrette. Yeah, Chris usually sometimes her hair back, at least from what the interviewer can remember from the photographs.

"Wanna beer?" Chris yells from the refrigerator to the bathroom. "No, thanks," the interviewer says. She turns on the water.

She wants to look through the trash, see what she can find. No, that's too much, she thought, besides, what's going to be in the trash in the washroom that would surprise her so? Nothing, she was sure of it, and from then on she made a point of avoiding even looking in the direction of the trash can.

This was getting out of hand, she thought. There was no story here. Nothing out of the ordinary, other than the fact that Chris decided to give up her cause, and now she's living life in this tiny, dark basement apartment.

The interviewer walked out into the yellow living room. Chris was stretched out in a chair, legs apart, drinking a beer with no label.

"I really appreciate you offering me this time to talk to you."

"No problem."

The interviewer sat there, suddenly so confused. Chris was terse. She didn't want to talk, yet she accepted the interview and offered her home as the meeting place. They sat in silence for a moment, a long moment.

"What kind of beer are you drinking?"

"My own." Chris sat for a moment, almost waiting for the interviewer to ask what she meant. "You see, the landlord gave me some keys for a storage room on this floor, so I converted it into a sort of micro-brewery. I've come up with this one -" she held the bottle to the interviewer - "and another one, a pretty sweet dark beer. I call this one 'Ocean Lager.'"

The interviewer felt she had to take the bottle. "Ocean Lager, that's a nice name," and she took a small sip and passed the bottle back to Chris.

"Yeah, I used to be a photographer, back when I was in high school and college, and I loved working in the dark, timing things, and I loved the stench of the chemicals. I've given up on the photography years ago, so

I thought that this would be a hobby like that. You know, it smells, it's dark, you have to add things the right way and wait the right amount of time. I like it. And it's cheaper, too," she said, and with that she took another swig. "Cheaper than photography as well as buying beer from the store."

The interviewer tried to listen to her voice. It was **raspy, feminine, almost sexy,** but it was very **low**; she didn't know if she'd ever heard a woman's voice this low before.

"I was looking at your great career," the interviewer finally started, "and thought it surprising that you just decided one day to leave. You had **everything** going the right way. People were listening to you. What happened?"

She thought she had dropped a bomb.

No one ever got a straight answer for that question.

"Well, it was my time to go. I couldn't take the spotlight anymore. I wanted to become who I really was, not what the world wanted me to be, not what the world perceived me as. I still haven't done that. I haven't become myself yet."

"When were you yourself? Or were you ever?"

"I suppose I was, when I was little, but by the time I got to high school, I start-

ed **hiding** from everyone, because no one seemed to want to know who I really was. I **didn't fit in** as who I really was. So then I started with my seminars, started trying to work my way to success, and people started to like me. But in all of that time that I was working on **women's rights**, I wasn't who I really am deep down inside. Not that I didn't believe in the cause, but I was doing it because it seemed like the best route to success. And when I reached the top, **people still wanted more** out of me, more that I wasn't ready to give. I wanted to take some of myself back."

"Have you gotten any of yourself back since you've left the spotlight?"

"Some." Chris paused. "I can sit at home by myself and act the way I want to, without having to **project a certain image for everyone else**. People have begun to leave me alone." She paused, then looked at the interviewer. "Not that I consider you and interruption; I wouldn't have accepted the interview if I didn't want you here. If fact, I think I really wanted to be able to tell someone how I feel, what I've gone through. I don't talk to many people nowadays. This is like a confessional."

The interviewer wondered for a moment what Chris was planning to confess.

Chris paused, swirled her beer in her bottle, then looked up. "Sometimes I

think of getting a pet. I'd get a cat, but then I think of this stereotypical image of an old woman in an apartment alone with forty cats, where she keeps picking a different one up and asking, 'you love me, don't you?' I don't want to be like that. Maybe a dog. But a pet requires too much care, and I think I'd end up depending on it more than I should. I should have another human being in my life, not an animal. But I'm so afraid I'll be alone."

"Why do you think you'll be alone?"

"I carry this baggage around with me everywhere. People know me as Chris Hodgkins, and that's not who I am. I don't want anyone liking me because I'm Chris Hodgkins. That's not real. Chris isn't real, not the Chris everyone knows. The only way I could escape her is to go off to another country in a few years, maybe, and start life all over again."

"Isn't that a scary thought, though? I mean, you could ride on your fame for a while longer, make more money, be more secure. You wouldn't have to work as hard at anything. And people respect you."

"People respect a person that I'm not. Okay, maybe that person is a part of me, but it's not all of me. The world doesn't know the whole story."

"What is the whole story?" the interviewer asked. By this time she put her pen

and paper down and wasn't writing a word. She was **lost in the conversation**, like the many people who had heard her speak before. Suddenly she felt she was thrown into the middle of a philosophical conversation, and she was completely enthralled. "Can anyone know the whole story about another person?" she asked.

"Do you really want to know my story?" Chris asked.

"I wouldn't be asking if I didn't."

"You realize that if I tell you, it goes off the record. Besides, you won't be able to substantiate anything I say. More than that no one would believe it, especially not your editors."

At this point, she didn't even care about the interview. "Off the record. Fine."

the confession, February 11, 10:35 p.m.

Chris sat there for a minute, legs apart, elbows on her knees, beer hanging down between her legs. She kept swirling the liquid in the glass. She took the last two gulps, then put the bottle on the ground between her feet.

"I wanna take a bath," she said, and with that she got up and walked toward the bathroom. Halfway there she stopped, turned around, and walked to the

refrigerator. It creaked open, she pulled out another beer, let the door close while she twisted the cap off. She walked into the bathroom.

The interviewer could hear the water running in the bathtub. She didn't know what to do. Was she supposed to sit there? Leave?

Chris popped her head out of the bathroom. "I hope you don't mind, but I really need to **relax**. Besides, it's cold in here. Sorry if the cold is bothering you. We can continue the interview in the bathroom, if you want," and she threw her head back into the bathroom.

Melanie didn't know what to think. She edged her way to the bathroom door. When she looked in, she was Chris with her hair pulled back, lighting one candle. "The curtain will be closed. **Is this okay with you?**" Chris asked.

The interviewer paused. "Sure," she said. **She sounded confused.**

"Okay, then just wait outside until I'm in the bathtub. I'll yell through the door when you can come in." And Chris closed the door, and the interviewer leaned against the door frame. Her note pad and pen sat in the living room.

A few minutes passed, or maybe it was a few hours. The water finally silenced. She could hear the curtain close. "You can come in now."

The interviewer opened the door. The curtain to the bathtub was closed. There

was one candle lit on the counter next to the sink, and one glowing from the other side of the curtain. The mirror was fogged with steam. Chris' clothes were sitting in a pile on the floor. There was no where to sit. The interviewer shut both seats from the toilet and sat down.

"Okay, I'm here," the interviewer said, as if she wanted Chris to recognize what an effort she went through. "Tell me your story." She almost felt as if she deserved to hear Chris' story at this point, that Chris had made her feel so awkward that she at least deserved her curiosity satisfied. She could hear little splashes from the tub.

"You still haven't asked me about my childhood. You're not a very good reporter, you know," Chris said, as if she wanted the interviewer to know that it didn't have to come down to this. "You could have found out a lot more about me before now."

They both sat there, each silent.

"It must have hurt when your parents died."

"I suppose. I didn't know how to take it."

"What was the effect of both of your parents dying at such an early age in your life on you?"

"I was stunned, I guess. What I remember most was that **my mother was strong**, but she **followed dad blindly**. And dad, he had his views - he was a political scientist - but no one took him seriously because he didn't have the background. He wasn't in the right circles. I just remember dad saying to mom, 'if only I had a different start, things would be different.' In essence, he wanted to be someone he wasn't. He failed because he wasn't who he needed to be."

"Did it hurt you to see your father think of himself as a failure?"

"He had the choice. He knew what he wanted to do all of his life. He knew the **conventional routes** to achieving what he wanted - he knew what he needed to do. But he chose to take a different route, and people thought he didn't have the training he needed, that he didn't know what he was talking about. But he made that choice to take that different route. He could have become what he needed to in order to get what he wanted. But he didn't, and in the end, **he never got anything.**"

"But you, you got what you wanted in your life, right?"

"Yes, but that was because I made the conscious choice to change into what I had to be in order to succeed. If I didn't make those changes, **no one**

would have accepted my theories on human relations and no one would have listened to my speeches on women's rights."

"How did you have to change?"

The interviewer finally hit the nail on the head.

"I'm not ready to answer that question yet. Ask me later."

The interviewer paused, then continued.

"Okay, so your parents died and you had to move in with your aunt and uncle.

How well did you know them?"

"Not at all. In fact, they didn't even know I existed. You see, my father had no family in the States, he moved here from England, and he lost contact with all of his family. Mom's family didn't want her marrying dad, I still don't know why, so they disowned her when she married him. She never spoke to any of them. In fact, my mother's sister didn't even know my parents died until the state had to research my family's history to see who I should be pushed off on to. When my aunt and uncle took me in, it was the first time they ever saw me. It was the first time they even knew I existed."

The interviewer could hear the water moving behind the curtain, and then Chris continued.

"My parents were in New Jersey, and my aunt and uncle were in Montana. It was a complete **life change** for me."

"How did you get along with other kids from school?"

"Before my parents died, fine. Once I changed schools, **I didn't fit in.** I didn't know how to fit in. I thought it would be **too fake** if I tried to act like all the other girls, even the ones who were like me, who didn't fit in. **I just didn't know how to be a girl.** I wanted to, and I tried, but it was so hard.

"I just wanted to be looked at as a girl. I didn't want anyone to question it."

"Why would they?"

"Because I looked so boyish. Because **I didn't go on dates.** Because I was so anti-social."

"Do you think that has something to do with the fact that your mother died, then a year later your aunt died? They were your maternal figures, and you lost them both at a crucial age."

"Yes. But my aunt **didn't know how to deal with me.** She never had children. She left me alone most of the time. She knew that was what I wanted. I remember once she asked me if I had gotten my period yet in my life. I did-

n't, but I didn't want her to think that, so I said yes, so the next day she bought me pads. I didn't know what to do with them. The day after that I told her that I would buy them myself from now on, so she didn't have to, but I thanked her anyway. That way I knew she would think that I was still buying them, even if that box in my closet was the same box that she bought me.

"Relations with her were strange. And when she died, I only had classmates and my uncle to take cues from. I wanted to be like the girls in school, so I tried not to take cues from my uncle. I tried to avoid being like my uncle. But sometimes I couldn't help it."

"Why did you want so hard **to be a girl?** Did you want to fit in? Or do you think it had more to do with your mom?"

"No, it wasn't that at all. There wasn't a part of me that said I needed to be **feminine**. But at that age I knew what I wanted to do with my life, and that was work in political science and sociology - specifically, in **women's rights**. I knew I wanted that, and I knew that I'd have a better chance of succeeding in that field if I was - well, if I was a girl."

"But you were a girl, no matter how much you didn't fit in."

And that was when Chris decided to drop the bomb.

"But that's exactly it, Melanie - I'm - well - I'm not a woman."

"There are sometimes when I don't feel feminine - when I want to go out and drink beer, I know what you -"

"No, you're not listening to me," Chris cut in. "I'm not a woman. I'm a man. My name is Chris, not Christine. I am a man, I have a penis, I've got testosterone running through my body. Just not a lot of it."

"You don't really expect me to -"

"Look, when my parents died, I knew what I wanted to do with my life - I knew before they died. But I also knew that I wouldn't be taken seriously in the field unless I was a woman. So at fourteen, when they died, I had a clean slate. I told everyone I was a girl. I was given to my aunt and uncle as a girl. I went to my new school as a girl.

"And I went to gym classes and I didn't have breasts, and I had to hide from all the other girls. Although I was boyish-looking, I wasn't manly, so I got away with it. I shaved only occasionally, only when I had to. And once I got out of high school, acting like a girl was easier. No one questioned who I said I was. People accepted me as a woman.

"Then I started doing the work I did, and people loved me. I got a lot more

fame for it than I ever anticipated. I was **succeeding**. It was wonderful.

"But then it hit me - I'm all alone, and I can tell no one about who I really am. I've been doing this all my life, and people would look at me like I was a freak if I went out and told them the truth now. I'm a man, and I like **women,** I'm not **gay,** and I could never tell any woman that exists that has ever heard of me the truth, because then they will no longer trust me or anything I have ever said regarding **women's rights**. I would take the whole movement backwards if I told the world who I really was."

"That you were a man."

"You still don't **believe me,** do you? I'm telling you this because **you wanted to know,** you wanted me to tell you this. And because I needed to tell someone. But I can't destroy **women's chances of being treated with respect** in this country by telling everyone."

"So what you're telling me is that at age fourteen you decided to become a **woman** so you could do the work you wanted to do in your life."

"Yes."

"But that's a lot to do to yourself, especially at fourteen. What made you

decide to do it?"

"My mother's strength, but her submission to my father, made me want to go into the field. My father's desire to do what he wanted, but his failure to achieve it because he wasn't what the world wanted, made me decide to become a woman. I realized then that I could never succeed in this field if I wasn't one.

"And look at the success I've had! Look at all of the people I managed to bring together! I was famous, people were reading my books, people wanted my opinions. I was succeeding.

"But even with all my success, people still expected a messenger for the welfare of women all over the world to be a woman - even the other women expected this. No one would have listened to me for a second if I was a man."

"And so you stopped because -"

"Because there's a price you pay by becoming what the world wants you to be. My father knew that, and he didn't want to pay that price. He didn't, and he failed at what he wanted to do. I was willing to pay the price, I made the sacrifices, and I actually beat the odds and succeeded. But

then I realized that I **lost myself** in the process. I'm a man, and look at me. People think I'm a woman. I wear fake breasts in public. I have no close relationships. I have **nothing to call my own** other than my success. Well, after a while, that wasn't enough. So this is part of my long road to **becoming myself again.**

"I'm going to have to change my identity and move to another country, I'm going to have to start all over again, I'm going to have to more completely separate myself from working on **women's rights**, but it's the only way I can do it. I'll know I did what I wanted, even if it cost a lot. The next few years will now have to be me **correcting all that I changed** in myself in order to succeed. **Correcting all my mistakes.**

"I want to have a family someday. How am I supposed to be a father? There are so many things I have to change. **I couldn't go on** telling the world I was a woman any more. But I couldn't tell them I wasn't one, so I just had to fade away, until I didn't matter anymore."

The interviewer sat there in silence.

"Do you have any other questions?" Chris asked.

The interviewer sat there, confused, not knowing if she should believe Chris

or not. She could rip the curtain open and see for herself, she thought, but either way they would both be embarrassed.

"No."

"Then you can go," Chris said. "I want to get out of this bath."

Melanie walked out of the bathroom, closed the door. Then she started thinking of all the little things, not changing with the other girls in school, looking so boyish, the low voice, the way she sat, her feet, the razor, the toilet seats. Could she be telling the truth? Could he be telling the truth, the interviewer thought, is Chris a she or a he? She didn't know anymore. But it seemed to make sense. Her birth certificate would be the only thing that would prove it to anyone, unless she somehow got it changed.

She could have had her birth certificate changed, the interviewer thought, and therefore there would be no real proof that Chris was lying, other than looking at her naked. It was such a preposterous story, yet it seemed so possible that she tended to believe it. It didn't matter anyway, because she couldn't write about it, proof or not, she offered this informa-

tion off the record. She grabbed her pencil and note pad from the living room and walked to the door.

Just as she was **about to leave**, Chris walked out from the bathroom. She walked over to the front door to open it for the interviewer. Melanie walked through the doorway, without saying a word, as Chris said, "Good story, wasn't it?"

The interviewer turned around once more, but didn't get to see Chris' face before the door was shut. Once again, she was **left with her doubts**. She walked down the hall.

marilyn monroe's sex life

some people would have
called me a slut
I prefer a vixen
Personally, I don't think
I was doing anything wrong
I had it all
men adored me
most men would have done
the same thing I did
played the field
I wasn't even looking for sex
just companionship
I had the fame
I had the wealth, the looks
everything
why would I want one man
keeping me in place
what if I wanted to see
a bit more of life
through the eyes of other people
why am I resented for that
so I start seeing my ex again
and another ex
and a new guy
and another
you know, most men

would normally love to have
a no-strings attached relationship
with a woman
why couldn't that happen with me
why is it people
become obsessed with me
am I really that famous
that perfect
I have rejected some of them
so many times they had to
pick up their ego from the floor
but they keep coming back
telling me they love me
wanting me to choose
wanting me to love them back
why do they think I want anyone
I know I brought this
upon myself
I wanted to go on this wild trip
but I didn't want to carry any baggage
I thought I could make the men
carry it for me
and it seems that my bags are getting
heavier
and it seems that the bags under
my eyes won't go away anymore
the bags are getting heavier
they're so heavy

stalker

And she got out of her car, walked across her driveway, and walked up the stairs to her porch, trying to enjoy her solitude, trying not to remember that he had followed her once again. She thought she was free of him; she thought he moved on with his life and that she would not have to see his face again.

Why did he have to call her, on this one particular day, years later, while she was at work? Maybe if she could have been suspecting it, she might have been braced for it. But then again, she didn't want to think about it: she was happy that she was finally starting to feel as if she had control of her life again.

It had been so many years, why would she have expected him to follow her again? Didn't she make it clear years ago that she didn't want him waiting outside her house in his car anymore, that she didn't want to receive the hang-up calls at three in the morning anymore? Or the calls in

the middle of the night, when he'd stay on the line, when she could tell that he was high, and he'd profess his love to her? Or the **letters**, or the **threats**? No, the police **couldn't do anything** until he took action, when it was too late. **Why did he come back?** **Why couldn't he leave her alone?** **Why couldn't it be illegal for someone to fill her with fear** for years, to make her dread being in her house **alone**, to make her wonder if her feeling that she was being followed wasn't real?

All these thoughts rushed through her head as she sat on her front porch swing, opening her mail. One bill, one piece of junk mail, one survey.

It was only a phone call, she had to keep thinking to herself. **He may never call again.** She had no idea where he was even calling from. For all she knew, he could have been on the other side of the country. It was only a phone call.

And then everything started to go wrong in her mind again, the bushes around the corner of her house were **rustling a little too loud**, there were too many cars that sounded like they were **stopping near her house**. Her own breathing even scared her.

I could go into the house, she thought, but she knew that she could be filled with fear there, too. **Would the phone ring?** Would there be a

knock on the door? Or would he even bother with a knock, would he just break a window, let himself in, cut the phone lines so she wouldn't stand a chance?

No, she knew better. She knew she had to stay outside, that she couldn't let this fear take a hold of her again. And so she sat.

She looked at her phone bill again.

She heard the creak of the porch swing.

She swore she heard someone else breathing.

No, she wouldn't look up from her bill, because she knew no one was there.

Then he spoke.

"Hi."

She looked up. He was standing right at the base of her stairs, not six feet away from her.

"What are you doing on my property?"

"Oh, come on, you used to not hate me so much." He lit a cigarette, a marlboro red, with a match. "So, why wouldn't you take my call today?"

"Why would I? What do I have to say to you?"

"You're really making a bigger deal out of this than it is," he said, then took

a drag. She watched the smoke come out of his mouth as he spoke. "We used to have it good."

She got up, and walked toward him. She was surprised; in her own mind she never thought she'd actually be able to walk closer to him, she always thought she'd be **running away**. She stood at the top of the stairs.

"Can I have a smoke?"

"Sure," he said, and he reached up to hand her the fire stick. She reached out for the matches.

"I'll light it."

She put the match to the end of the paper and leaves, watched it turn orange. **She didn't want** this cigarette. She needed to **look more calm**. Calm. Be calm.

She remained at the top of the stairs, and he stood only six stairs below her. She sat at the top stair.

"You really think we ever got along?"

"Sure. I mean, I don't know how you got in your head -"

"Do you think I enjoyed finding your car outside my house all the time? Did I enjoy seeing you at the same bars I was at, **watching me** and my friends, like

you were recording their faces into your memory forever? Do you think I liked you coming to bother me when I was working at the store? Do you -"

"I was."

She paused. "You were what?"

"I was logging everyone you were with into my head."

She sat silent.

"At the bars - I remember every face. I remember every one of them. I had to, you see, I had to know who was trying to take you away. I needed to know who they were."

She sat still, she couldn't blink, she stared at him, it was just as she was afraid it would be.

And all these years she begged him to stop, but nothing changed.

She couldn't take it all anymore.

She put out her right hand, not knowing exactly what she'd do if she held his hand. He put his left hand in hers.

"You know," she said, then paused for a drag of the red fire, "This state would consider what you did to me years ago stalking."

She held his hand tighter, holding his fingers together. She could feel her lungs

moving her up and down. He didn't even hear her; he was **fixated** on looking at his hand in hers, until she caught his eyes with her own and then they stared, past the iris, the pupil, until they **burned holes** into each other's heads with their stare.

"And you know," she said, as she lifted her cigarette, **"I do too."**

Then she quickly moved the cigarette toward their hands together, and put it out in the top of his hand.

He **screamed**. Grabbed his hand. Bent over. Pressed harder. Swore. Yelled.

She stood. Her voice suddenly changed.

"Now, I'm going to say this once, and **I won't say it again**. I want you off my property. I want you **out of my life**. I swear to God, if you come within fifty feet of me or anything related to me or anything the belongs to me, I'll get a court order, **I'll get a gun**, I'll do **whatever it takes** to keep you away forever."

"Now go."

He held his left hand with his right, the fingers on his right hand purple from the pressure he was using on the open sore. He moaned while she spoke. She stood at the top of the stairs looking down on him. He slowly walked away.

She thought for a moment she had truly taken her life back. She looked down. Clenched in the fist in her left hand was the cigarette she just put out.

at least i have this

how far will we push each other? i wonder
as we sit in the living room, waging this
emotional battle, knowing that in the end
it will still be with you having your sex
with me, leaving me when you're through
with me. that is what i'm here for. that is
my function. but at least i have this, at least
i can make you fight me a little more for
it. i know you'll win in the end, but at least
for these few moments, these few fleeting
moments, i have this control over you.
and then the pain of being with you comes
back, and you win. but let me have this.
just this. i know i'll get no more. please.

here it goes again

maybe this is what i deserve
this pain
but i can't let you go

even if there is someone else
on the side
doing the same things to me
you do
i can't let you go

i need that connection to you
i need that pain
i can't be alone

even though i'm alone when i'm with you

i guess i feel
like i'm nothing when i'm with you
but then again
i'm nothing without you

so here it goes
here it goes again

i am the woman who loves pain

i am the woman who loves pain

i look for you
and i usually find you

one of you

i know you'll all do the same things
act the same way
i've gotten used to it

they tell me i should find someone
better
that i am settling
that this is not love

but i've never felt love
and although this is pain
although i am hurting with you
it is better than hurting alone

i swear it is

i'm really going this time

i pack my bags
say i'm really going this time

you throw my bags
scream at me to leave

before you get more violent
and you mean it this time

i'm sitting in my car
outside the hotel

see you at the window
holding the drapes back

why do i have to think
that means you care?

why do i came back,
asking you if you realize

what you've done to me,
if you realize what

you're about to lose.
i'll bet you think

you'll call me once
and everything will be

forgotten. other times,
yes, i've forgiven you.

i've come back. but i

can't take being thrown
to the ground, strangled.
when i realize what i

lost that night, i'm
scared. but i have to

remember that you
lost more. you lost me.

i'm really going this time,
and you won't see me again.

carry this with you,
always. this pain, like

the pain you've given me.
you won't see me. carry this.

soothe me just this once

when i called you from the pay phone
at the hotel
after he hit me

i got your answering machine
i tried to tell you
as quickly as i could

a woman came up to me while i was
in the lobby
asked if i was okay

that's when i realized i was scraped
up, bleeding
i told her i was fine

please just tell me you're at home
screening calls
pick up the phone

you think i brought this on myself,
don't you
please just this once

pick up the phone, listen to me
soothe me just this once
help me

that's not what i'm here for

every once in a while
i want to talk to one of them

see if they'll actually listen

but i've learned by now
they're not interested in

what i have to say
that's not what i'm here for

they think they're using me
i guess they are

but what they don't realize
is that i'm using them, too

maybe that's why
they don't feel the pain i feel

but i still use them, they use me
but i do it anyway

they never ask me

i get up to find my clothes
sometimes they stay asleep
sometimes they wake up

"why are you getting dressed"
they ask, and i tell them
that i have to get going

they never ask me to stay

when you're gone

i know you'll be back
to take more from me

i always wonder
how much more i have to give
how much more i possess

sometimes i wonder
if i am spent
if i can take any more

but i always do
and you're always there

when you're gone
there will be

someone else

i know it

knowledge

I hated going into these Goddamn gas stations in the middle of nowhere, but we'd been driving for so damn long that I think I lost all feeling in my ass. Besides, I had to go to the bathroom. It couldn't wait. He said he'd pump the gas this time, so I got out of the car and began to stretch when I saw the attendant staring at me through the window from behind the counter. It was an eerie stare. A sex stare. I stopped stretching.

I walked around the side of the building, where the dingy arrows pointed to the washrooms. I really didn't need the signs, for the smell of shit that has been sitting around overpowered the smell of the dust in the air as I walked closer and closer to the bathrooms ... I walked past the men's room and up to the ladies room to find that the door was... gone. It was propped up on the inside of the bathroom wall. "A lot of fucking good it does me there," I mumbled in the stench.

"How the Hell am I supposed to go to the bathroom when there isn't even a God damned door to the damn bathroom??" I thought as I stormed into the store where he was paying for the gas.

He was buying two bottles of Pepsi for the road, to keep us awake. "The door of the women's washroom is off," I whispered with exasperation. "Well, that's no problem, honey -- just go into the men's room. I'll watch the door for you," he said back. The look in his eyes told me that he thought it was such a simple and obvious solution that anyone could figure it out. He thought he had the solution for everything. I wanted to tell him that the women's room frightened me enough for one day, and that I didn't want to risk my life by venturing into the men's room. Besides, men go in there. That attendant probably goes in there. I finally shrugged and waited for him to pay for his Pepsi and gasoline. I turned my head and followed him out. The attendant looked at me as I left. I could feel his stare burning into the back of my head.

We turned the building corner and followed the signs. My shoulders suddenly felt heavier and heavier as I walked. He checked the room to make sure it was empty for me. He even held the door open. What a gentleman.

I closed the door, but I really didn't want to be left alone with the smell. It smelled like shit. But I could also smell sweat, like the smell of dirty men. I wondered if this is what the attendant smelled like. I lined the toilet bowl seat with toilet paper. I had to use it sparingly -- there wasn't much left. I got up as soon as I could and walked over to the dirty mirror, almost hitting my head on the hanging light bulb. There was light blue paint chipping next to the mirror.

I strained to see my image in the mirror. Instead, all I could focus on was the graffiti on the wall behind me. For a good time call.. So-and-so gives good head... Did that attendant ever call that number? I wondered if I was ever put on a bathroom wall. I wondered if I was ever reduced to a name and a phone number like that. I probably had been.

The floor was wet. I always wondered when the floors of bathrooms were wet if it was actually urine or just water from the sink. Or maybe it was from the sweat of all those men. I didn't know.

I stepped on something under the sink in front of the mirror. I looked down. It was an open porn magazine. I looked at it from where I was standing. I didn't move my foot. It was hard core shit, and it looked painful. Women with gags on their faces... I remember someone telling me that porn was okay because the women in it wanted to do it. But there was no smile on this woman's face. I pushed it back under the sink.

I stepped back. I wanted to hit something. I wanted to hit the graffiti on the wall, the porn on the floor. I wanted to smear the urine from the stall all over the place. I wanted to pull the light from right out of the fucking ceiling.

I put my hands up against the wall. I put the top of my head on the wall. I tried to breathe. It hurt. With my eyes closed, I knew what was there, behind me. It didn't scare me anymore.

When I walked into the bathroom, I was afraid to touch anything. But then I just leaned up against the door, feeling the dirt press into my back, into my hair. I wanted to soak it all in. All of it.

I shook my head and realized that he was waiting for me outside the door. I turned around and grabbed the door knob. I didn't worry about the dirt on my back. I opened the door.

the martyr and the saint

they gave their daughter the name
of the Patron Saint of television

and the television's always been
one thing she hated about him

or was it the drinking that he needed
more than her

the business has gone bad
I'm a failure I'm not a man

he said he respected her
then he'd call her

a twenty dollar whore from Vegas

and the mother would hold
the child, the saint, the pure angel

hold her ears and hope she
couldn't hear

content with inferior men

there are some theorists that say that women need to be able to look up to a man in order to feel complete. these theorists would say that a woman could not be president, at least not on a personal level. think of it - here is a woman, the most important person on earth, and she would never know of anyone who had more power than her. how could she look up to any man? how could she admire any man? how could she respect any man? and you know, i can kind of see that point, how can you love someone you don't respect, i mean, i want someone in my life that can teach me something, that can help me grow, and if i was the most powerful person on earth i would probably think that no one could teach me anything. but the only thing i could think of in response to this theory is, why don't men who are the presidents of the united states of america find themselves unhappy with their boring, unequal, supportive wives? why is it that man are content with inferior women but women aren't content with inferior men?

i'm thinking about myself too much

all of my life it
has all been about
you
what do you need
what do you want
how can i help
you
what can i do for
you
and now for once
i start to live
and now you tell
me
that i'm thinking
about
myself too much
and i think back
to

all the time i've
spent with you
and all the care
i've given you
and now you tell
me
that i'm thinking
about
myself too much
and i've cooked
for
you and i've
cleaned
for you and i've
made
sure everything in
your world made
sense

i want love

i'm laying here in bed
and i'm looking over at him

he's sound asleep
perfectly happy

you know, i can't remember
the last time he's held me

he has no idea what i'm thinking
he's perfectly content this way

i decided to spend the rest
of my life with him

he's my best friend
but i don't know if he loves me

damnit
i want love

resurrecting the dead

do i ask for too much
do i expect too much

i know it will be the same
as it always is

something will go wrong
and you'll come crawling back

do you expect me to pick up the pieces
again?

am i supposed to watch it all
fall apart

then make everything
right again?

you never give me
the benefit of the doubt

you think someone else is better
well, maybe i'm cocky
but i know better

and soon
your world will crumble again

and i'll come back,
because i have to

resurrecting the dead

...from

in the air

Have you ever noticed that the air isn't normal air in an airplane? I mean, I know they have to pump in the air, and pressurize it and all in order to keep us alive up there, but there's just something about the air in the cabin that's different. It's got a smell to it, that's the only way I can describe it. A smell of all these people, going places, running to something, or running away from it.

And it always seems that you're stuck sitting next to someone that is either too wide for their seat, or is a businessman with his newspaper stretched out and his lap top computer on his little fold out table. Once, when I was on a flight back from D. C., a flight attendant walked by, stack of magazines in her hand, Time, Newsweek, Businessweek, and I stopped her, asking what magazines she had. And she replied, "Oh, these magazines are for men." This is a true story. And I asked her again what she had. I had already read Time, so I took Newsweek.

driving by his house

I know it's pretty pathetic of me, I don't know what I'm trying to prove. I don't even want to see him again. I don't want to have to think about him, I don't want to think about his big eyebrows or the fact that he hunched over a little when he walked or that he hurt me so much. I know it's pretty pathetic of me, but sometimes when I'm driving I'll take a little detour and drive by his house. I'll just drive by, I won't slow down, I won't stop by, I won't say hello, I won't beat his head in, I won't even cry. I'll just drive by, see a few cars in the driveway, see no signs of life through the windows, and then I'll just keep driving.

I don't know why I do it. He never sees me, and I never see him, although I thought I didn't want to see him anyway. When I first met him I wasn't afraid of him. Now I'm so afraid that I have to drive by his house every once in a while, just to remind myself of the fear. We all like the taste of fear, you know, the thought that there's something out there stronger than us. The thought that there's something out there we can beat, even if we have to fight to the death.

But that can't be it, no, it just can't be, I don't like this fear, I don't like it. I don't want to drive by, I want to be able to just go on with my life, to not think about it. I want to be strong again. I want to be strong.

So today I did it again, I haven't done it for a while, drive by his house, but I did it again today. When I turned on to his street I put on my sunglasses so that in case he saw me he couldn't tell that I was looking. And then I picked up my car phone and acted like I was talking to someone.

And I drove by, holding my car phone, talking to my imaginary friend, trying to unobviously glance at the house

white knuckled

The hot air was sticking
to her skin almost pulling
tugging at her very
flesh as she walked
outside down the
stairs from the train
station. Just then a
breeze hot and
sticky hit her
in just the wrong
way, brushed against her
lower neck, and she
felt his breath again,
not his breath
when he raped
her, but his stench
hot rank
when he was
just close to her.
Her breath quickened,
like the catch of her
breath when she has

just stopped
crying. All the emotion
is still there not
going away. She
walks to the bottom
of the stairs, railing
white-knuckled by her
small tender hands,
the hands of a child,
and that ninety degree
breeze suddenly
gives her a
chill. They say when
you get a chill it means
a goose walked
over your grave.
She knows better. She knows
that it is him
walking, and that
he trapped that child in
that grave

where published

a woman talking about her
rapist friend.

First published in: Cer*Ber*Us.

Also published in: A Room Without Walls.

at least i have this

First published in: Angelflesh.

Also published in: The Poetry Exchange, Spilled Ink,
Spiral Chambers, 24-7, Opossum Holler Tarot.

best friend

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Plain Brown Wrapper, Girder,
They Won't Stay Dead, Report To Hell, Opossum Holler
Tarot.

Chapbooks published in: "Gasoline and Reason" and
"Bottoms Up."

confident women

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Gin Mill Productions, Gypsy Blood
Review,

The Avant-Garden, Penny Dreadful Review, Spirit,
Opossum Holler Tarot, Taggerzine, Shockbox, Women and
Recovery, Zap Inc., Nowhere Magazine, So It Goes, The
Poetry Exchange, The Poems Gallery.

Chapbooks published in: "Slate and Marrow," "Gasoline
and Reason," "Chic-a-go-go" and "Bottoms Up."

coslow's

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: The Plastic Tower, dccr,
Opossum Holler Tarot, Kaspah Raster.

Chapbooks published in: "Scratching."

domestic violence in america
- nose

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

domestic violence in america
- stick

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

driving by his house

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Napalm Health Spa, The Owen
Wister Review, Opossum Holler Tarot.

gasoline

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Plain Brown Wrapper, Opossum
Holler Tarot

Chapbooks published in: "Gasoline and Reason" and
"Bottoms Up."

here it goes again

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

i am the woman who loves
pain

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

i'm really going this time

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

in the air

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Opossum Holler Tarot, Plain Brown
Wrapper.

i want love

First published in: Casper's Poetry Gallery.

Also published in: Art/Life Limited Editions, Cat
Machine, The Poetry Exchange, Pif, The Poems Gallery,
Joey and the Black Boots, Opossum Holler Tarot, The
Bridge, Sweet Annie (Eclectic Woman).

photograph, 19th century

First published in: Listen With Your Heart

Also published in: Art/Life Limited Editions, Women and Recovery, The Poetry Exchange, The Bridge.

rape education one

First published in: Women and Recovery.

Chapbooks published in: "Bottoms Up."

rape education two

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Women and Recovery, The Flying Dog,

Joey and the Black Boots, Opossum Holler Tarot.

Chapbooks published in: "Bottoms Up."

rape education three

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Women and Recovery, The Flying Dog, Opossum Holler Tarot.

Chapbooks published in: "Bottoms Up."

right there, by your heart

First published in: Linsey Woolsey.

Also published in: Feminist Studies, Opossum Holler Tarot, Listen Up, Tand, Paradox, Napalm Health Spa, Taggerzine, Women and Recovery, Kaspah Raster, Plain Brown Wrapper, Interbang, The poetry Exchange, Pif, The Poems Gallery.

Chapbooks published in: "Slate and Marrow" and "Gasoline and Reason."

resurrecting the dead

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

Also published in: Art/Life Limited Editions, Musing Magazine, A Room Without Walls, The Bridge.

Chapbooks published in: "Slate and Mar

soothe me just this once

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

that's not what i'm here for

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

the apartment

First published in: Gypsy.

Also published in: Art/Life Limited Editions,
Poet's Sanctuary, Gin Mill Productions, The Flying
Dog, Tand, Slug Fest, Opossum Holler Tarot, dcr,
White Crow, Lazy Bones Review, Kaspah Raster, The
Poetry Exchange, The Bridge.

Chapbooks published in: "Slate and Marrow" and "still
Had To Breathe."

the burning

First published in: Linsey Woolsey.

Also published in: Aldebaran, Art/Life Limited
Editions, Dance on the Horizon, The Plastic Tower,
The Avant-Garden, Spilled Ink, Opossum Holler Tarot,
Shockbox, Women and Recovery, dcr, Oh! Zone, The
Poetry Exchange, Lacunae, The Poems Gallery.
Chapbooks published in: "Slate and Marrow," "Gasoline
and Reason" and "Still Had To Breathe."

the fourteenth

First published in: Challenges.

the martyr and the saint

First published in: Treasured Poems of America.

Also published in: Opossum Holler Tarot, Art/Life
Limited Editions, The Flying Dog, The Wooden Head
Review, Inspirations, Dark Bizara, 24-7, The Poetry
Exchange, Ya See I Got This Turtle, Pif, The Poems
Gallery, The Best Poems of the 90's, Crimson Leer,
Greencart Magazine. Was also read on the television
show "Speer Presents" in December 1995.

Chapbooks published in: "Scratching."

the room of the rape

First published in: Frontiers.

Also published in: Female 5: Impetus, Art/Life Limited Editions, Women and Recovery, Driver's Side Airbag, Report to Hell, The poetry Exchange, The Bridge, Opossum Holler Tarot. Was also used as reserved notebook reading for the 1995/1996 and 1996/1997 academic year for Nur551: The Social and Cultural Context of Women's Health, at the Oregon Health Sciences University

Chapbooks published in: "Gasoline and Reason," "Still Had To Breathe" and "Bottoms Up."

they never ask me

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

Also published in: Joey and the Black Boots.

when you're gone

First published in: The Poetry Exchange.

Also published in: Joey and the Black Boots.

white knuckled

First published in: Gin Mill productions.

Also published in: Dance on the Horizon, Art/Life Limited Editions, Cat Machine. Was also read on the television show "Speer Presents" in December 1995. Chapbooks published in: "Gasoline and Reason," "Scratching" and "Bottoms Up."

crazy

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Also published in: Malcontent, Plain Brown Wrapper, Out of a/Maze.

Chapbooks published in: "Gasoline and Reason" and "Bottoms Up."

gabriel

First published in: "the International Corpus of English," a database in 1997-1998 that will be used for research purposes on the changes in dialects of the English language.

knowl edge

First published in: Linsey Woolsey.

Also published in: Art/Life Limited Editions, Penny
Dreadful Review,

Speer Presents Newsletter, Cat Machine, Lip Service
Magazi ne,

The Poetry Exchange, The Poems Gallery, Greencart
Magazi ne.

Chapbooks published in: "Still Had To Breathe."

a mi crocosm of soci ety

First published in: Linsey Woolsey

Also published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Chapbooks published in: "Gasoline and Reason" and
"Bottoms Up."

stal ker

First published in: Art/Life Limited Editions.

Chapbooks published in: "This is What it Means" and
"bottoms Up."

the wrath of valentine's day

First published in: Challenges.