



Rib
By Rib
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I sense a mounting suspicion
confrontation is at hand
a mystery revealed
finds a broken man

The questions are all answered
the doubts all put to rest
the evidence takes shape
a woman laid to rest

a finished puzzle
each piece in it's place
no more innuendo
just an evil villains face

Moments of yesterday
fly
from
my
head,

Dreams that glow red.

Beyond remorse, without sobriety
a burden on the edge,
not fit to share
The remains were once sacred,
not there on the stage,
as if on a dare.
A weakness for the flesh,
living or dead,
so cold, so bare.
It's all so numbing,
the precision, the calculation,
the heartless stares.

REARRANGED

Her love hangs in the wings,
lonely times are even harder
no one listens as she sings
and he is there, but who is he?
The heart slowly fades away
with nothing to lose, too much to gain
there's just nothing left to say
and he is there, but who is he?
But there she goes changing, changing her life, changing her ways,
once again changing, closer and closer, but so rearranged.
The new world is strange, so is he
seems so familiar, a scene from a play
Is he taken? Can this be?
Rejection is simple, time for change.
Who is he?

You said you were inspired just like the song
You screamed I was fire but I didn't belong

Just like the movies but just so wrong
Just like a high just like the song.

Aunt Lou Said So

The clock was ticking. It seemed time would be moving slow from now on. I missed mom and pop already. I'm just thankful they had such a long life. I suppose it could have been happier though. Their last few years were filled with The Price is Right, local news and unsourced foods. It must have been pure hell. If only I could have done more but it was all I could do to keep them alive. I think I'll always wonder if working less or dropping a class may have helped to ease their pain. I knew their days were numbered and I should have spent more time with them. They always insisted I concentrate on my future. God, am I that selfish? Could they ever know how grateful I've been for their guidance and love, for their confidence in me? They pushed me gently my whole life. I always believed I could be something because of their support.

A car roared up to the curb outside with Marilyn Manson screaming from the open windows. "Later!" I heard my little brother Al shout to his best friend.

The car skidded and rattled down our street then turned onto Perry avenue. I heard the back door slam then the refrigerator door open and close. There was the small pssshht of a can's pop top and footsteps heading this way. Al stood in the doorway and smiled at me. It was that half stupid grin he always had after being with John. I've come to think of it as his refer smile. I often wonder if they really think they're fooling anybody. With those half closed eyes and silly laugh they give themselves away. I know he's eighteen and is capable of making his own decisions but he always seems to make bad ones.

"What's up, Lisa? Don't you have to work today?" he said, barely audible.

"No, I'm off today. I've just been going through some of mom and pops things here wondering what to do with everything. I mean it's been almost a month, I suppose we need to get on with it. If I'm going to move back in I need to make some room for my stuff. I just don't know quite what to do with everything.

Al looked at me with a fuzzy yet icy stare, "So you're really coming home, huh? It's gonna be strange without them here huh? It still don't seem real, all our lives they've been right here. I just never pictured them anywhere else. I mean they hardly ever even left town for a vacation or anything. It seemed like they would always be here. You know I am of age now. If you're coming back cuz you think I need a babysitter..."

"Of course not, you know better than that. It's our house now. It seems silly to pay for my apartment when I can live here. Don't you think we can coexist? I'll stay out of your way when you want me to. I think it'll be ok for awhile. Who knows, one of us might get married or I might get a job offer somewhere else once I'm out of school. Anything could happen, it just seems silly to pay rent. I think they'd want me to save my money."

"Well you do what you want. Like you said it's our house now. You were always good at saving and pinching pennies, mother taught you well. I guess she'd be very proud."

I always hated it when he got like this. He had a way of making everyone around him feel bad. It seemed to follow him. He never did have many friends, just John and that Brett guy who'd dropped out of school to work at the candy bar factory. He never seemed to dream about anything or aspire to be better than he was at this very moment. Still he was my brother and I did love him in a have to 'sort of way. He took our parents death very hard and is just now able to even admit they are gone. He had still lived here with them after I grew up and moved on and it probably was harder for him. He shot me an 'I don't give a shit' look and headed for his room upstairs.

I turned back to the window, staring at the quiet street. It took only a moment before I got my thoughts back to the business at hand. I sat down and started going through the same drawer I had been working on. It was a drawer in a small stand by the telephone that held three more drawers, I had already emptied one that had been filled with small scraps of paper with phone numbers on them, a couple of old TV guides and various menus from local restaurants that deliver. The drawer with the search now in progress seemed to be filled with phone bills and phone books. One of the phone books was five years old, they threw away nothing. Well, mom and pop, I thought to myself, sorry but some of this stuff has got to go. I grabbed the small garbage can that sat next to the desk and pulled it closer to me. I deposited the old phone books and other useless things I came across. This continued until the last drawer. When I opened it, my eyes widened, it was full of pictures. I was thrilled, a trip down memory lane. I had been wondering where all of our old childhood snapshots had ended up. It had been years since I'd seen them. I grabbed a pile and started to look through them. I found they weren't photos of me or my brother or our parents for that matter. These were strangers, there were young and old, fat and thin, black and white. I did notice a few shots of some neighbors but other than that I knew no one in this giant pile of pictures. My parents were not socializers, they surely would have told me of all these acquaintances. Who could these people be? Pop, especially, always stayed at home and neither rarely talked of friends. Were they people from the past, before my time perhaps? No, couldn't be, most were newer pictures and the clothing worn was of today's styles. It probably means nothing and it will be a mystery I can never solve since they are both gone. I

carried the pictures to the dining room table and dropped them in the center.

The desk held many treasures so that was my next project. I remember playing at this big roll top desk for hours as a child. All the little tubby holes were fascinating and pop kept dozens of pens in the top drawer. I had dreaded going through all their things but I actually looked forward to this. Just sitting in the old wooden chair made me feel like a kid again. The rollers didn't seem to glide like they used to, in fact two of them were completely stuck. Memories of sliding around on the hard wood floor came back. It was so much fun spinning around and pushing myself to the other end of the room. But mother always heard me and came running in to scold me for scuffing her floor. Well I can't wait to see what I'll find in here.

I started with the little cubbies and found all sorts of memento's and just plain junk. There were cocktail napkins taken from special places, matchbooks with some of the same places

printed on them. There were dozens of erasers, some staples, liquid paper and other general office supplies. There were old stickers of birds and flowers that I'm sure I had used as a child. I found stamps, note paper, even a small bag of rice that must have come from a wedding long ago. There were many books sitting on the desktop so I sat them on the dining room table alongside the photos. I thought I should ask Al if any of them were his or if he wanted them before deciding what to do with them. I went to the kitchen to refill my tea before tackling the next drawer. On my way back to the desk the telephone rang.

"Hello." I said hesitantly, not really wanting to talk to another distant relative who was just hearing about my parents accident.

"Is Al there?" came an elderly voice from the other end of the line.

"Yes, just a minute."

I yelled for Al to pick up and he announced that he would get it upstairs. I hung up after he yelled that he had it. My curiosity was getting the better of me. I couldn't help but wonder who could be calling my brother. He was just like our mom and pop, he always kept to himself. It could be about a job, that would be nice. It's none of my business, I can't nose into his life before I even move back in.

I went to the desk and opened the next drawer. There were more pictures, lots of them. Under them were three knives. They weren't plain knives by any means. The handles appeared to be delicately, identically carved and were very beautiful. Underneath was a large folded piece of cloth. I opened it to see an enormous half moon stitched onto the black cloth. What was I seeing? What on earth were these things doing here? On the bottom of the drawer there was a five by seven picture of my parents and Al dressed all in black. They wore hoods on their heads and they looked very somber. Where was this taken? I never thought they went anywhere. The contents of the drawer were on my lap and as I stood up trying to grasp it all, one of the knives fell back in. There was a strange hollow kind of thump as it landed. I removed the knife and felt the bottom of the drawer. It was wood but it looked like a different color of wood. I opened the drawer above it to look at it and sure enough it seemed to be a different kind of wood. I went back to the hollow sounding bottom and studied it. I used one of the knives to pry up the wood. There was a pile of computer paper under the false bottom. It was filled with names. There must have been thousands of them. I was beginning to feel very uncomfortable about what I was seeing. As I moved to the kitchen table, Al ran down the stairs and grabbed his coat.

"Al, come here and look at this, it's really strange.

"Sorry, gotta run." he yelled running for the door.

"Wait, where are you going?" I tried to say but he was already out the door.

I started to look through the list of names. There were two names on each line, one man, one woman. What in hell did this mean and why was it hidden away? Here I was in the house of my childhood, the safest, most uncomplicated place in my world and I was in the middle of a mystery. Things couldn't be what they seemed. There had to be a reasonable explanation for all this. Where was Al off to so fast? He had to have some answers, he lived here with them. They couldn't have possibly known all these people.

I warmed up some old coffee in the microwave and sat down with the list of names. It would take hours to go through all of them and it was getting late but I thought I'd browse. The list was full of strangers but I noticed the Wernsman's, Dick and Ellen. They lived a few blocks away and I used to babysit for them. There was a couple of people I knew in school. Randy and Kim had just gotten married last year. I flipped through the pages and landed on the last page. I stared at the printout, there was my brother's name. The name Greta Hamilton was next to it. I didn't know this name, who was this person? I had to put the stack down, I was getting a headache. Al wasn't home yet so I headed for bed. It took hours to fall asleep and I awoke from dreams I couldn't remember.

At six o'clock I finally got out of bed after lying awake for about an hour. I hadn't heard any noise but the birds singing . I wondered if Al was home yet. He wouldn't be up, rarely did he rise before noon. I went down and picked up the pile of papers and flipped through them again. It wasn't a dream, there was my brother and thousands of other names. I moved to the table and

sifted through the pictures. My head was spinning, I had ran a hundred theories through my head and just kept coming up blank. The rest of the morning I spent looking through other drawers and throwing out the junk.

At about eleven thirty Al came bouncing in with a huge smile. I heard the door and came downstairs with a million questions. When I saw the smile I stopped short. I wasn't used to seeing a smile on his face, especially lately.

"It's about time you got home, what has you all lit up this morning? Did you have a secret rendezvous last night?"

He laughed, "Well, in a way, I guess I did. But not like you think, I have some wonderful news."

He just stood there with a nervous smile, rubbing his hands together. I couldn't stand it, what had finally put a twinkle in my brother's eye? "Well, what is it, spill it."

"Sis, I'm getting married."

I'm sure my eyes were bugging out and my jaw had dropped. After a minute or two of stammering I managed to give him a hug. "Who is it, Al? I didn't even know you were dating anyone, how did all this happen?"

"You should know me well enough by now to know I don't tell everybody my business. I'm shy, I don't kiss and tell. Last night just seemed like the right time so I popped the question, as they say." he beamed.

I was floored. My brother had no money, no job, not even a car, this must really be love. "Are you gonna let me meet her before the wedding? When is the big day or are you going to have a long engagement?"

He laughed, "I think we're going to get married right away. I see no reason to wait. I'm ready, Greta's ready so I think we should just go for it!"

I suddenly felt a lump in my throat, "Greta?"

"Yea, Greta Hamilton, you don't know her, she's from Kickapoo, by the college?"

My mind whirled back to where it was this morning before this news came into my life. "Al, I have heard of Greta but you're right, I don't know her. Come here, I want to show you something."

I led him into the living room and grabbed the stack of paper. I shoved them into his hands and hoped for a reaction.

"I found these in a desk drawer. Do you have any idea what they are?"

He fumbled them around a bit and licked his lips. "I um don't know. It looks like a list of names or something."

"Yea, look at the last name on the back, look familiar?"

He looked at his name and swallowed hard. He said nothing. I led him to the dining room and showed him the pile of pictures. I found the one of he and our parents and handed it to him. He looked at me then down at the picture. Silence.

I studied his face, waiting. "Where did you guys have that taken and who are all these people? Mom and Pop hardly knew anyone. I can't make heads or tails out of this. Do you know what all this stuff is here for? It's driving me crazy."

"It is strange, isn't it? They were so quiet and never went anywhere but they must have known somebody."

"Al, what's going on? Why is your name and the name of your new fiancée on this list? What is it for? What is this picture? C'mon there has to be an explanation."

"Look, I don't know what all this is but I need to catch a few winks. I've got to meet Greta after awhile." he said as he headed up the stairs.

"Are you bringing her here? I'd really like to meet her."

Without turning he mumbled, "We're gonna be kind of busy, I'll have to get back to you on that."

With that he made it to his room and closed the door. I was left alone with the mystery once again. After eighteen years I've gotten to know my brother a little bit even if he has always kept to himself. I know he knew more than he was letting on. What has my family been keeping from me? I could be getting worked up over nothing. But I could feel it, this all means something, I know it. I'll have to think about it later because work is waiting.

I was so tired on my way home from work but still couldn't get the names and pictures off of my mind. At work I had got to thinking about our Aunt Louise. Dad's sister and mom had been very close. They used to talk on the phone quite often and go shopping sometime. I wondered if she might know something that could help solve my mystery. Perhaps mom may have told her things she wouldn't tell me. It seemed unlikely because I always felt mom and I were best friends but it might be worth a shot.

I walked into the dark house and flipped on the light. The first thing I noticed was a note on the table. It was from Al, he wrote that he was with Greta and would be home sometime. I sat my purse on the table and headed through the dining room. The dining room table was empty. All the pictures were gone, the list too. My heart sank, I looked around the room. Nothing was out of place, no pictures in sight. I checked the other rooms and found no pictures, no computer pages. Why would Al move these? I've never known him to clean up anything, why did he start now? I headed straight for the little phone book I had seen in the top drawer of the telephone stand. I found the phone number for Aunt Louise and dialed the phone. After three rings, a shaky but

friendly voice answered, "Hello?"

"Aunt Lou? Hi, it's me. "I said wearily.

"Oh honey, "she cried reassuringly, "How are you? I've been thinking about you since the funeral. Are you and Al getting on AT'

"Yes, we're fine, Aunt Lou, just fine. In fact Al is getting married.

"Married? Your brother Al? I never thought I'd see the day! Oh, I'm sorry dear, that probably didn't sound very good, did it? "

"That's ok, " I laughed, "I never thought it could happen either. It happened so fast, I haven't even met her yet. I didn't even know he was dating anyone but he came home this morning and announced he was engaged."

"Aunt Lou giggled as well, "Isn't that funny, it's just like your parents. One day your dad came home and told me he was getting married, two weeks later, he and your mother started a life together. But their marriage was a long one so maybe your brother will get lucky too. "

"I hope so... Look, I'm sorry to bother you but speaking of mom and pop, I wonder if I could ask you something. I've been going through the house and came across some, well, kind of strange things. "

There was silence for a moment. "Yes, hon what is it that you found?"

I took a deep breath and continued, hoping I wasn't about to sound too paranoid. "Well, I wanted to make some room for my stuff, you know, so I started to go through some drawers and the desk and... well, I just thought it was about time I get around to it and there is stuff I just didn't expect to find. There were tons of pictures of people I've never seen. I found a picture of Al with mom and pop at some sort of costume party and Al acted nervous about it. My parents were not exactly party people. I know I couldn't have known every move they made and they didn't know all of mine but it just seems odd. I also found a list of names printed out on computer paper. I have to wonder if the names match the pictures I found and if so , why? Al's name is on that list and the name of the woman he has decided to marry. Does this sound crazy or am I making way too much out of this?"

Her voice shaky, Aunt Lou answered, "I don't think you're making too much out of this. Are you going to be home tonight?"

"Well, yea, I just got off work, I'll be here. Why?"

"Where is all this stuff now?"

I didn't see what difference that made but responded anyway. "I don't exactly know. I came home from work and Al has moved it all. I had it all on the table and he decided to clean, if you can believe that. "

"I believe it. I'm on my way so don't go anywhere."

"Lou, you live an hour away. I didn't mean to alarm you, it's probably nothing. You don't have to drive all the way over here. "

"Yes, I do honey, stay there I'll be right over." With that I heard a click and she was gone.

I had always admired Aunt Lou. She was beautiful, sixtyish with a kind and gentle nature. She never forgot a birthday and always complimented people .I hate the thought of her coming all this way but I'm kind of glad too. It will be good to see her and even better if she can tell me what's going on. Does she know why I found all this stuff or is she just curious like me. Perhaps she just wants to look at it. Where could Al have put this stuff?

I went to the kitchen and put together a few snacks for Aunt Lou and then to the bathroom to freshen up. She was right when she said she was coming right over. In an hour and ten minutes after she hung up, I heard a knock on the door. When I opened the door she gave me a huge hug and a kiss. The pleasantries were exchanged, then she got down to business.

"Have you found the pictures Al hid?" she asked.

"Hid? Why do you think he hid them? He probably just moved them because he needed the table or something."

"Hon, I hoped this day would never come but it looks like I'm going to have to tell you a few things. Let's sit down so we can talk."

I looked into her eyes and knew I wasn't going to like what she had to say. I got the snacks and some tea for both of us and we sat down at the table.

She looked at me with such sadness, my heart ached for her. My head told me I didn't care to hear this for her sake and mine but I couldn't speak. I was transfixed on her sadness, too scared to move. She looked around the room then lowered her head and closed her eyes.

"I don't even know where to begin. This is the hardest thing I've ever done. I love you so much. Do you know that? I always hoped you knew how much I cared about you. We are so alike, you and I. I thank God everyday that we are not one of them.

"One of... them? Lou, what are you talking about?"

"I suppose I should start with my father, your grandpa Fletcher. It goes back a lot further but these are details we'll probably never know. These are things we aren't supposed to know, that we don't want to know. Your grandpa was, the leader of an organization that you only enter by birthright. You are born into it or you aren't. You and I were not. Your parents were, your brother was. They call it the crescent club but it's Satanism to me, pure and simple. When grandpa died, it was up to your father to take over. Those of us who are not part of this so called club are not to know anything about it. It is, of course very private. I noticed things while I was growing up, though, things that didn't seem quite right. I would stay up late sometimes when I wasn't supposed to and listened when I shouldn't have. I was curious and heard some of their meetings. As I got older I kind of put two and two together and figured out that the family that I loved and cherished were Satanists."

My mouth was hanging open and I couldn't seem to form a thought or say anything. There were hundreds of things running through my head but nothing coherent. Aunt Lou looked on the verge of tears but continued.

"Do you remember staying at my house a lot in the summers?"

I nodded yes.

"I couldn't stand to think of you here going through the same things I went through. I wanted you to live a normal life, at least as normal as you could, considering. Whenever I could I would try to get you out of this house. I'd think up an excuse to get you to my house so we could shop or see the sights, anything was better than leaving you in a house filled with evil. I think your mother was grateful, she felt bad about the way things were sometimes, but there wasn't a thing she could do about it. I know you don't know what to believe right now but I wouldn't tell you something like this if it weren't true. I hoped you would never find out. I can't believe they just left that stuff around for you to find. The accident happened so sudden though, I guess they didn't have time to prepare. They probably thought Al would take care of everything but apparently you beat him to it. He never was exactly what you'd call on top of things."

I finally got my voice back. "Lou, this is madness, this can't be true. I love you and trust you more than anything but this cannot be. Why wouldn't we be part of this if one is born into it?"

"It took me a long time to figure that out. I thought something was wrong with me since I was the only one forbidden to come to the family meetings. It's the crescent. They were all born with the shape of the crescent somewhere on their body. Just because we are in the same family does not mean we are born with the symbol. That is how they know who they can trust. There are a lot of them. That is probably the reason for all the pictures. The high ruler of the crescents has to keep tabs on the whole flock as it were. The high ruler decides who will marry whom as well. The crescents aren't your ordinary Satanists. From what I have seen they don't sacrifice virgins or drink blood or anything. They can cast spells like witches though if they don't like what someone is doing. I wish I could tell you more but I don't know a lot myself. Like I said they were very secretive and I could have been in big trouble if they had ever found out I was spying, family or not. Even now I'm a little frightened telling you. I wouldn't want the next high ruler to find out. I don't even want to think about what would happen to us. "

"And who would the next one be since my father is dead?" I asked, not really wanting an answer.

"Why Al of course. Our family has always been in command. It's like royalty, the reigns get handed down. Al had to hide the stuff you found. He couldn't take a chance on you ever finding out anything. Not only would it be harmful for an outsider to gain knowledge of this kind but he would look like an incompetent boob. I'm sure that is the reason he has to get married so fast. The high ruler has to be married. You said both of their names were on the list of names you found?"

"Yes, right next to each other. Does that mean that she had already been chosen for him?"

"I'm sure it does. Your father probably picked her before he died. They pick mates for all sorts of reasons. They both must have the crescent, of course but I think there are other factors. I don't think age or color matters, it all deals with signs received from Satan and traits of both people. "

My body felt numb, I still couldn't believe what I was hearing. To accept this was to say that my whole life had been a lie. It explained some things, I can remember waking up in the night and hearing lots of voices downstairs when I was very little. When I would tell mother in the morning she would always say I'd been dreaming but it never felt like a dream. We had never went to church. When friends would ask me to go, I was never allowed to but never really thought much of it. We would always have something we had to do instead. Somehow, through the shock I knew Lou wouldn't lie to me. I knew that I was hearing the truth but I didn't know how to feel about it.

"You and mom were so close. Didn't she ever suspect that you knew about them? How could you be close to her knowing all of this?"

"I loved your mother in spite of all this. I also wanted to stay close to you. I always felt like I was your protector. Your mother and I had something kind of unspoken between us. I'm sure she knew that I knew but she never said anything. I never let on that I knew she knew either. You see there is nothing we can do about it but accept it. If we tell others we would regret it. You must forget we ever had this conversation. You must forget you ever found those things. I think you should stay at your

own apartment and let Al have the house. It would make your life a lot easier if you parted ways with your brother. Let him go on with his life and you start a new one. Go into the light and forget about all of this."

Lou and I talked awhile longer, sipped our tea and held each other. I never felt closer to anyone than I did to my Aunt Lou at this very moment.

For a week I stayed in bed pretending to be sick. I crawled inside myself so I could somehow sort this out. I asked Al what had happened to all the stuff I'd found and he told me he'd thrown it out. He claimed to see no reason to hang onto the junk. I agreed and in my heart said good bye to the brother I thought I'd known all my life. I met his fiancée, Greta. She was a sixty seven year old librarian and I just smiled and congratulated. I honestly didn't know what else to do. After a week I told Al I would be moving back to my apartment. I went on about how crowded it would be with a new wife in the house. I thought they deserved to start a life by themselves. Al did not put up a fight. I went to the wedding. It was held in the back yard of a friend's house. Everyone there was so happy for the couple. I may not have noticed the worship thrown their way had it not been for the talk I'd had with Aunt Lou. I would have thought they were just very happy for the couple. I never saw Al after that. I moved away a year later to attend a different school. I kept in touch with Lou, she was my only real family. We'd get together for holidays and laugh about the things we used to do. I realized my happiest memories were times away from the house I grew up in. It had been dark and strange and I hadn't even known it. Now that I looked at all that life had to offer I felt so alive. I even met a wonderful man. He's like a dream come true. I didn't invite Al to the wedding. I wanted good vibes to start my new life. We do everything together, he takes such good care of me. When I heard I was pregnant I was ecstatic. I cried all day with Joy. My wonderful husband cuddled me all night. We saved money and planned for the future. We filled our old study with baby things until it finally became a nursery. He went with me to the delivery room. He wanted to be the first to see his beautiful new son or daughter (we wanted to be surprised). He helped the doctor bring our son into the world. Everyone in the room was laughing and crying at the same time. It was an easy birth and he was perfect. My husband smiled as he held him.

"Sweetheart, he's perfect," he said, "You did good. He's got all his fingers and toes and a powerful set of lungs. Well I'll be, Look at this, he's got the cutest little birthmark on his tusk. It looks like a little moon."

WATCHING

Sometimes we watch, we don't say a word
Others see nothing, just tragically scheme
All the while...
The young people cry,
The poor people sigh,
The old people die.
We're caught in the wind, mindless stares
feet stepping over us, being pushed down the line.

*I can leave you dyeing on the pier
I can crawl the staircase of fear
this scrambled mess of a brain
away in a briefcase, if some other time
locked, 12-4-6 on the right hand side*

PLAY

Walked in low, sailed in high,
either or, a terrible lie.
All my life, a comedy? a tragedy?
closer to a parody.
direction given much too harshly,
production values, like the life of the party.
Acting out the romance, practicing my lines,
waiting for the curtain calls, I'm sure will never come.

*Lost in the night
shadows of sins
mortals in bindings
vibrant grins
how many moons
how many suns
apparent reasons unknown
ebb tide*

DECEMBER

Quietly overwhelmed whenever he is near,
the waiting so painful, hours tick by,
no substitutions, that is quite clear.
weekends are torture except for his voice,
he said it wouldn't be the same,
the shape I'm in, I have no choice.
he sits in bed, glasses on, reading,
a foolish fantasy
all that's on my mind is breeding.
I read about a viscous man,
killed his friends to keep them
but I don't think I can.
it's a new year... goodbye Mr. S.

And Just One More

Springtime, summer moods
under a faded winter moon,
my heart feels a chill
as he walks away
ghostlike and empty
in the fall, about noon.

A hug in the darkness

an imagined caress,
driving off distant
warm and lonely inside
keep turning the pages
from a friend, a mess.

Make You Money

I could make you money workin on the street
and I could make you money without skipping a beat
I could make you money at the five and dime
and maybe we could make some on our own time

Could we go and tell,
I think we should sell,
talking about the times
that we knew so well.

We could start to deal
from just behind the wheel
or drop it down alone
for that hollow feel.

Son of Rosemary, Son of Sam,

Mother Earth, Vietnam

Our Father who art in heaven,

the number that comes right before seven

The farmer's daughter, jokes inbred,

a sister brother tryst instead.

torn into pieces at the top of a hat.

common threads, unspun webs.

stolen marriages

tossed from a ledge.

man made bedlam, film noir,

shots of bourbon,

cold desire.

Lost in the years, things he would never know
through clenched teeth, a love that couldn't grow

so tender, so raw, so many things to bring back pain
a song, a scent, a season, first drops of a light rain

trunks and boxes of the past to sort through,
an occasional smile for the memories he thought he knew

his face on the wall in a second hand store,
faint expressions to learn and explore.

EXTREME

Glass tapestries fade to black
mimics cornered, carnations withered
fool hardy ornamental window displays

Overtures filled with passion
from lessons in backwoods classes
alive with delicate fabrics.

He moved slowly through the bazaar. Eyeing the prices, he could see they were priced too high. It was like a flea market for people who had nothing better to do with their money than throw it away. Honestly, a chunk of old wood with a picture of Elvis on it for twenty five dollars. The world is a strange place. The man at the pottery booth was wearing overalls and staring at a teenager's ass. His hands were dirty and one of his teeth was missing. A half eaten sucker lay on the floor near him. It was purple, probably grape. It was time to go.

Foreign lands, tidal waves
visits from the heart
further ramblings
evil meditation
saw it from the start

A morbid situation
wipe the dust away
filled with soft emotion,
clutter ,debris

*Shadow cold
lost in the mist
a quiet fatigue has it's grip
a lonely unsettling flavor
helpless and forlorn with a twist*

*How many times have you dined alone?
How many old movies did you watch at home?
Finding footprints in the snow
facing the other way, should have known.*

The Glare

Glaring flaws, dimly lit from postwar traumas
a lecture that beckons from beyond the mist
wants and needs internalized, time stops
shallow unmarked graves no one sees.

Take flight, rest easy,
you can see the end
slow the pace,
forget do not attend

The cold sets in, a flame is gone
a flood of tears after the fall
lover, brother, father, son
empty sadness shared by all.

Dreams and smiles all but gone
no answers for the pain
no time for release
others plotting for their gain.

Romantic nights not to be
memories in a lonely heart
forever came so suddenly
the end is just another start.

The fog was so thick, it was hard to make out anything. There was a faint outline of something, but what was it? Drawing ever closer in this car that seemed new somehow, the image became clearer. It was a woman, yes a woman in a long, white, tattered dress. Her eyes were looking somewhere far away. The sadness on her face was unbearable. She was filled with emptiness, it was so clear to see. The car slowed and stopped next to her. There was no response, just cold silence. Her head started to turn gently. The panic rose, must go now, must go. Suddenly she was behind getting further and further away.

Ophelia sat straight up in bed, trying to catch her breath. Drenched in sweat, she looked around to find herself safe and warm in her room. After a few moments she started to breathe normally, yet her mind was still fresh with the image of the dream. Not again, she thought, I don't know how much more I can take. She sobbed quietly, glad that Bob was on a business trip tonight and not here to see her like this. She did like to be held when these dreams came upon her but this had gone on for so long that sometimes it just felt good to be alone in her misery.

Opie, as everyone called her, had been such a happy carefree child. She wasn't the most popular, the smartest or the prettiest girl in town but everyone loved her. She had the right mix of everything and lit up the room when she entered. Always laughing and smiling, Opie had lots of friends and one big passion that really drove her spirit, drawing. When she created beauty on blank paper, she thought of nothing else. There was nothing she couldn't draw flawlessly and with perfect detail. Things never seemed to get Opie down. Her parents delighted in her talent and her charm. Big brother, Tom always looked out for his little sister and wasn't nearly as annoyed with her presence as some of his buddies were with their smaller sisters and brothers.

As Opie started her teenage years her father was promoted and decided to move into a larger home with a big backyard and a two car garage. Everyone was excited but it took two years for the family to find a house they all agreed on. Her parents were very adamant about house hunting being a team effort. At fifteen Opie was more worried about boys and makeup than this big house hunt. When her mother had told her to stop off after school to look at a house they were considering, she rode her bike by the front and told mom it was great. There was no time to look inside, she was expecting a call from her best friend Mandy to hear about her kiss behind the bus barn. Mom was so happy when this house came on the market and that was good enough for her. Everyone else agreed and the move began. When finally she walked into the house on Koenig drive she couldn't believe her eyes. It was a grand home like something out of a dream. Her heart sank but she didn't know why. A coldness filled her as she was telling her parents how much she loved it. She couldn't turn back now. There could be no telling of the drive past the house. Papers were signed, money had been exchanged and this was their home now. It was so beautiful so why should she feel so strange? Surely this was an emotional teenage thing. It would probably pass, she tried to tell herself, but she knew better.

A week later it was no better. It had been seven restless nights. Her mother even commented on her dark circles but Opie said it was just being in a new house. She made excuses about getting used to a different room and new surroundings. Mom and dad were so happy here and though Tom was hardly ever home anymore, he seemed more contented too. Every night she would toss and turn. Something just seemed so wrong, it always seemed like she should know, that it was right there in front of her but then it just faded. There were times right before sleep took her that she could swear she heard... something, was it a voice, a throat clearing, a humming sound? Was it just nerves? Was she starting to lose it at this tender young age? No, she was very lucky that disaster had never struck around her, no psychos had ever invaded her life. She had never had any real traumas that would catch up with her and send her mind into a tailspin. She came up with a brilliant idea, she would spend the weekend at her best friend Mandy's house. She could get a couple of good nights rest and perhaps get a better perspective in this whole thing. The plan was hatched and mother said of course it would be okay, without even suspecting any other motive but two girls talking all night and giggling about boys. The weekend was a complete success. Opie returned home with a new attitude and no more bleary eyes. She felt a chill when she entered the house but shrugged it off and decided to not let it bother her. She just kept smiling and chatted on about her weekend. When strange thoughts or feelings started to creep in she just thought of more to say and pushed it out of her mind.

She stayed up as long as she could. Tom had went to his room hours ago to listen to a new cd. Mom kept falling asleep on the couch till dad finally convinced her to head upstairs. Dad watched the end of an old cop show with her then headed for bed, reminding her it was a school night. It was no use, Opie knew she had to try to sleep. The thought of falling asleep on the couch went through her mind but she wanted to face the demons, so to speak, so she shut off all the lights and went to her room. It looked so harmless, all her things were in their place. The room decorated bright and beautiful. So why did her heart sink, why was her flesh suddenly cold yet sweaty. The rest of the house felt strange enough but this room really took the prize. It was all she could do to keep from screaming and running to mom and dad's room like she did when she was little. After searching the closet and looking all around outside through the window, she switched off the light and hopped into bed. The sheets felt fresh and cool, she closed her eyes and tried to relax. After an hour she finally decided to read. She grabbed 'Still life with woodpecker' off the nightstand and lost herself in the pages until she finally drifted off. As she slept a dream came over

her. An intense feeling of loneliness filled her. The dread was overpowering. She could feel she was being driven slowly in a car down a deserted road. She could not see who was driving. As she stared out the window looking for something safe or familiar she noticed something ahead in the distance. Even though she did not want to look she couldn't help herself. The car got closer and she could make out a human looking form. There was white fabric flying loose in the wind. Although it was in slow motion they moved ever closer. It was a woman, a sad pitiful woman. Her heart was breaking, of that she knew. Even through the fog she could see her face and Opie was overwhelmed with helplessness. The woman in the long white tattered gown wanted to tell her something. She grabbed for the door handle but suddenly the car was moving away. It moved faster as she looked back. The woman never turned around and that's when Opie bolted upright in her bed. Her breathing was heavy and she had tears in her eyes. She looked around the room to see all was well in her own bedroom in her new house. She lay back down and wiped her eyes. She didn't remember much of the dream but she never remembered feeling quite so sad. She didn't sleep much the rest of the night. The thing she couldn't forget was the look on the woman's face.

The next 14 and a half years went on much the same. She managed to get through high school somehow. She never felt she could tell this dream to anyone. After she left her parents house and went onto college the dreams lessened but were still there. At times she could go months and almost forget but eventually that same vision would return. Sometimes it was stronger, at times the woman would actually speak but Opie could never understand the words. It was almost like moans or sobs but with something important not yet revealed. When she married at 25 they became so frequent again that she finally told her husband Bob about it. He was, of course, concerned and urged her to seek counseling but she was afraid of what she might find. They finally seemed to fade away for almost a year but then came the call about her father's illness. He was dying and she was going to have to return home for the first time in a long time. The last few years she had managed to bring her parents here for visits and holidays. Bob made good money and took care of everything, never revealing her secrets. It was too hard to think of returning to the place where it all started. But it was important that she see her father before it was too late. They were scheduled to fly back when Bob returned from his biz trip tomorrow.

Opie looked at the clock to see the numbers flip stating 5:35. "I won't be able to get back to sleep now," she thought. Sliding out of bed she started the coffee pot and jumped in the shower. Through the day of packing and last minute errands she saw the woman's face everywhere. She didn't even want to go to bed that night but knew how important this last night of rest would be before going home. When the time came she took a book with her and as she often did, read until she fell asleep. Once again the dream invaded her sleep. This time she awoke with a word clearly in her head, "Violet". The woman had said "Violet". When her breathing slowed she shook her head and lay back. "Almost fifteen years and I was waiting to hear ...Violet?" She giggled even though her body was shaking with fear. Deep down she knew it couldn't mean anything good. Then she heard a noise in the house. Was she imagining things or was someone in the house? Again she heard something. It sounded like it was coming from the kitchen. Slowly she made her way down the stairs and around the corner that led to the breakfast nook. There was Bob fixing a sandwich. She let out a huge sigh of relief. He turned and smiled with a mouthful of pickle.

"Oh am I glad that you're home." Opie squealed as she ran to his arms.

He embraced her tightly, "Well , I'm glad to see you too. I missed you baby." he felt her clammy skin and pulled back. "You've had another dream, haven't you?"

She looked into his eyes and he knew it was true. "My poor baby, I'm sorry, "he said as he cradled her.

He led her to the table and they sat down slowly. The look on her face was pure terror.

"Oh, Bob, "she sobbed, "How am I gonna walk into that house? I can't help feeling that my dreams have been getting worse because of this trip. This fear in my life started because of this house. I know it. Even though I feel I need to face the demons, I just don't know if I can."

Bob softly stroked her hair. "Look, why don't we stay in a hotel while we're there. We used to do that when we'd visit them before."

Opie shook her head, "That would be great but mom will have to have us over for dinner and to visit with the rest of the family. Besides, she really sounded like she needed me there , you know. She's been lonely since dad's been in the hospital."

I think you should tell your mother. She would want to know. You should have told her in the beginning. Perhaps her comfort would have helped. It's so sad to think that you lived with this, all alone for all those years."

"Mother has enough on her mind right now. I don't know how she's gonna do on her own. She's a strong woman but dad was always there for her. She's had a pretty easy life really. There was never a lot of hardships. I think that's another reason I never said anything. Strange things just didn't happen to our family. I always thought that somehow it would start happening to them too, you know. I never figured out why none of them ever felt anything weird in that house. It was so obvious to me the minute I walked in. I couldn't believe they went about their normal lives like nothing was different there."

Bob let out a sigh. "I gotta admit I never felt anything either. It felt like a normal everyday house to me. But I've seen how you look after these nightmares. I figure there must be something to it. Try to look at it this way. If they started there, maybe they will end there. Perhaps you're supposed to go home and face the fear before it can stop."

"I hope so," Opie said as she ran her fingers through her hair. "Hey, I finally heard a word in the dream."

"You're kidding, what was it?"

"Violet."

"Violet?"

"Yea, Violet, I just don't get it. All these years and I get violet!"

"Hmnnii," Bob responded, "You got me stumped. What the hell could that mean?"

"I don't have a clue but we have a few hours before we have to leave and I really need to get all this out of my head." she cooed while rubbing her nose on his. "What do you say we go upstairs and forget all about this for awhile?"

He smiled then kissed her tenderly. She felt warm and safe, her body started to relax. Arm in arm they made it up the stairs, stopping occasionally to kiss, squeeze and fondle.

The love making was tender and orgasmic. It was just what they needed. After nodding off for awhile they woke up with just enough time to shower and make the plane. Before they

knew it they were in the bosom of Opie's family at the terminal. Her brother, Tom and his wife and 3 kids were there. Her mother held onto her for a long time, trying to hold in tears. Her mother's sister, Nancy was there and one of her dad's sisters, June. All his brothers were at the hospital keeping the faith. After finding their luggage and sitting in traffic for quite awhile, Aunt June finally pulled into the hospital parking lot. Tom and his family parked next to them. Opie was a little nervous. She hadn't asked what her father looked like and wondered if she'd be shocked. She was glad her mother suggested that she and Bob go in alone. Once they entered the room her nerves calmed right down. He looked just like dad. Just a little thinner and a little older. He was just waking up and his face lit up when he saw his baby girl. They held each other and shed a few tears. All other problems faded away as they talked on for an hour. He didn't seem weak or sick at all. Bob left so they could talk alone for awhile. Finally the doctor came and said he had to examine him and then he'd need to rest. Opie kissed him and promised to come back later.

On their way to her parent's home to have some dinner and freshen up, the tension started to build in her. Bob held her hand as the van came to a stop in front of the house. If only the others had felt how cold her hands were or noticed how white her knuckles were. They would surely have known something was wrong. She took a deep breath and entered the house. She moved to the left out of the way so others could get past her as she relived that sinking feeling in her heart once again. It was the same as any other time she entered this house. pure terror. All the images from all the dreams flooded her mind. There was no escape. She thought she might collapse. She heard her relatives chatting around her but she didn't know what they were saying. Suddenly her brother stepped in front of her and gave a big bear hug. It was just what she needed. Her legs felt a little. Her mind floated back to reality just enough to appear normal.

"It sure feels good to be home, doesn't it, sis?" he boomed. "It's almost like old times."

Opie smiled nervously, "It sure is."

Bob flashed a worried grin and gave her a wink before uncle Roy pulled him off to the other room to chat about fishing and his truck. Tom helped them take their things up to her old room. She wasn't quite sure if she could even go through the door but the thought that she'd made it this far gave her strength. They put all the suitcases down and Tom left so Ophelia could freshen up. She sat alone on the bed where she'd spent so many sleepless nights. She cried a little for father and for her deteriorating mental condition or whatever the hell was wrong with. She let the demons fill her for a few minutes and then took some deep breaths and rejoined the family.

She picked at her dinner and yes even with all of her own problems, Opie's mother noticed. You never quit being a mother. It was only about an hour later that they got the call. Her father had passed on and there was nothing anyone could do. She was grateful she had seen him before he went but she was rather surprised he went so quickly. He had looked pretty good and she'd hoped the doctors had been wrong and he was on the mend. But it was all over now.

The family cried well into the night. The next sound was silence. Everyone lost in their own thoughts of a kind and loving man. Slowly some left for their hotel rooms, then others made their way to the guest rooms upstairs. Tom and Opie tucked mom in even though they knew she'd never sleep. Finally it was just Opie and Bob. She had her head on Bob's shoulder for a long time. She didn't want to move.

Finally Bob interrupted the silence. "Are we going to stay on the sofa all night? Do you think you can face the room, sweetheart?"

She rubbed his chest and lifted her head. "It's nice right here isn't it? I don't see any reason to go anywhere else, do you?"

Bob smiled a sort of pity smile, "Whatever you want honey. I'll stay with ya wherever you want to sleep."

Opie realized how lucky she was to have a man like this. She also knew it was time to grow up and face the fears. She took Bob's hand and led him to her old bedroom. The bedroom where all her negative emotions lie. The place that changed her life.

"As long as you're beside me I'll be fine." she said.

They curled up and held on tight until they drifted off to sleep. It was a good three hours before the dream started, the final one of it's kind. This time it was different though. Everything was in such focus and every question was answered. She was taken on a journey. She saw the same sad girl in the white tattered dress but she was happy and fresh and clean. She was playing in the yard, younger than in the other dreams. But then darkness filled her. The sadness was everywhere.

"No Grandpa no," the girl was saying. There were only brief flashes but Opie knew it was evil. She knew the girl could feel her grandfather all over her, inside of her. It was a feeling no granddaughter should feel. It went on, Opie tossed and turned but didn't wake up. The girl became older and the abuse continued. She could feel the girl losing her sanity, losing herself. The girl felt powerless and so did the dreamer. Now the girl seemed about 16 and held a terrible secret. She was going to have her grandfather's child. She could tell no one, the shame was too much to bear. She hardly ate so she would gain no weight. She fooled everyone but grandpa. He knew, of course. He'd felt the baby kick as he had his way one night. He threatened the lives of her parents and siblings as he always did to get his way. He demanded she tell him and nobody else when she felt the baby's arrival was imminent.

The nightmare continued, sweat pouring from Opie's body, a painful look on her face. So much was shadowed, so much unsaid, but somehow she knew. It was as if she were seeing it all in front of her. The next thing she knew she was driving down that road. The old road led to the girl in the tattered dress, there was blood on the dress. Her expression was blank. She was a non person. She had no emotion left save for one. The car stopped this time and the girl led her over a hill. There it was, the house Opie had hated most of her life, the house on Koenig drive. She resisted, she tried to turn back but all was gone behind her. It was just vast empty space. She reached out as she did in her sleep but felt nothing. Turning back she saw the girl with pleading eyes. The girl in white begged her to follow though she never heard a word. The house was closer now. There was only one more house on the street and it was strangely quiet. The usual noises were not there. The next view was inside the house. She felt herself being transported to the upstairs somehow. The surroundings were so different, like from another time. The girl was sobbing now. Clearly she cried, "I'm sorry Violet, I'm sorry." Opie could see her bedroom door. She wanted to open the door but couldn't. Her arms wouldn't move. She could no longer see the girl but felt her presence. The feeling to get in her room became more urgent. She must go in and see what the girl had been trying to tell her all these years. The door flung open and Opie felt herself run to the right of the room and fling herself against the wall. She dropped to the floor and let out a scream. Bob awoke to see his wife in a heap on the floor. He ran to her but she jumped up and hit the wall with her fists. She was awake now but saw the girl in front of her.

"Please, you have to bury her properly. He killed my baby, my perfect little girl I'm sorry Violet." The vision shrieked.

The knowledge was there. She didn't know how but she saw it all and she wasn't dreaming. The grandfather was strangling the baby. He crushed it's delicate throat with no remorse. He had conveniently begun to wallpaper his granddaughter's room so that it would coincide with this moment. He wrapped the body in an old dress of the girls and boarded it up deep into the thick wall and papered over it. The girl watched with those sad eyes, never again to speak in her lifetime but at least finally left alone by her tormenter after that day.

Bob finally shook her, "Hon are you ok? Is it the dream."

Opie nodded as her mother ran into the room. "Are you okay, honey? What's wrong?"

"Are there still tools in the hall closet, mother?" she replied.

"Well, yea," her mother said hesitantly.

Opie ran to the hall and pulled out a big tool box. She quickly sifted through it until she found a little hatchet.

"Bob, what is going on?" asked her mother.

He put his arms round her reassuringly, "I'm not sure but I think we better just let her go. She seems to know what she's doing."

Opie ran past them with the hatchet upright. Her mother cowered against Bob with huge disbelieving eyes. She hit the wall as hard as she could. Again and again she banged against the wall until Bob finally grabbed her arm on a backward swing.

"What are you doing? This is madness honey, you have to stop."

By then the whole house was awake. The general consensus was that Opie had flipped her lid. She was taking her father's death harder than anyone. Tom's wife shuffled the kids back off to bed once they saw what was going on. She was creating some tale as to why this was perfectly normal behavior and nothing to worry about.

Opie held Bob's face and stared into his eyes. "Bob, I'm not losing it," she said, breathing heavily. "For the first time in

many years everything is clear. My questions were answered tonight. Do you understand? Just help me right now and I know we will both understand. For the first time I know I'm NOT crazy. "

The rest of the family looked amongst themselves and said nothing. Bob smiled, hugged her then started hitting the wall himself. After a minute or so he struck something. It sounded different, hollow. He hit a few more times to see a different layer crumbling down.

"What the hell is that?" Tom asked from behind him.

Everyone stepped in to see a paisley fabric sticking out of the wood.

"Be careful," whispered Opie as she began to cry. She recognized the pattern, the color. It looked just like the dress in the vision. "It's a baby."

The room gasped. Tom pushed Bob aside and used his hands to pull out the rest of the wood. When there was finally a big enough space he pulled out the old dress. He carefully lay it on the bed. They all searched each others faces looking for a reassuring glance. But every face looked the same, shock. Opie slowly walked to the bed and unwrapped the bundle. There it was, a small pile of bones with a skull no bigger than the palm of your hand.

It took quite a bit of convincing but Bob and Opie did finally get the family to believe their tale. They told the sheriff that they found the bones by accident. Since it wasn't a very big town they buried Violet in the only cemetery in town. In research they found a picture of a young woman who lived there about the time they believed the body was put there and Opie recognized her right away. Her name was Eleanor Carr. Bob and Opie gave Violet a tombstone with a first and last name and a chill went through Opie the first time she saw it at the cemetery. She could have sworn she heard a thank you in the air as well. Ophelia was thankful as well for now she slept like a baby.

*People can't seem to lose their fear of religion. Mow down Kennedys, shoot the kind
and kill the kings. Nobody aims at the pope.*

titles..... formulasweeds.....witches

Chaos In The Apple Orchard

The penetration blessed my soul
the lord my father struck a blow
leaders castrated through time
selling Satan in nursery rhymes

A new era overstated
past generations underrated
foreign press dead survivors
fluid moments from the bible

Yards of doubt, circles of shame
shoulder the passion, take the blame
cordial announcements from yesterday
learn how to walk, know how to play.

Escapades in the clouds

Finalize plans for the future along the bogus journey

an open heart

terminal and bright

escapades in the clouds, fuzzy improper

a swarm of love in the cool island breeze

o c c u l t p r o d i g y

Dear mom,

I hope this finds you well. You have been through more than a person needs to in your short life. When you find your husband in the arms of another, time is your only real friend. Each passing day adds age but at least the pain finally fades. When the sweetheart from the past probably should have stayed there, the damage is already done. The lies, the torture of your soul, your state of mind all casualties. In your own World War Three the fists arrived. Phony friends and shoddy craftsmanship were the least of your worries but the ones still remembered. Of course this is all after the caretaker from hell. The woman who made you pay for being you, the man who simply turned away. Then all the wonderful starts and tearful endings along the way to fill in the holes. There isn't anyone who has tried harder or given more. A breath of fresh air entered your life only to find a sudden departure. No words can help when your life partner leaves this earth without warning. Some people start the day with champagne and some people just wake up alone. So many times you've started over. So many times you've cried. So many times you've wondered where you'll get the strength.

Let me tell you how I feel. Somehow, with all this to contend with, you managed a miracle. You were completely unselfish and without a doubt the greatest mother there ever will be. Your ears are open when I need to talk. You fill my pockets when they are empty. You smile when I am right and correct me when I'm wrong. You support me in any endeavor. We laugh and keep each others secrets. I know your life has not been easy. I know you've been kind to everyone you've met, even when they don't deserve it. I hope you take some comfort in the fact that you were a great teacher. Over the years you have taught me how to be a good mother as well.

Love,
Rib

Old friends, holidays
family hatred all around
tables full, hearts empty
the wonder of it all.

Animation, walking sticks
street numbers from afar
join the bright parade
think of things to say.

Big mouths, shame gained
take it all away
twelve days then back to normal
just spread my legs and pay

Figure drawings, poison pens
fun for all the men
patient circumstances
think of us now and then.

INJUSTICE

- Marijuana can lead you to ask brilliant questions but you forget what they are.
- Really stupid people rarely get abortions.
- Any soaps on CBS, I just don't get them.
- Child molesters aren't automatically sent to death row. WHY?
- The way people sometime fine tune and tinker with art until it's no longer beautiful.
- The way a once cool, funny cartoon character is turned into a baby version of itself.
- Garth Brooks
- Alan Alda always appeared to be one who stood on the side of the good and the just but he just can't stay out of those Woody Allen movies.
- The terrorists who feel they have to bomb something don't target NAMBLA meetings where it could do some good.

I am mortal man, take me as I am
boasts, faults, living life grand.
educated without mirrors
be it special, be it bland.
courageous careers, empty fears,
always hopeful but never sincere
age looks to youth
youth wonders why we're here.
poverty increases daily
healthy ,beautiful, plain or homely
no tricks left to try,
intellect turns sad and lonely.

And the
mortal takes
a wife.

Hello, my name is Janet. I've decided to tell my story. Yes, I have a story to tell, I suppose everyone does. Just when you think you've heard it all, something crawls out of the woodwork. That's how my story started, with something that crawled out of the woodwork. It seemed like only yesterday that I was watching that morning news show. I was just eating my peaches and strawberries, thinking about the workout that lay ahead of me. Health is so important these days. A face appeared before me on the screen. It was the face of the enemy. His name was at the bottom of the screen, Henry Ramsey. I remembered reading his name in our local papers. There he was, a local boy from our own West Port right there on national television. This small town boy wasn't making good however. He was spouting a mouthful of racist garbage. "Great," I was thinking "we make the news and it's for something like this." This idiot was carrying on about being denied a head position at a hospital because he is a white supremacist. The more he talked the madder I got. The anger led to outrage which put me on the journey I am now on.

When I was a little girl my father used to tell me that by the time I grew up this sort of thing would be a bad memory. My father was a kind and gentle man. He was quite large physically but a teddy bear underneath it all. His skin was black, my mothers white. She was a delicate flower. Everyone was in awe of her beauty. She was also very smart, a college professor. I never saw two people more in love. They were together to the end. A sleepy semi driver ran them off the road. They were killed instantly. It took me a long time to get on with my life. I moved to West Port to start over. I was born here and lived my first few years in this charming town. Mom and dad had moved here from Detroit when their parents disapproved of their union. They always told me how they had been accepted here. But nothing lasts forever and they had to move on. My grandfather became ill and dad had to take over his business. They reconciled and dad spent the rest of his life making candy. I had no head for business so I sold the place. I wanted to keep it in the family but all I am good at is writing. I've published three books to little acclaim but it pays the bills. I took the money from the factory and bought a little house on a hill here in West Port about six months ago. I don't know too many people but the ones I've met are truly, genuinely nice. Of course there aren't many people of color but I've never heard any racial slurs or put downs until now. I guess they wouldn't have directed them at me since they didn't know I'm black. Yes I am so light skinned that people rarely know I'm black. Sometimes it bothers me, sometimes I get a giggle out of it. Once on vacation, I entered a blues club filled with dark skinned customers all eyes were upon me and I just wanted to say "What?" Another time when I was in a hair salon, an old white woman cutting my hair, noted that she'd never seen hair quite like this on a white woman. I just smiled. A person doesn't just go around meeting people with the opening line "Hello, I'm Janet and I'm black." I just let them think what they want to think. I've made one friend since I've been here, Pam. She knew right off my true color, so to speak. She's a great girl who fills in at the diner from time to time for her friend that owns it. Pam also lives off some inheritance she received from an Aunt. She pretty much keeps to herself as I do. I guess that's why we hit it off. As I told her of my dilemma about the locals assuming I was white she laughed heartily. Being a bit of a prankster she convinced me I should keep it that way. It was kind of funny to be in on something so obvious to us. My neighbors really were clueless. And that brings me to my story. I'm sure by now you wonder what all this has to do with the racist pig I saw that morning on television.

Well, I continued finning through my workout that morning. As I went for my morning walk my head began to clear. I wondered what I could do to make a difference. I knew this was one man's opinion. Others in this town have grumbled about his views. This is truly not a racist town and he's not originally from here. He's a newcomer, only been here about three years. I heard the ladies in the store gossiping about him. Nobody even knew who he was until his name started hitting the papers. He's 37 years old, single and apparently graduated top of his class. He filled a position at the hospital in Warren when an old doctor retired. Warren is only about 5 miles away. It's our areas "big city." Henry Ramsey lives in one of the nicest houses in West Port. He goes to church here but otherwise he's rarely seen. It was never given much thought because he's a doctor and they work all the time. The chief of staff recently suffered a heart attack and Henry was expected to get the job. Some rumors started floating around the hospital that he belonged to some questionable organizations. There had also been some complaints from African American patients. When confronted about this, Ramsey freely admitted he was a white supremacist. They denied him the job and that's when the trouble started. Warren community General states that they can't have a man filled with hate running their hospital. Ramsey claims he is fighting for his religious freedom. He goes to the local Nazarene church which by coincidence, no blacks attend, not even me. I've never been terribly religious just spiritual inside myself. The paper said that he believes in the teachings of the church but then he went on to take it all a step further. He twisted many things

the bible said and told of swastikas all over his house. The church of course has distanced itself from him. He still attends but speaks to no one.

So as I was taking a walk an idea started forming in my head. Being a somewhat incognito black, I felt it could make a great story if I were to infiltrate this man's life. I write for a living, occasionally sell a story to a magazine or newspaper. It would be very interesting to make nice with this guy, if I could stomach it and record his actions toward me, not knowing I'm black. My first problem would be could I even pull it off? Is he so prejudiced that he'd smell a "nigger" coming a mile away? Is he so paranoid that he has people checked out before he trusts them? I mean if he truly means what he spouts, he wouldn't want to take a chance on there being a drop of black blood in his friends. Was I crazy? Would it bring shame to me and the things I stood for to want to get close to someone like this? Part of me thought it was a ridiculous idea but the other half looked at it like a part in a movie. If I could leave my body and look at it from the outside I thought I could handle it. My next problem was how to go about it. I could start going to church and play dumb like I didn't even know who he was. I could bump into him at the hospital and pretend to be sympathetic to his cause. I could simply approach him as a writer who wants to do a piece on him. Would this idea ever go beyond the thinking stage? Perhaps I was being a little crazy but I truly thought it would make a great story.

Pam stopped over and I invited her to stay for lunch. I mentioned my idea and she agreed it was crazy but a story she'd want to read. She believed I could do it and the best way would be to befriend him. I was thinking along the same lines. He'd never really trust me if he knew this was all going down on paper. My thinking was to let him see me a few times without ever speaking just to see if he noticed my true color. Everything else depended on it. My plan would go no farther if he suspected the truth. I had to be careful of looking too suspicious to others as well. This wasn't a large town, people talk.

Two days later I decided to make my presence known to Mr. Henry Ramsey. All I had to go on was the image from the television and a photograph that was in the paper that very morning. I pulled up to the post office about 10:00 because I'd overheard Mrs. Paulson that runs the bakery mention that he always gets his mail between 10 and 11. I went across the street to the bank and cashed a check to waste time as I watched the post office. Still no sign, so I slowly made my way to the flower shop and bought a small bouquet to brighten the house. I chatted awhile with Midge who asked if I'd seen the paper that day. She hoped that evil man never came into the flower shop, why she just doesn't know what she'd do. It made me realize that people probably wouldn't understand why I would want to get to know this pig. But I didn't really owe these people an explanation. I only knew most of them from casual conversation and hellos on the street. It might even make it more convincing to Henry if they cooled towards me as well. It could all be worked out later. Once the story came out, they'd understand and if they didn't, fuck 'em. Midge was still trying to blab on as I left the store. My hand on the doorknob, I saw him, it had to be, he had a rather long distinctive nose. I waved a quick good-bye and strolled across to the post office. He was just opening his box as I entered. Wanda, sorting mail, stared daggers at him. He appeared not to notice and casually browsed through his mail. My box was surprisingly close to his. I opened my box and pulled out my two letters, probably rejection letters and hoped he would look my way. He certainly got a lot of mail, no doubt from other skinhead Nazi types. He shut his box and walked to the door while looking right at me. I closed mine too and smiled the sweetest feminine smile I could fake. He returned a smile and headed on his way. My heart was racing and I was proud that I didn't reach out and strangle him. He had smiled, that was a good sign. He'd never smile at black Janet so I took it as an encouraging sign.

Over the next two weeks I "accidentally" bumped into him at the grocery store, sat at the next table at the library and even sat in the next pew at church. I wasn't sure if the congregation was eyeing me because I was sitting too near him or because they'd never seen me at church. I had heard from Wanda one day that he'd been known to hang out at that place outside of town. It was sort of half way between Warren and West Port. I'd heard about this place from Pam, she had frequented it a few times with a married man she'd kept company with. It was an out of the way little bar owned by an x-biker or so the rumor goes. Nobody held any grudges there and it catered to an all white clientele. The word is that back in the 60's, a bus of flower children stopped to use the bathroom and there trip continued minus the black man they came with. They say his body is buried somewhere behind the bar. I don't know if that's true but a lot of backwoods types live near there that act a little strange. People from the cities only go there if they really don't want to be seen.

So there I was sitting outside The Blue Jay wondering if I had the guts to go in when his car pulled up. He went right in with a bit of a swagger. It looked as if he'd been drinking already. I waited about ten more

minutes, took a deep breath and got out of the car. A strange feeling came over me, I sort of left my body. I realized that was a good thing. This is what I wanted to do if I was going to pull this off. There was no turning back as I entered the bar. There was a little foyer to walk through before I actually entered but I heard hoots and laughter as soon as I was in. I walked in as cool as Little Richard at church. There were bikers playing pool, a couple necking at the bar and a waitress walking with a tray of empties. I sat at the bar and ordered a draft. A couple of guys sitting at the bar were the only ones that looked as I entered. I think they were looking at my chest, not at my skin color. Ramsey was nowhere to be seen. I was sure that had been him, same car, same walk, it had to be. A few sips later he emerged from the bathroom. He sat with the two curious gentlemen at the bar and they seemed to continue their discussion. I looked around and acted as if I hadn't a care in the world while I listened intently to the men. They were obviously friends that agreed with his point of view. They were laughing about the pinheads at the hospital. They were discussing welfare and the housing projects in Warren. I held my tongue and ordered a couple more beers. I left but not before I noticed Ramsey give me the once over. I was sure that by now I had left an impression on him. I still hadn't really conversed with the man but I felt that he was at ease around me, as strange as that sounds.

I laid back for about a week because I felt that I had made my presence known. I didn't want to push it. I went to pick up a pizza at Mario's and lo and behold he was there doing the same thing. He smiled as I walked in. I waited at the counter to be helped. Finally he let me know that they were very backed up and his pizza wasn't ready yet. He hoped I didn't have to wait as long as he. We talked a few more minutes while waiting and he asked me my name.

I couldn't believe how charming and polite he was, it almost made me sick. I got my order first and bid him adieu. I could see him watching my ass in the glass. I didn't plan on him liking me that way, I just wanted to be his "friend", but at least he noticed.

It took a few more run ins but he finally suggested we have lunch. I accepted graciously and it went smoothly. He didn't go on too much about his propaganda and I pretended not to mind when he did. I hinted around that I liked a man who stuck to his convictions. I agreed that the world did need a lot of changes. His changes could ruin us all but I never let him know it. Mostly we talked about our child hoods, having one foot in the white world it was easy to fake. We talked about our professions. He truly was dedicated to his work but only for the white population. I told him I lived off my parent's inheritance. Only a few locals knew what I did and I hoped he would never get too curious. I couldn't believe I'd done it. Pam came over that night and we laughed so hard when I told her. I had enough for a good story already and Pam thought it would blow that bastard right out of the water when he read it. We were sure he had never broke bread with a black person before. It was kind of exciting in a sick way to know how he'd feel if he only knew. There was no way I could publish this using real names. Could I publish it at all? Would he figure it out anyway? He'd probably have me killed for making a fool out of him. Maybe I should just put this down to an experiment that no one has to know about. Pam still thought I should write the story and go from there. She was right, it was too good to pass up.

The more I wrote, the more I liked it. It practically wrote itself. I also knew I didn't really have an ending I'd have to see him again. I was apprehensive yet drawn to him. Something in my mind was gnawing at me. I think it was that I couldn't accept the fact that such an educated, cultured and yes handsome man could be so vile. I didn't just want a cute story now I wanted to go deeper. I had to know what can make a seemingly nice enough fellow think the way he does. A few days later I was in the market when suddenly a flower appeared before me. I followed the arm holding it and there was Henry. He told me the tired line of a beautiful flower for a beautiful woman and I almost lost it right there. I almost told him that of course, black WAS beautiful just to see the look on his face but I couldn't do it. This was too rich. He really had swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker. We talked and of course he asked me out again. We had dinner three times in the next week and a half. There were times I wondered if he knew and was setting me up for the fall. But I didn't really think so. He was too calm around me, smiling too much. You can't hide that kind of hate or can you? After all I was, I was not being myself at all. I was acting but the strange thing was that there were times when I don't think I was. When we weren't talking about other races trying to take over the world or niggers killing each other in the street we got along wonderfully. We agreed on so many things. They were superficial things like vacation spots and food etc. but we agreed none the less. I began to worry about the way I felt about this whole experiment. Was it wrong for me to deceive him? Was it wrong for me not to put him and his ideas out of his misery? Was it wrong for me to stand there waiting, wanting him to kiss me that night at the door? My father would have been stunned. My mother would have been ashamed. There he was, this thing standing before me, gallantly walking

me to the door as had become his habit. This time was different, there was something in his eyes. There was something in the way I felt. I was attracted to him, this monster. What was inside of me, that I could feel this way? Can physical lust detach itself that much from the brain? Can your lips tell you one thing, your head another? Talk shows are filled with women falling in love with bad boys, but this was a bit over the top. It happened, though, he kissed me tenderly. I waited for the vomit to rise in my throat but it never came. He kissed me again, harder this time and I reached for him, I held on tight.

By then it was only a matter of days before we made love. It was extraordinary, the most mind blowing sex I ever experienced. He didn't suspect a thing I couldn't believe it. I thought in my natural state, there would be something that would give me away but he never faltered. When I finally told Pam she didn't even believe me at first. She stared wide eyed for a full two minutes. She told me I'd gone insane and had to end this immediately, this wasn't funny anymore. The neighbors started ignoring me once old man Tucker saw him leave one morning. The whole neighborhood found out and they didn't realize the half of it. When he told me he loved me one day in bed something clicked in my head. This had gotten way out of control. I started to cool things off right away. I didn't answer the phone, I was on my way out when he came by. Luck was with me because his suit finally went to trial. He became consumed with it and I told him he needed to focus on his career. Now that I'd stepped back I couldn't believe what I'd done.

I kept up with the trial by reading the newspapers. He even asked me to go once but I declined. He tried to keep in contact but I made it as difficult as I could. I found it hard to stay away from him so I started a stupid argument one day when he stopped by then told him we were through. It was never proven that Henry mistreated any patients but he didn't get his position. The case was settled out of court and Henry would probably never have had to work again. He did though, he opened a small office and racists from all around came, knowing they wouldn't have to see people of color once they got there. He left a few messages on my machine but I didn't reply. I sold my beautiful house a few months later and moved to the other side of the country.

I sit here now writing all this down. I wrote a great article on most of my experience and sold it to a major magazine. I used no names of course and never heard any comments from Henry himself. A few of his kind laughed it off as fiction because of course no supremacist could be so stupid as to have been fooled this way. Hearing this on the news, I shook my head as I rocked my sweet baby to sleep. It seemed a shame to me that Joey would never know his father. It would be worse if he knew the truth, though. How could one go through life knowing your own father hated you because of everything you were from the day you were born? Joey's skin was as dark as my Fathers. It was ironic that it turned out that way. It's a shame that a father and son would be ashamed of each other. I plan to tell him his father was killed before he was born. I can honestly tell him how much I loved his father. I can tell him how much I miss him. I just can't tell him his name.

Tattoo of choice equal and better

blotter, sugar cube

lungs of man

binding the innocent ,skip a stone

old fashioned cattle, Q through T

Posters of Bruce Lee, then there were three
memories from the backyard, so carefree
I recall the big shoes, the hair, the guitars
How lucky I was, here was Lynn, there was Lee

calm your fears, have no worries ,they wait for you
I'm sure sometimes the pain can make you blue
and even though you can't always remember with us
we smile inside and realize your heart will stay true

The last born, the baby is leaving far too soon,
but there's no time for pity and gloom
Grandma would have been the first to say
our family carries on, another flower blooms.

It came upon a midnight queer. He just wanted some relief from that nagging wife ,those horrible spoiled children. So Greg left the bar after work and decided he just couldn't face going home just yet. Knowing where the male prostitutes hung out he headed that way.

It wasn't the first time, of course. He knew, in his heart he was gay but it was never worth telling his parents or his friends. He would rather keep it a private matter. So he married, had the two required children and got his sexual kicks on the side .He was taught from a young age that queers were not real members of society. The dykes, fags, hippies and retards were looked down upon. They were to be laughed at, not to be taken seriously. He could live with that. Society has somehow made sure that one can still enjoy a deviant lifestyle without getting caught. If you were lucky and knew where to go, people didn't ask for names. Just have the ready cash and your needs can be met.

So it happened that Greg ended up in this part of town as he often did when the pressure built. He knew that a quick blow job would make everything alright. He found Jodie, a familiar face with a different name. Variety was important in this business, he assumed the names were often changed to protect the not so innocent. This was a fabulous performer, he recalled and was sure he could do the trick, so to speak. Greg smiled and gave him a nod. They went around the corner and down an alley. A fifty was put in Jodies strong hand and his eyes lit up. Greg always made sure to give them more than the going rate to insure a great finale. Jodie went to work and did not disappoint. He watched smiling for a while then threw back his head as the moment approached. Better than he's anticipated, Greg came all over his best friend of the moment.

Returning home, he checked the front of his pants for stains. He combed his hair and washed his hands with a moist towelette. He pulled in the driveway to notice the lights were on. His only thought was that somebody was home, of course, somebody is always there. He painted on a weary smile as he opened the front door. There was Glenda, an obese, sad version of her former self. They both grunted hellos, then she went back to the detective show she was watching another potato chip entered her mouth. Greg got a beer and sat with her for a few minutes. The silence was unbearable. No sign of the kids, out somewhere, no doubt. After sucking down the beer he claimed he was tired and headed for bed. As he lay there he noticed the clock said 1:21. He drifted off thinking about the next midnight queer.

Entice me, silently, sweet drink of life,
sobriety will keep us in the end,
all we crave all our relief
won't help us at all,
I need it now while I'm weak

toke, toke inhale the smoke,
feel the smile, feel it deep,
to the nose ,up she goes
searching for the final blow
it's never enough ,still more I seek.

Feed my hunger, sugar, meat,
too much comfort too much ugly,
roll me, roll me pull my chain,
losing money everyday
it feels good now but the future's bleak

the bedpost adds another notch,
hurry, hurry, enter me
I'll pay the price so willingly,
and work harder tomorrow
while the earth inherits the meek.

adrift ,adrift, I sail in bliss... distance
harmony, a kiss, safety in numbers,
I wait in the grass... on the fence
smile, touch, fan the romance.

off the ground, up so high,
encouragement, I live the dream... patience
no questions fulfillment
calm and warm... compliance.

Drop Your Green

I walk to the shadow and piss on the leg next to mine,
I whisper to you the dog is in surprise
to be in love with me is so lucky for you,
that thing on your head is not of this time

but I think that....
your stench is on my hands once again
I'm throwing away tears
I'm sick in my bed

He ripped off my clothes and held me, passing out,
colors, trails, bees swimming
a black girl enters ,holding vigil
hold my hand, frame a sow

Under The Paint

Funny little man, long hair evil mind
first the shadow ,now a legend
with the family he had a perfect plan
I scraped to find him revealed under the paint

The steps in the attic
the basement hanging
see me in the window?
why did we look under the paint?
Who hid it there, under the paint?

Dripping from the hand
dripping from the knife
God, it must've been a terrible fight
we'll never know more than what's on the door
I saw it all under the paint

Fear is coming, can't tell the rest, nowhere to go
hide away, don't face the others
don't go beyond the door
see the secret under the paint
so well hidden under the paint.

Total paradise

lost in flesh

there's nothing like it when strangers mesh.

Deprived of sleep but ready for action
lost like sheep though not as happy
wheels are turning. nothings inside
always half empty, never half full
drive all night no stop signs.

A long farewell on the day of wine and roses
 goodbye, I silently spoke
 goodbye, they all drove away
on her last day I knew she'd be proud
 all of us were there
 I didn't follow the others
always on the outside looking out
 so many changes in store
 the anchor was gone
goodbye, I said aloud

crushed elephants, ordinary house cat
scream for the idol in the slaughter house
 lick me with a foreign tongue,
 beg for a glimpse of the sun.
 I show no mercy

illegal furs ,bloody tracks
 dream of masturbation
 bring on all the fun
you and me, one on one
 I feel your tears

c

h

i

r

p

The End
Words from Rib, Volume 2