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AZALEA

a magazine by & for third world lesbians

SHORT STORIES

special double issue 

\$3.00
(more if you can, less if you can't)

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This Issue

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AZALEA: a magazine by and for 3rd world lesbians, is printed and distributed by the Azalea Collective—a working collective of five 3rd world lesbians.

We try to remain non-elitist, non-traditional, rotating the editor's spot with each issue.

We print what YOU send—work that is important to us as 3rd world lesbians.

The opinions expressed herein, are not necessarily those of the Azalea Collective, but of individual authors/artists.

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—If you cannot afford the price of *Azalea*, please send as much as you can, and we will send you a copy.

—*Azalea* will be sent free to women in prison.

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THE ASTRAEA FOUNDATION, INC.

This special short story issue began to grow out of a particular need I have as a dark lesbian woman who writes fiction, to see and read work by other dark women working as I do. Until now, in circles I was a part of, I hadn't found very many dark lesbians who are fiction writers, writing woman-identified material.

So, not subscribing to the ever-present myths of "invisibility", "incompetence" or "born poets with natural rhythm", we decided to do a flyer calling for fiction by dark lesbians—and waited to see what would happen.

What did happen was our mailboxes flooded with work from sisters in nearly every part of the country. We found we had to limit page space in the issue because women sent such a volume of interesting, innovative, beautiful work.

Fiction writing is a solitary craft, I think, partially defined by the necessity of "prolonged creative solitude". But, solitude need not mean "closeted". There are sisters I have spoken to since beginning work on this issue, back in April, who have kept their stories hidden away in desk drawers, figuring no one wanted to read them.

I hope the publication of this first collection of short fiction by dark lesbians will spark the flame to the continuing work and support of this very important, little seen (so far) part of lesbian literature: Woman-identified fiction, written by dark lesbians.

We are excited by this issue and hope all of you will be, too. As usual, we need, appreciate, and solicit your feedback.

Join us in celebration.

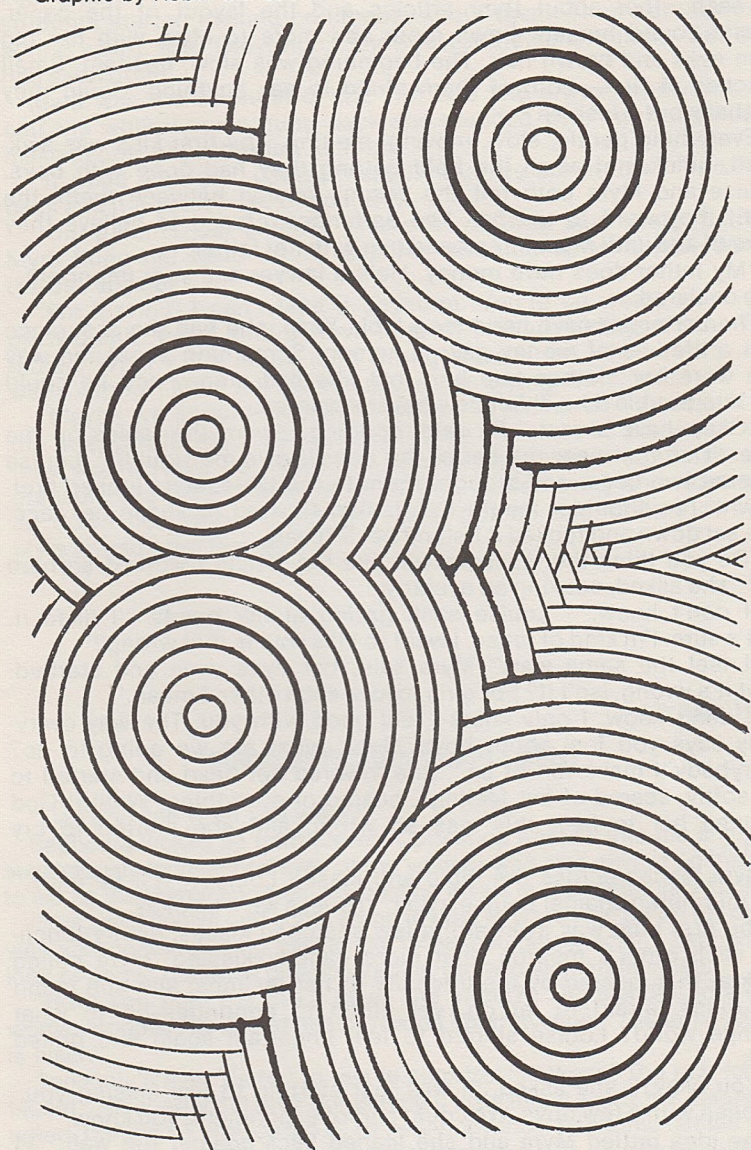
In Sisterhood & Struggle,

Linda

for AZALEA

September 1980 NYC

Graphic by Robin Christian • 1978



FIRST AFFAIR

How was it that they first linked hands? Louise didn't know; she and Myra had been friends for a long time. It happened that they moved into their love affair by common consent. They worked on their high school newspaper and began to spend more time talking to each other about their articles and the layout of the paper. Louise found herself drawn more and more to Myra with her big blue eyes and brown hair. The beginning was slow, hesitant. Small touches at first—both of them afraid to say anything. Could they be that word—lesbian?

Everything gentle, slow, moving, melting. The first kiss was awkward, quick, not at all the bold petting they had done with boys. Louise and Myra both felt the sexual tension between them, the night they went to the bar. The bartender refused to believe they were of age until Myra threatened him with her father.

"My father does have money. He's a lawyer and very important." She declared.

The bartender gave her a long look. Yeah, she had the assurance that a lifetime of money gave a person. Something about the way she wore her clothes told him that she had money and he could get into trouble if he didn't do what she wanted.

"Okay, have a seat," he said, nodding toward the tables on the side. "Don't sit near the bar or the cops'll give me trouble." Louise ordered two beers and brought them to the table. Myra looked pretty with her shoulder length hair falling forward to shade her face. She sat down and tucked it behind her left ear.

"Do you think the teachers will like the article I worked so hard on?" she asked, cocking an eyebrow.

"I don't know," Louise said, gazing at her hands. "I liked it, that's sure. I'm kind of tense. I want to kiss you. Is that wrong?"

"I feel the same way," Myra said, her eyes wide and startled. "But it's wrong, isn't it? For girls to love each other, I mean."

"I don't know; I only know I feel good with you. The way everybody says you feel about boys. Geez, what are we going to do? Everybody'll make fun of us." She lowered her head and started to cry softly, scared of her feelings, scared of everything. What if God damned her to hell, this was so wrong and she started to cry harder.

Myra leaned across the table and kissed Louise. "It'll be okay," she murmured against Louise's hair. "I guess we'll be okay."

The first time was awkward: a few snatched kisses, gently touching each other's mouths then more eagerly kissing. Myra pulled back at that, scared by the intensity of her feelings; she still clung to Louise, afraid to let go, yet afraid to continue—on to what strange world? Louise started to feel uncertain again and pulled back.

"You okay?" she asked. "I was just starting to like kissing you. I've been with a few guys. We could sort of experiment, you know."

The idea rattled Myra and she leaned back against the wall. "I-I dunno I'm scared. I—what if Mom and dad knew. I mean—being queer. It's real hard to be different from everyone else."

Louise began to feel older and more devilish. "Come on," she coaxed softly, "Let's try." She looked so enticing sitting there that Myra leaned over and kissed her on the mouth.

They undressed, fumbling with bras and panties. Myra began to kiss Louise more eagerly than before. They fell into bed together. Nothing much happened, except they fumbled around a lot but it was nice being together.

They began to see each other more often, after that; gradually becoming more bold in their explorations of each other's bodies. Fear was a constant companion though; they knew when the other students started making comments about them. Their parents were acting weird, too. They didn't know anyone else like them, but they had each other.

Myra was the stronger of the two and she always answered the catcalls while Louise hung back and pleaded with her not to do it, make people pay attention to them.

"It's bad enough," Louise hissed, "that we are noticed. You fight back and it'll get worse. Our parents..."

"Our parents, *our* parents. That's all you ever say. I hate it, I do!" Myra flung her head up. "I feel like breaking up with you. What's the use anyway?"

"I'm leaving; I can't take it anymore. You're so weak, so-so just plain dumb. What kind of love is this? Hiding, hiding, all the time hiding. What we're doing isn't wrong, even if the whole world says we're wrong." Myra felt awful; Louise was crying even harder.

"Maybe we should stop then. Not be lovers at all." Louise found the strength to say. "Love shouldn't be like this, so painful. If only they would leave us alone. I'm weaker than you. I can't take this pressure anymore. Maybe later..." She looked away and tears spilled down her face. "Good-bye." She got up and walked away as Myra stared after her. ●

MYRNA HILL

SUMMER FICTION SUPPLEMENT

"Can't decide what you want?"

Saphonia looked up from Steve's Coffeshop window into the amused, suspiciously long-lashed eyes of the woman who was always so friendly to her as they came and went concocting meals in the community kitchen.

"Yes, well, you've just come along in time to watch me go off my diet. I was just contemplating having the Cheeseburger Special." Saphonia's look of comic defiance disappeared as the two women laughed.

"Have you tried the place down the street?" The slender, jock-clad woman nodded her Jeried head towards Third Avenue. "The atmosphere is nicer."

Saphonia's eyes darted to Eva in surprize. "Parker's? Too rich for my blood!" Nicer atmosphere? Something a little funny about her, Saphonia noted. Damned if she looked it. To her annoyance, Saphonia felt her face forming itself into that sycophantic femme smile, a combination of Scarlett O'Hara and Camille. Abruptly interrupting her hand in the act of smoothing black pleats over her exuberantly Rubenesque hips, she glanced at the older woman and asked, casually she hoped, "Were you thinking of going in?"

"I'm not really hungry, but I would if I had some company." Eva studied the menu in the window with dedicated concentration.

Ever slow on the uptake, Saphonia continued to calculate the difference between the price of the Cheeseburger Special versus getting the cheeseburger plus the salad plus the french fries. They didn't like to substitute onion rings, but maybe if—

"Would you like some company?"

Saphonia jumped, her startled eyes meeting a bold, cinnamon-colored pair, black-ringed and set in a delicate, hollow-cheeked face, lips now curved into a somewhat predatory smile.

"Well I— Why not?"

Without thinking, she preceded the taller woman through the door, absentmindedly patting her naps and then arresting her hand in mid-pat. Great, she thought, I'm at it again. Next I'll be dropping my handkerchief. If my Redstocking sisters could see me.

"Hmmm?" Eva was waving her hand before Saphonia's eyes in a mock attempt to wake her from her trance.

"I was asking whether you saw the Philippine's Dance Company?"

"No, I missed it. I always miss everything. I'm more the African dance type, anyway. Though I do have reason to like Filipino dance—we used to live there, and it was so beautiful."

"You did?" I visited there, too, in '77!"

• • •

Saphonia suddenly caught herself up short. Surely the passionate outpouring she'd been engaged in for the last ten minutes was not merely inspired by the memory of hibiscus and the South China Sea. She was leaning into the other woman's face like a lover. She leaned back and laughed. And just what was going on with Eva? Saphonia knew her legs were long, but the last under-the-table collision of knees hadn't felt like just clumsiness. She became aware that Eva was asking her something.

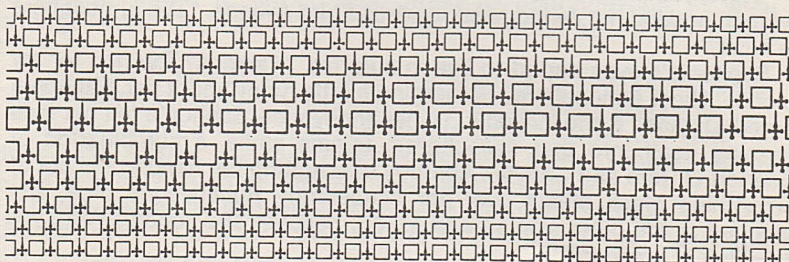
" . . . the free exercise class?"

"What free exercise class? Do you go often? When does it meet?"

Eva smiled. The tenor of her glance suggested more intimate sport.

Disconcerted, Saphonia found herself wondering what it would be like in such close physical proximity to this woman. Would her flutter-kicks falter at the meeting of their eyes? Would Eva feel her heart beating inappropriately fast in the midst of some innocent paired stretch? Would she, in fact, be turned on by the rise and fall of those long yellow thighs? The prospect of seeing Eva so intimately, so regularly, so scantily-clothed was too much to turn down. She would be there on Monday and she would find out. ●

Graphic by Rose Marulanda



JUANA MARIA PAZ

"Onita"—Vision of the Enchanted Forest

I had another vision. I regret the ways in which I have wanted you and the reverence that I feel for you is unbounded.
I tried to imagine us coming together in a different way.

We are standing in a small clearing in the forest, just a small circle before the trees swallow up the space. The earth floor is brown with pine needles and the branches hang low. They catch in my hair if I am not careful.

It is cool, like here, and the brief chill reminds us that winter has come. We are standing near the tipi. The circular shadow of the canvas protects us, surrounds us in its folds. You are standing very still and near. You are holding my hands.

"Can you let go of me now?" I ask softly, "I need some time. I'll come back when I'm ready."

"Ready for what?" you ask with quiet, steady deliberation.

"For tonight," I say, "I thought it's what we both wanted."

"Yes, I think it's what we wanted", you say and a great burden falls away from us. Your face is clear. I turn and descend the path that will take me to the water. It is very close and I reach the gently running stream in a few moments.

I bend down with my feet in the wet earth, on the bank of the stream and place my hands in the icy coldness of the water. It is cold and harsh against my skin but it is good and real and fills me with warmth.

I begin the ritual. I anoint my body with drops of water, first my breast where the folds of my dress fall open at the neck, then my wrists and . . .

I hear a noise on the path behind me and just above in the trees, the rustle of leaves against the forest floor and the sound of branches swaying against your body tell me that you have come.

I rise and turn to meet you. The water is dripping cold from my hands. The stream is just behind, rippling softly and lending music to our words. The branch above is gently touching my hair as I stand against its bark.

"You are sooner than I expected," I say.

"I know you said you needed time. . ." you begin.

"I'm ready now," I answer.

A swift breeze, the rapid flutter of fallen leaves, the branches swaying about our heads reminds us that winter has come. My dress falls long and white against the path. Two strings hold it together at the neck and waist.

I reach up and loosen the first string, the one at the neck that holds it close together. You begin to move, then stop, the old apprehension returns.

"Will it be too cold?" you question.

"No," I answer.

Your hesitation leaves and dissolves with the sun and the wind. The sun is not clear to us. It is blocked by the ceiling of branches in the forest. We are standing still in the enchanted forest and as the rest of the strings of my dress give way beneath my fingers it falls to the forest floor. It is very light against the brown of the earth.

As I descend to meet it and you lie low and reach over me you speak only once.

"At last. . ."

Juana Maria Paz
ARF Womyn's Land
Santa Fe, New Mexico
September, 1979

A LOVE TWISTER

COQUI

"Hey, what's up Pepe?"

"You, baby."

"Check this out, I have some nice smoke."

"All right."

We smoke, the smoke was good.

"Try my smoke, Short."

"You didn't like my smoke?"

"It's half-ass."

"Let me try your smoke."

We smoke, she starts giggling uncontrollably, my smoke was bad.

We was hanging out on Amsterdam Ave. I'm butch, she's straight.

We're the best of friends.

"Damn, this smoke is good."

"Black and red combined, I can't miss, that is where it's at."

"Let me get half of an ounce."

"Cool."

We walk to the grocery store, buy some cigarettes and some beer.

We go back to our hang-out spot.

"Jesus, girl, what's been happening with you?"

"Nothing much, except that I'm seeing this dude."

One of my aces passes by, I give her a joint.

"Good looking out, Pepe."

"Right on bro', catch you later at the Fem's."

We hang around Amsterdam Ave., I won't mention exactly where for dealing purposes. We was smoking and drinking, rapping and goofing, when I saw the dream of my life. Fierce, slim, fine, divine, a bad looking woman, walking with this white man, a coke dealer. I took a glance at her, she took a glance back, her old man wasn't paying attention.

"Short."

"Yeah?"

"Who in the hell is that fine momi walking with that white dude?"

"I don't know, the dude's name is Frankie."

Short is good for finding out information.

"Pepe, want me to find out about her?"

"Hell yeah."

Two weeks passed, I was lost with problems with the rent and waiting for my check to arrive. I also found out that my two best male friends had croaked. Short came over to see me.

"Pepe, I have some news."

"Good or bad?"

"Good news, I found out her name is Star."

"Who the fuck is Star?"

"Dummy, the chick that you asked about two weeks ago."

"Who I asked about two weeks ago?" Then I thought—the fine

babe.

"You mean to tell me that her name is Star?"

"Yeah."

"Some name."

She gives me the information.

"Also, she likes to drink Olde English 800, smokes Kools and smokes herb."

We both go to the store, buy the beer and the cigarettes. I have smoke, so there is no problem there. We go to her residence.

Jesus, what a woman. We formally introduce each other. We started to drink, smoke, rap. She finally asked me to rub her down with baby oil. There was a knock on the door. My ace wants me to go uptown, some smoke business—important, can't be delayed.

"Damn, bro', I'm checking this babe."

"Right on, but I just got a deal uptown, and you have to be there to be able to pull this deal, dig?"

"Right on, bro'. Let me tell the babes that I'll be back in an hour."

"Good, check you downstairs in five minutes."

"Short, Star, I have some important business to take care of, I will be back within an hour."

"Check, I'm going downstairs to check a friend of mine."

Short cuts out, I walks out, Star calls me in a caring way.

"Pepe, come here." She grabs me, and takes me into the bathroom. We look at each other and she all of a sudden plants herself to the wall. "Pepe, I want to ask you something; I've been dealing with men and they don't seem to satisfy me, and being that you're butch, well..."

"To be direct, you want me to fuck you."

"Well, you didn't have to be so blunt."

"Well, I have to go uptown to take care of some business."

She grabs me, and gives me a longing kiss. Jesus, I booked uptown, got over, took care of business, and hurried back to her. Our happiness in bed didn't last too long, for Short was banging on the door like it was nobody's business. Star was furious, she grabs a towel, and walks out. Short and I started to argue, I got dressed. I sensed that I blew her. She comes in, I'm already dressed to leave. She is combing that fabulous red hair with black intones. That fine body that was with it! Deep in my heart, I was shattered. I walked out and as I did, I took a long glance at her, watching her comb her hair. She sensed my thought at the moment, and looked at me not with anger but with a want. I thought at that moment and looked at her not with anger but with a want also; then I thought I was a fool and walked out. I sensed her presence running to the door, she left the door, shit I kept tipping.

Well, time passed, she got busted for eight months at Riker's Island for violation of parole, failure to report. She finally on the up and up told me that she dug me, but couldn't deal with me, she had female problems and lost her baby in jail, also that she was seeing a butch in there, just to pass the time, and that she was messing with a dude on the side. Weird, ain't it?

Then there was The Blackout, everyone thought I got busted, I was safely within the arms of another woman out of sheer need to fill in the void of missing this bitch. I wrote to her afterwards, she was worried, was happy to hear that nothing happened to me, and had the gall to wish that I would be busted so that I would be in jail with her. But I had stopped all contacts with dealing smoke, and started to live what people would call the "clean" life. I proceeded to get my shit together all over again.

Time went by and things were getting better for me. I was enjoying the Puerto Rican Parade with a close friend and a small one. We got stoned and cruised for days. We finally got home and partied some more. Then I received a letter. I was shocked, after three years of not hearing or calling, I got a letter from Star. You know that she's my heart. To be to the point she had broken up with her

butch. So I called her.

"Hello, this is Pepe, can I talk to Star?"

There was a mass of confusion, then Star got on the phone. "Hell, baby, where are you?" I gave her my location. "I will be there within an hour. Don't you move until I get there, okay?"

"All right, I'll be waiting for you. That's a promise.

We walked and got some beer and cigarettes, we decided to relax in an unknown park, and to talk.

"Listen to me, Pepe. I've been through a lot of shit with this butch, and I'm not ready to deal with the horrible thought of another butch to take advantage of me. In other words, I want a butch to love me, not to beat me. Can you deal with me? I want to know now, 'cause life is short, and I'm not going to live it being battered by a jealous butch. You understand me, don't you? I want you to love me."

I looked at her, and thought very slowly about what she was trying to make me comprehend, and how deep inside that she didn't realize how much I had loved her, and she didn't know it because she was always with someone else, and how she never gave a real thought on how much a person could love and never had to even touch them.

"Star, if that's what you want from me, then you got it."

She broke into the sweetest smile, I couldn't describe the moment in my heart the love I had for her. We kissed, oblivious to everything around us.

(to be continued)

ROBBI

MARSHA AT 31

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The bedroom was warm and loving as Marsha entered the beige colored room. She looked at the double-sized bed covered with a pale lime green spread. The decorative toss pillows of beige and green stripes rested haphazardly at the foot of the bed. Marsha's brown eyes moved from the bed to the dresser, its mirror reflecting the pictures on the opposite wall. On top of the dresser were various items, an open jar of cold cream, a tray of slightly used perfumes, and a black jewelry box, opened and revealing the owner's treasures. A wooden bookcase stood to the left side of the dresser. Marsha scanned tattered book jackets of Plato, Stein, and Angelou. They stared back at Marsha as she traced a small index finger over the dusty top of the case. She paused looking into the still eyes of a lovely woman whose photograph was encased in a golden scalloped frame.

The room was empty now, and yet the silence that filled the place was disturbing. Suddenly, Marsha turned toward the window and heard muted tones of a long neglected flute that lay on the

window ledge. Was it **just** the wind, blowing through the tiny holes; or was it the spirit of Crystal who used to play as the sun rose early in the morning. Marsha walked slowly toward the flute. She didn't want to interrupt the tender music which filled the room.

It was seven years ago. Marsha realized her love for Crystal had grown immensely since the first time she gazed into those deep honey eyes. She had first seen photographs of Crystal and after they finally met, Marsha shed her inhibition. Her emotions took over. She sensed that Crystal felt the same, but was reluctant to express her feelings. It wasn't until the blizzard of 1978 that Marsha and Crystal spoke openly to each other. When that happened, their relationship changed from photographer and model to **lovers**.

One hot summer day the sun shined brilliantly on lush green lawns while sprinklers moistened the grass in many yards. The avenue, echoing with activity, smelled of summertime—roses, lilacs, gardenias mixed with the scent of daffodils. A bird bath bulled in the front yard of a red brick house. It was Saturday morning, and men and women worked in their yards.

Crystal mowed the lawn. This was the first time Marsha had actually seen her future lover in the flesh, and Marsha's heart did a samba as she smiled at the slender woman. She licked her lips as though the first kiss Marsha anticipated had been tasted, instead, a hundred times before.

Crystal was a model. Marsha had been looking for a model to photograph in Simpson Sportswear, her latest assignment. After interviewing several women, Marsha chose Crystal. Though she didn't believe in love at first sight, Marsha fell in love with Crystal seconds after seeing her pictures.

Marsha looked at Crystal. This was their first dinner alone, and Marsha had been nervous that the meal wouldn't turn out right. She had planned the menu carefully, but she nervously watched Crystal as she chewed intently on a piece of veal. As though Crystal could sense Marsha's tension, she smiled after swallowing the tasty veal. Marsha relaxed and enjoyed the delicious feast she had prepared. Afterwards, they sat back on the sofa and watched television. Then they had dessert.

One evening, a few weeks later, Crystal telephoned Marsha. As she answered the phone, Crystal's distressful tone was apparent. "I need you," Crystal said, her tears flowing and dropping on a letter she had received from her sister Evelyn.

"What's the matter, baby," Marsha asked. After the conversation, Marsha left immediately and drove to Crystal's home.

It was a crisp spring night. A breeze, blowing sweet smells of springtime ruffled Marsha's dark curly hair as she drove along the turnpike with the convertible top down. Marsha loved April; it was the month of **love**. She approached the exit leading to the turn off. The road was dark. Houses sat dimly lit and quiet along the road. It was 10:30 p.m. and Marsha steered the car cautiously along the tree-lined street.

The red brick house stood silent on the corner of Janice Lane. A light glowed in the wide picture window that faced the street. Movement could be seen behind the pale yellow curtains. Marsha parked her car in the driveway and then walked quickly toward the front porch steps. She climbed the familiar five wooden steps and then knocked three times on the dark wooden door. Marsha heard soft padded footfalls and muffled weeping inside the house. She rapped once more, this time loudly, eager to be inside comforting her lover. ●

Struggling

LOU

Copyright © 1980 by Lou

I was emotionally/physically preparing myself for the long journey to Atlanta G.A., in order to get to the National Third-World conference, and the march on Washington. I had known that I could have been risking a possible custody suit by taking Crystal along. But I was bound and determined to go.

I watched Sly move about the house, wondering what her feelings towards me going to the march were. I made a pretense at not wanting to go, to make her feel good. Inside I knew that I wanted to go. I had been living a kind of up and down existence for a long time, hell, I was tired and frustrated. But I guess I wasn't upset enough to let the relationship die of natural causes.

So I was going to Washington. Far away from Sly, and hopefully into the arms of another. On the long bus ride, I alternately breathed sighs of relief and of fright. I got to Atlanta, and was picked up by a white straight feminist named Tedi.

She got me straight on the fact that she wasn't a lesbian, but I got the strong impression she was for the rights of lesbians. I told her of my feelings of frustration about Sly. She told me that she felt Sly was pulling a macho trip on me, among other things. The final step, whether I stayed or didn't with Sly, was totally up to me. I really wasn't sure whether I wanted all that power.

I really got closer to me, in the hours, I spent at Tedi's. I felt that I could have survived, without Sly, but on the inside, I needed her. Not necessarily to survive, I had survived a hell of a lot alone, but I just couldn't imagine living a life composed of so many wimmin, I didn't want emotional entanglements with around the child, Sly and I planned together.

But I didn't want any more pain. As I loved me, in solitude, I couldn't help wondering if I had reached my peak with Sly. But I couldn't let go, although I was beginning to feel hatred/resentment toward her.

I left Atlanta on a busload of predominately white gay men and wimmin. I really felt out of place, but I wasn't totally sure why. When I got in Washington, I found that the housing promised me,

with my baby, was non-existent. What a bitch! I was scared shitless, but I didn't want to return to Columbia, to Sly. I called her for support. She was as angry as I was disillusioned. Oh well, after running around in the rain with my baby, I got housing with two wimmim and food money.

The conference was beautiful, I learned so much. In fact several wimmim caught my eyes/mind/body/soul, but I never said anything. I still thought very much in the context of my relationship with Sly, our parenting of Crystal. I guess I scared off anyone who might have given a shit.

I came back to Sly, and I went through the motions. Sex was something I wanted more and more of, but it just wasn't right, or Sly just didn't feel like being bothered. It hurt, I hurt. Not that I didn't complain or try to end things. I did, but Sly didn't take me seriously.

She hung on with the tenacity wimmim of my sign are supposed to possess.

I even began to hate feeling like a tied down mother. Crystal was fast becoming my ball and chain. I questioned my role as a mother. I reasoned that maybe I wasn't ready.

I was close to returning to the State Mental Hospital, when something happened to snap me back into dealing with the realities of what I was going through. Crystal had always had a heart murmur, and I finally consented to her being catheterized.

The doctors found three holes in and around her heart. What the hell was I going to do? I understood that the holes were going to have to be closed. I had to deal with this issue, in the midst of my own emotional turmoil. I ended up calling Sly, because Crystal is also her child. But I had already made up my mind. After all, I wasn't sure if I'd always be with Sly.

I was confused, and to add on to that confusion, I met a lady that I was sexually/emotionally attracted to. We kissed/hugged, but nothing more. I called Sly at 3:30 that morning on the twentieth of June. But I only called her because she had been calling me off and on all night long.

I pulled no bones with her. I told her that I'd met someone, I was attracted to. But to me nothing substantial happened. I got to Columbia that afternoon, and I went home with Sly. I didn't want to hear anything that she had to say, I felt like all she was saying was a repetition of lies. We were apart for only eight days, then I decided to give the relationship another try, only this time, she had to be able to keep up her end of the bargain.

We have fought a lot. A whole hell of a lot, in the last two months. Finally things came to a head, and we went to a friend for counseling, and we had to make a peace treaty. What has happened is that Sly no longer pressures me to decide if I'll always be with her, and I'm trying to be a lot more understanding. It's really hard because we at this time don't have much association, with other wimmim couples with kids, so therefore we don't have any support.

But at least right now, I can work on getting my head together. As far as my child is concerned, and about this relationship I think things will work out alright as long as Sly does her part, and I suppress my urge to run whenever the going gets tough.

But last and certainly not least, although we're struggling, love and devotion will help us to make it. ●

ROSITA ANGULO MIRET LIBRE DE MARULANDA

Rose stopped to think of her name. It was not the first time she had ever done this, and she was never happy with the end result of her deliberations. "There is so much in a name," she thought. She had considered going back to her birth name, at one point and her children had said that they would also do the same. They wanted to have whatever name Rose had. And Rose felt that that was too complicated and she dropped the idea of changing her name back. This was in the year 1972.

It was not the first time that Rose was going through a name change, except that the previous time it was mostly decided for her. That was the time she got married and the name change was part of the whole package which came with the change of lifestyle. She took her husband's name. Rose was happy to take on a name change at the time. Ever since she was little she never liked the name Angulo for a last name. It wasn't such an awful name, it's just that she was tired of it, and then the kids used to hassle her and would rhyme Angulo with culo which means "ass" in Spanish and she didn't like that. Instead, the name offered her was musical and rhythmical and so she took on Marulanda. That decision about a name change was not very difficult.

Her last name was not the only part she had considered going back to. She had trouble with the ways she was called by her Spanish speaking friends. She would be called Rosita, which had a connotation of being small and cute that Rose was not comfortable with. She would also be called Rosa, which had a connotation of big and massive, and she was not comfortable with that either. However, she enjoyed the neutral sound of Rose, and furthermore, it sounded good when followed by Marulanda. So she used the name Rose Marulanda from 1963 to 1980.

But this was 1980 and along with the new decade, Rose wanted to reach a broad base of people that she had known throughout her life. She was writing to clarify her own thoughts and to reach out to those who knew her. She wanted to make sure that all who ever knew her would recognize her name when they saw it in print. She thought she might even hear from some of her readers, especially the readers she knew. She thought for a while about the making of a name in the Spanish tradition and the kinds of ingredients that go into a name.

She suddenly had a striking thought that made her very happy indeed. She would just copy the process of a name-making in her Spanish culture. Why of course, Rosa was her birth name but she preferred Rosita. That was her decision. The name-making process for a woman in her culture would be to add on the husband's name. If she became a widow she would also change her name to indicate widowhood., i.e. Rosita Angulo Miret Viuda (widow)de Marulanda. But Rose did not have such morbid luck as to become a widow. However, something excited her in her inner being. This was a moment she seemed to be waiting for. It was a moment of coming out and liberation newly found in her ability to blend all her names under one identity and announce it to the world the same way she would announce a birth. She now felt free of the bondage that oppressed her. She felt free from the bondage to a man, to her mother, to her culture, and she decided to make changes in her name to reflect that. Therefore, Rosita Angulo Miret Libre de Marulanda. What a joy she felt, feeling free and giddy and wanting to celebrate. This was a good occasion to take part in this issue of *Azalea* and to take the opportunity to reach more Spanish lesbians. "Lesbiana, lesbiana, dime donde estas (lesbian, lesbian, tell me where are you)", she repeated to herself rejoicing her arrival of this point to her head, and almost singing to herself a tune.

Me llamaron Rosa Mercedes Angulo Miret cuando nací,
Me llamaron Rose Angulo cuando llegué a este país
Rose Marulanda cuando me casé
Libre de Marulanda cuando me divorcié.
Me quite el Mercedes cuando me nacionalicé como Estado
Unidense
Y hoy, libre de madre, marido y cultura,
anuncio al mundo mi libertad
y en regocijo canto mi encuentro
con otras lesbianas en Nueva York. ●

ANNA HEARNE

BLACK SWAN, WHITE SWAN

In the Autumn the swans used to come to the village. Sometimes they stayed a Winter. There was a pond, an old pit-pond, underneath the slag heaps, a little ways beyond the mine-head. It was a dark pond, rain gathered, coal dirty, set at the foot of the pit-hills. In those days I may have accepted the view that the pit-hills were ugly. That the mine-heads were ugly. I don't know if I look at it that way now. If anyone could work that hard, go that deep, do that impossible thing, mine the Earth, go underground every day and come out again. Sometimes not come out again. I don't know if I could look at the refuse of it, the symbol of it, the reality of it as ugly. Not ugly alone. Not simply ugly.

It is a particular sight, the Colliery Country. It's changed now from when I was young. More shut down. Even when I was small some mines were already closing. Mines that are all closed now. Forgotten places, deserted. The miners are as ghosts. All gone under the hill like ancient dancers. But when I was a child in Britain the Northumbrian mines were busy still. And though in all of Britain no one worked harder than a miner, in all of Britain there was no one lower than a miner's brat. No one that is except the West Indian coloured child who had come in a boat from the colonies to the Mother Country. No one that is except I who had come so far to grow so hard among the Northern Hills and mines.

I would watch the pit-head and the slag heaps with the shacks and the high colliery wheel to lower in and out of the Earth. I used to watch the wheel silhouette against the sky. Black lines against the open air. Delicate for something so great, traced like lace, like something drawn, like something symbolised. You could never be sure men were really there working beneath it. When I think of men and work two sights can stop me in my path through the Earth. The pit-head and the cane field burning. Both hung out against the sunset sky. Even when I was very little I'd been from one end of the world to the other (whether I wished to or not) and I'd seen both of them. You cannot know what Man or Devil has made of work 'til you know these two. The Pit-Head and the Cane-Field burning.

I say they stopped me. In truth I still don't know if they stopped me or moved me further in my path through this world, through the earth, through the innermost of my heart, down the back reach of my soul. The cane-field and the pit-head. The sugar and the coal. The Black coal worked by the White men in the dark, and the White sugar worked by Black men in the sunlight harsher than dark. Always it was there in my life. In my mirror, in my dreams. The dark against the light. The Black and the White. My images. My wonderment. My destiny. My Soul.

Like the Swans. When they first came to the pond I thought the white swans lovelier than dreams. All the more lovely for sailing so unreal, so white and so brilliant against the pit-head. Beauty and Beastliness. The dazzling swans settled in by the dust and the coal. A magic both real and unreal. I loved them even though they were white and all white things despised me here. For I was dark. Dark like hidden coal, dark like gathered rain water, dark like the symbol scratched on stone. Yet still I loved these white swans for they were white but free. They sailed at ease by coal mines and rain water which were dark like me. I watched with love the white swans against the black landscape.

Then the Autumn I was eight the Black Swans came. Like mystery. Like ebony. Sailing the coal water. Arching their necks. Gliding the bullrushes. I said I'd never been told there were black swans. That I hadn't known. I'd thought all swans were white. No, the adults said there were some black swans. They were rare. Even a dying breed I was told. But the black swans were there—no dying breed—on the pond by the coal pit of my eighth Autumn.

I used to watch the pond to feel the white swans against the coal dark. And know the shock of such beauty. And then I used to watch again to see the black swans crystallise on the landscape of the pond. Black on Black. And it was as if that was a final magic, another dimension, the opening of a third place that no one had told me was there. As if the Earth had opened up beneath the mine-head and what emerged was not grim chaos but Holy Grace.

The height of Winter came, bringing with it a deep night of heavy snowfall. And with the snow a change. In the morning the sought pond was different. The dark pit hills, the pond, the slag, were all snow covered. They stood icy, frost bound, crystallised and white. Colour changed. I watched breath taken the completed circle of this fate. The white swans were blurred. The black swans sailed dazzling, spectacular like jewels, like long buried coal, brilliant against ice and snow. Like glory. So this was how. . . this was what I was . . . this was the way.

Throughout the winter I watched and gazed. I changed. The swan images stayed. Then the thaw came. The pit-heads emerged from the snow. The snow ran grey in rivers from the slag hills. The ice melted. And one day the pond was empty. The bull rushes stood alone. The swans had flown. I was surprised. I'd thought they'd take me with them somehow. Carry me wind borne. Carry me home. Not leave me here in this world that didn't care and that wouldn't know. But they were gone. Only the visions remained. And I was left wondering. I wondered through to Spring and I

wonder still. I thought then "What will happen to me, what will happen to me? What happens to a little girl who had been born by the cane fields and raised in the snow? What happens to a little girl whose white mother does not like her colour?" And far away at the end of the world where I was born the cane-fields they began to rustle, the cane fields they began to smoke. Far away at the end of the world where the wind that touched the swan wing had blown the cane-fields they began to burn. While I, I stood alone beneath the silent pit-head in the Northumbrian cold wondering what will happen to me? Where can I go? What happens to a little girl who has lived to see and was born to know the white swan sail against the coal and the black swan sail against the snow? ●

DONNA DONATO

birth

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she was born yesterday (not a cliché) at approximately 10:45 am. Willie Mae Harper, a nice lady, finished the operation. oh my, isn't she beautiful, all the other laboring women paused to admire her. sleek, smooth, lovely color (a nice brown), not too big or too small. one of god's better handiworks.

my, my, all the tongues clicked, never seen one this nice before, no telling what these women will do next.

she was released from the center two days later. Willie Mae Harper, because she had created—the sleek, smooth, lovely colored, one of god's better handiworks, etc.—was allowed to keep her.

Willie Mae's children, two girls, 5 and 6, rushed to the door to meet their mother.

may i touch her, hold her, play with her—oh Mama—she's beautiful.

such a pretty color, not too big or too little for me to hold.

beaming with pleasure, Willie Mae Harper, a nice lady and good Mama, handed her daughters their new ball. ●

JOAN GIBBS

"If He Changed My Name..."

(Excerpt from *Bearin' Witness*)

"They took my Lord...They took your Lord...They took our Lord...(Uh hum)...They took Jesus...(Yes)...And they went to Paul—and Paul didn't believe it...And they went to Matthew...(Yes)...But Matthew didn't believe it...And they went to Peter...And Peter cried but he didn't believe it...(Yes)...So they said, 'Go ask Mary, she was there.'...So they went to Mary...And Mary said, 'Yes, I was there but I still don't believe it...(Yes)...'I saw the pricks in his side, but I still don't believe it.' ...And Mary said, 'I saw the blood running down his sides but I still don't believe it.'...He will be back...(Uh hum)...All hope in God...(Yes)...There is no hope...All hope in Jesus...(Uh hum)...There is no hope...But some day...(Uh hum)...One day...(Yes?)...."

Easter (1978)

Ruth (1901)

Coming up the road I could see her: rocking slowly and catching some sun. It was late March and the tulips surrounding the porch had just started to bloom.

Grand-daddy, as usual was out back trying to get Old Tom to pull the plow. I could see them too: Grand-daddy with his old, once yellow straw hat on, constantly stopping to plead with Old Tom, "Listen you damn fool of a mule," I had heard him say it thousands of times before and even now the words ring in my ears, "I feed you as well as I do myself, keep you in a warm barn—why won't you work?"

At the edge of the porch I stopped, stood kicking the dirt under my feet, waiting. Trying to be as silent as I could. I knew she wasn't sleeping but

'Every shut eye ain't sleep,' she always said. 'Every shut eye ain't sleep; every good-bye ain't gone. So don't you go creeping up on somebody just cause you see they got their eyes closed.'

I don't remember how long I stood there, kicking the dirt. It seemed like days and then again it seemed like only a few seconds before I said it and she

'What do you mean,—He called him out of his name?'

'He called him out of his name—cussed him.'

She had a way of asking questions even when she knew the answers. It was years before I realized that it wasn't answers she sought but questions, and that that was her way of thinking, making you think and living.

'Something to tell you from everyone else. That's all they are and all they will ever be. The white folks own the names same as they do everything else. They just gave 'em to us so that when they wanted one of us for something they could call whoever it was they wanted and we would know who was supposed to go. But, if who they wanted wasn't there they just called somebody else to do whatever it was they wanted the first one to do. That's all.'

'Ma, that was Aunt Sadie's son and it was her that named him. That white man ain't had no right...'

'Nasty Gal...'

She knew I hated that name. It was what they called me. My Mama named me Ruth. Miss Anne called me that cause she said that she had never seen me clean. Said I was "musty." But how was we supposed to keep clean when we were all the time working in the fields. All the time hauling water for them to wash in. All the soap and clothes we had we made. Despite my silence she went on, saying it again. The second time, spitting out a mouth full of Sweet Society along with it. The snuff spit ran dark on the ground, slowly approaching my feet: I stepped aside to let it pass, only to have it catch me a few seconds later.

'Nasty Gal, that's all you are and all you will ever be, if you don't learn that a name ain't nothing, nothing but a tag. Words ain't never killed nobody.'

'Ma, we got to do something. If a name is all we got then we got to...'

We were standing there, waiting for our turn to come so we could go in the store get what we wanted and get back to the fields. I was telling Ezekiel about my crush on John and he was just standing there—quiet like he always was, listening. We didn't have to be in school cause the white folks didn't think "niggers" should be in school when there was work to be done: It was planting time. So we were standing there not doing or saying nothing to nobody, and Henry Ben, drunk as usual, with his pants falling down, just come out of that there store look at Ez and

'Ma, now I ain't gonna call you this, but what if I called you a

'No, you ain't going to call me that.'

'But what if I did, Ma? What if I did?'

She just sat there rocking.

'Ma, we got to do something—we got to do something.'

'The Lord—'

We were standing there. And Henry Ben just come out of that there store look at Ez and Ez wasn't saing and doing nothing to nobody. Henry Ben just come out of that there store looked at Ez and called him a "Black son of a bitch." Just like that. Ez was just standing there, with his head down, not saying nothing or doing nothing. And Henry Ben just kept repeating it, kept saying it over and over. Cussing Ez and cussing his mother. I could see the sweat starting to rise slowly on Ez's neck and it seemed like only a second before Ez was wet all over, ringing wet...and then Ez looked up at Henry Ben and started to laugh and just kept laughing, laughing in Henry Ben's face while he kept repeating it, over and over: Black son of a bitch Black son of a bitch.

'...giveth and he take it away.'

Then Henry Ben shot him and Ez never did stop laughing. Black son of a bitch. Black son of a bitch.

'Ma, where was the Lord then? Where was the Lord then?'

I was crying then and I couldn't stop. I had started to cry before, had cried all the way home but now I couldn't stop. And she? she was just sitting there in that old blue rocker, going back and forth and not saying nothing. ●

'Ma, we got to do something.'

'What happens to Henry Ben ain't for you to decide.'

Did she say that or am I dreaming. I think she did but I'm not sure. She said something.

'The Lord works in mysterious ways. His wonders to perform.'

Maybe that was it...She got up slowly after a while, as if she was tired; picked up her sweater off of the rack in back of her and stepped down off the porch.

'Fix you and your Grand-daddy some supper. I'm going to be with Sadie.' ●

ROCHELLE HOLT DUBOIS

on my honor

Pisceans are by nature mysterious and deceptive because sometimes they live too much in the imagination, or so I have been told. The first time I lied to a woman was, I believe, to protect her, because I loved her, so I reasoned. I had invited another woman friend I had met in the southwest (while visiting my family over the holidays) to come down to the South for a week escape from the northern winter, to stay with me and my husband. I told my woman love that another woman was visiting me, a platonic long-time friend, because I knew if I told the truth Paloma would show her jealousy and possessiveness. I did not want to stir her feathers, even though I had no physical relationship with Carolynn. By the end of the week, I had developed a friendship with Carolynn, realized I was falling in love with her.

A few days after Carolynn left, my husband was on the phone telling Paloma that Carolynn had been with us for the week. I had made up my mind to tell Paloma myself, but now it was too late. Letters passed through the mail like flying arrows and I learned that Paloma had been having an affair with a woman before Carolynn came to visit me. The point is, I was not jealous, even after I knew, for I did not expect true confessions. Is my sense of honor different from other people's?

Even now I would like to visit Paloma, but the fact that Carolynn knows about her, deters me from doing so, and I ask myself, why? Now that I have the freedom to come and go as I please, without deception, without lies, somehow I do not have the desire to do so because I feel fulfilled emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I feel I love the woman I am now living with—Carolynn. (Oh, I shortly divorced my husband after Carolynn's visit. It was in the process of learning that I could not continue to live a lie. I love women not men.) But still sometimes I think the old me may return and yet I know for the first time I have the freedom but I do not want to escape. I want to build my life on shared experiences and honest relating with and to Carolynn.

Paloma, who thought she could live an open relationship, actually realizes she cannot face the painful truth, that Carolynn is my primary love, my eternal passion. Who can say what the future will offer, but I will not lie to Carolynn although I may keep some things from her knowledge, which isn't exactly the same if you reread Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. But confronted, I will not lie, and one wonders if I will even jeopardize my primary relationship with affairs that are usually unfulfilling and transitory. However, I will continue to need other women as friends and guides, and this is truth, so I will honor their wishes and desires when I confront them personally or on the phone or in the mail, and I hope they will honor mine. ●

DONNA ALLEGRA

On Her Knees Before the Machine Pleading Mercy

Buzz, click, screech. She laughed at the bicycle's machine song. She'd done a good job with the new brakes. They needed time to toe in before they'd stop singing soprano whenever she pulled in to halt her perfect machine. She was home for a hot minute and then would be off again. She mused that her affections were so set on a mechanical device as she fondly locked the bike in the hallway.

She bounced up the stairs, feeling just that light and breezy. She pushed the door open and by the time—split seconds—she realized she hadn't left the window open wide like that, she heard the click, like a single ripple from the instrument she wheeled around town.

Who was there? She saw a man. What did he want? Her heart was thundering in her throat. He gave simple and clear directions with the gun he had cocked, now ready to fire. He wanted her on her knees.

The tears came hard. She'd been brought up tough and free—raised by a man in a house with another young man. Twins, they were treated alike by an easy-going father who encouraged his son's gentleness and nurtured his daughter's strength. She'd never had sex with a man. Sure, she'd been felt up and humped in elementary school, but she knew she was about women at an early age.

She was desperate to wake from this living nightmare. He can't put this on me—I'm so strong I ride the bike when the hawk is howling and singing into the teens, I carry ten speeds of weight to the top floor where I live close to the sky. He'd been able to come in through her kitchen window, from the roof of the adjacent building.

She was face to face with the other side of rape. Easily, half the women she knew had a memory that made them shudder. In almost hysterical irony, she asked: why me? If anyone was an unlikely candidate, she was that woman—butch, strong looking, independent to a fault—but rape doesn't respect individuals, has no mercy, allows no time off for good behavior. This man didn't know her or her story and could have cared less. He whipped her with his words, "Bitch, and you like it too, huh? You can't wait for me to shoot off, can you, ya cunt." She was on her knees to a hard shell of anger and inadequacy. She could sense none of the healthy life rhythm pulse through him. If she knocked, there'd be no one home. She'd never considered the men, but for every woman raped, there is a man who does it.

Would any of this insight matter in the morning, if she were alive in the morning, she thought grimly. She was afraid in a different way now and wanted, of all people, Mommy—the woman whose constant message was: Be nice dear. Be nice to the nice man even if he's not being nice. Anger isn't ladylike, be nice dear, even if he's jerking off on you. Be nice and don't forget to say thank you. Now, though, she wanted to pull away in tears and say, I don't want to play, I want to go home. I don't like you. I want my Mommy.

And the helpless anger, that, afraid and having no channel for release, was already spurring its force on her for its reasons. Maybe this was happening because she'd rushed through her prayers this morning, too eager to meet the day, or because she had sneered inwardly when Aisha called two hours after the fact to make her excuses and plead off the rehearsal. Maybe, she thought with a twist of pain, it was because she'd steered clear of even the possibility of relationships with the women she knew. Save as phone friends, she side-stepped the eye contacts that asked for more. She knew well how not to see the flirtation that came her way. As she racked her mind through the coals for another possible reason why she deserved, had brought this on herself, another part of her said stop. This angry macho has no connection to who you are or what you're doing with your life. He played rape to forget himself. His space said, "I have a dick and a gun to back it up if you don't believe in the power of my penis." He kept saying to her, "You just here for the ride mama. I'm going to shoot myself off with a bang."

Bitterly she thought how this pervert doesn't even have a steady grip on his gun and with one wrong move he'll shoot right through the side of your face—probably maiming you for life, not even the mercy to blow you away to kingdom come. Her mind perked from a dungeon of misery. She went back over the thought that had just presented itself. His hand was loose and had dropped as he relaxed—not the one holding her head—the hand with the gun.

The first click had been the trigger cocking. A sudden movement would fire the shot, limp as his wrist was. He was in some other world, without focus for a target. She changed her position slightly, slowly, as if to get a better grip on him; and sure enough, the barrel was off her head and nestled in his crotch.

He started to shake as if in some death rattle. He lay back on the bed, moaning, his weapon turned around and without pity, the source of his manhood cocked and in gear to fire. She bit hard. The rehearsal of his threat shifted his next move to automatic. She knew there'd be no click on this round. She listened to the shot heading straight for his balls. After that, the next sound she heard was his long scream sing soprano. ●

Trees dropped silently into the past as the Trailways bus rolled north on 95 to Cape Cod. Lena loved riding buses. She could feel their voices. Two more hours and she would be home again. She felt like Little Red Riding Hood: "To grandmother's house we go." But this time alone. No visiting mothers or sisters or uncles. She alone with her girlhood past.

Lena's separateness in New Jersey had weighed down on her for too long. The wide, open world had seemed closed and narrow for her. Every day was a schematic diagram, an intellectual exercise in survival and surpassing. Her life was a therapeutic theory that proved she could fit in with a crowd and still be alone.

At night, she had cried, disappointed at a seat too often empty beside her. As she cried, she felt cheated. Lena could not even be comforted by hearing the sound of her own sobs.

Her tears would spread like silent hot candle wax inside of her, then cool, locking her in a grip of fear. She thought even if I could hear I would be too afraid to speak.

Her grandmother had left her the house in Oak Bluffs. Left it to her and her younger sister. Sometimes they came up together for vacations. But this weekend Lena carried her aloneness like a banner she would spread out and lie beneath.

Lena closed her eyes and saw the front porch. She could almost smell the sea in the air and feel the tide pulling and pushing her. But she heard only the sea gulls. High sharp points pricking the skin on the back of her neck.

She remembered her grandmother, MaDear, tall and flat, black and red with the shining sun setting behind her. MaDear had been her ally and haven. She'd been the first in the family to study the signs so she could talk to little Lena. She'd been the only one who didn't make Lena feel that being deaf was a curse that might be catching. MaDear and Merry.

Lena smiled remembering her childhood dream. Every summer she had spent with her MaDear she would play in the attic after supper amongst the old furniture, clothes and family albums. On an oak dresser was an old painting: six women in vintage bathing clothes digging for clams on the beach. One was looking back impudently over her shoulder as she kneeled in the sand. Lena had called her Merry Christmas.

MaDear had always spent that holiday with them in the city, so the old house needed a festive holiday and Christmas was Lena's favorite with its sparkling lights and sweet smells.

Merry became Lena's friend, growing up with her each year. Sometimes Lena would fall asleep on the upholstered settee and dream that Merry spoke to her out loud. She would hear her say, "Lena, Little Lena" as clear as all of those other sounds she never heard.

Lena always ran upstairs anxiously to greet her imaginary friend until MaDear died and Lena became too grown up and Cape Cod summers became less frequent.

When Lena finally closed and locked the front door of the small cottage behind her she snatched the dust covers from the tables, lamps and chairs. Soon it looked like her home again. She crawled into her bed remembering how good it had felt to be 14 years old in MaDear's house.

The moon shadows played over the ceiling, bouncing off the four poster. The New England night was thick and damp. Lena thought about wood for the fireplace tomorrow. Alone in the dark and the silence she felt a quick chill of fear and helplessness. There could be sounds out there, waiting to hurt her. She closed that thought out and tried to sleep. She dreamt about the sea gulls she might hear in the morning.

The next day Lena fixed a picnic of can goods: sardines and olives and iced tea. She went up to the attic. It was warm and mustier than the rest of the house, and sunlight washed over the lonely things showing up the dust. The picture was sitting on the dresser. Lena sat down and looked at it as she ate.

Merry was still there in the painting, with the same quizzical glance from the canvas. Now she seemed older. Lena curled up on the settee and felt the tears drop from eyes onto the brocade fabric. With the tears came a release from anxiety. She was happy to be at home. She lay down and slept until she heard Merry call her name, "Lena, little Lena." She opened her eyes. Merry stood over her, her hands dancing in the air, the words coming fast.

"Come with me. We will never be alone again. I've waited so long."

The afternoon sun shone on Merry's arms, brown with the days at the canvas shore. Her lips moved gently and her eyes were damp with tears of joy.

Lena blinked twice or more. Her terror pushed up through her stomach, choking her throat. This couldn't be! Dreams are not real.

She ran from the attic, bolting the door. She stood trembling at the foot of the stairs for a moment then ran out of the house down to the beach. She sat in the damp sand, watching the waves struggle in and drift out again.

Where could she go now? Only the ocean lay before her and an empty, noisy city behind. She looked back at the house, its open windows and the curtains blowing in the breeze, inviting her back.

She thought about her teaching job, her little apartment, her married sister, her divorced mother. She thought about all of the feelings she had been too embarrassed to express, too ashamed to be the dummy in a world that could not hear her.

She walked back to the house and threw the folded sheets over the high winged chair, the mahogany dining table and the roll top desk. She unpacked and stored her suitcase, then went up to the attic.

She stopped only an instant before unbolting the door. Merry stood beside the settee. Lena closed the door behind her.

Merry signed, her hands graceful and quick.

"Do you like to dig for clams?"

"I think so. It has been a long time." Lena responded.

"You will come with me?"

Merry's hands were dark and a few tiny grains of sand glistened in the hairs on her arm.

Lena nodded and Merry smiled like the sunrise.

"I miss you. We all miss you."

Lena looked at the painting where five women stooped in the sand. She smiled completely for the first time.

Lena started to speak but Merry held her hands gently.

Seven women dug for clams in the sand, laughing together silently. ●

PATTI GAYLE JACKSON

commonwealth gulf

there is a white cross on a hill top and unlike telephone poles; connecting in lines of wire and wood, touching us and calling us to ourselves, the kissing planks mark something outside of us as we live and plant and sell in the market, as we fish mercury quick salmon from once white waters and drink wine and sometimes laugh. the cross is to remind us of a self that is not ourselves as it blends into the coral and blue of sea beyond. and there too on a hill top, is a u.s. target range.

pass the church carmel crosses herself three times, once for the imagined, once for the real, and once for the spirit; like gas the marriage of twin opposites. she spits phlem thick. she drags her feet as horse hooves wrapped in rag pass the large silent door liting a brown bag cigarette. coughing. uplifted face her prayer soft epilogue is punctuated by smoke streams pouring from an overhead plane that passes by sky the soggy green of island.

a zinc roof resounds with a sudden rain and water runs in metal ducts that cry acid tears as the storm builds on a southern breeze. carmel ducks into her shanty under the curtain of rain. inside a squatting warmth, candle lite, the smell of fish. removing her scarf carmel is not an old woman but her green eyes peer out of her lean body still and alarming against the bee's wax glow of her expression. her face is a child's though she is twenty four and even if childless a four years married two years widowed woman who has always worked of the village trades. despite the sprawling of town into city she has remained with the faithful liting homage to blind gods. on the wind came the planes and by sea came only boats of steel nodding surely on her skin.

a neighbor poked thru her door, a fishwife's face creased and providing channels thru which the rain could flow enrique enters shouting, drenched in the last of the sun shower.

"carmel they block the sea again today we saw them from the small boats, me dios, when will it end."

"never i fear."

"so unjust" his head shook, his small body in a frenzy. "so unjust. does god sleep now?"

"no fish" she asked.

"no fish" the old patriarch bellowed. "south from vieques they come and the wind with them causes the fruit itself to drop like black flies." tears fell hesitant and then a wealth from his eyes. "you too, huddled here with the smell of death like an old woman you too rot."

"uncle i have only just returned give me peace."

"in this war you beg of peace women?"

"yes i..." her eyes dart over the dirt floor.

enrique spins in his anger and sorrowful love smashing candles and figureines with his small fists and in the garden of broken glass and spilt fires they face each other heads bowed before the elemental; woman man youth age together and alone the rain blowing thru their doorless homes. he turned mumbling apologies and ran into the darkening sky.

when evening has become nite carmel lay listening to her own heartbeat or the shutter explosions off the coast of culabra. carmel is at war with herself, both a woman and an island raped and barren. ¡control control! she plea with herself and slipped into the hum of mosquito wings, back.

"babies to market, babies to market" martina's laughter rang still in carmel's dream, loud and drunken as her sister's red dress that day. they had walked together all three sisters.

"AGE?"

martina the eldest but nine months apart each they went to the american clinic.

"MARRIED?"

"no" culabra; two sons both child in arms.

"no" martina's rum wet speech.

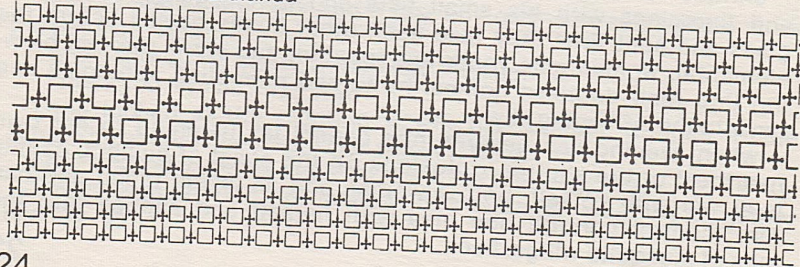
"well yes i am." but that had made no difference for carmel. not alone but in a parade it seemed, a stream of women all going in that direction umbrellaed by the shouts of sellers and gunfire rattling like bones in the near distance. the allies and their war games. so familiar one learned to talk below it so that one could still be heard but often only silence could accompany the sound. war games at sea. the half eye always looked that way, to the shore. and now the other looked, sticky, towards the prospects of technology; well fed babies, born wanted expected planned. carmel came mostly to make sure she was herself fertile, and then to begin with the planning, it seemed a good thing. she and the man had made a living together then when there was a living to be made. technology. in desperation they trusted. none suspected another military exercise in the stark white clinic. none but culabra, named for the land, dared even wonder how long would it be before she could pour this promised money into milk bottles, she asked, for her tits were dry and her babies crying. yes there was to be payment, wasn't it too good to be true. the women had talked among themselves, unintelligible to outsiders broken only by the:

"RIGHT THIS WAY" of a woman white in her uniform. and she too, thought carmel, had been a soldier involved in a logistical closing of bodies.

carmel tossed out of the live nitemare pain spread wide over her pelvis, her stomach a tight ball. 'empty' she whispered heaving tears for her severed tubes, tears that fell on the earthen floor and turned white salt. one hundred miles and ten the land refuses to yield. the fish surface on their sides, duppy eyes bulging in horror. but the people have always eaten fish. the wealth. the war. the rich they claim this peace yanked from our dirt like stillborn maize and we must make our wealth common. 'my womb' she cried but neighbors slept, dead tired. a recurrent dream of two long years. and all her life the deathly occupation. she lay in linen, four feet and eleven inches, empty bellied beside the women walking endless roadways in her mind, below a sky so large it could only mean promise. a minefield of stars.

time crept. she rose a thin silhouette in the nite against the rising tides. the moon. her eyes searched the shore a lighthouse beam. the rape can breed, she thought, the rape must stop. ●

Graphic by Rose Marulanda



DORIS DAVENPORT

A Signifying Short Story

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Chapter 1

There was this woman, see, (once upon a recent time) supposedly very beautiful, vital, sexy, etc., who, without even trying, since she was also very intelligent, i hear, developed a knack for short love affairs, but longwinded and long-lived lovers. that is, she would stop/but they just could not.

Chapter 2

So, after awhile, there were so many of them, the ex-lovers, that they formed a small, elite, private club, or group, or society. They seemed to gravitate to each other, attracted by a quality of peculiar self-induced, self-indulgent pain, and burnt out intense crazy-looking eyes, so they formed this group, a real serious one. They incorporated by-laws from the Black Panthers, the DAR, the Mau Mau, the Gestapo, Roberts Rules of Order, the black Baptist Church, and some consciousness raising guidelines, for good measure. Naturally, to be a member, you HAD to be in love with her, and the 3 main officers, were these 3 wimmin, see. They set up some more ground rules, some of which were these:

a) her name could never be called, only alluded to, in female pronouns, in caps, in italics, quotes, etc.

b) yet who had to be mentioned constantly at least once a day, each member had to deny being in love with her, and once a day also admit they did love her, and Agonize and Ecstasize over it.

c) and there was a High and Holy celebration every sunday nite, to make sure they started the week in the right, appropriate frame of mind, or frame of love and anguish, there was this Ritual. but that belongs in the section, The Ritual.

The ritual was choreographed. It was eclectic. It was hi comedy and low drama. a fusion of the edge of night and the tempest. it was all the art forms in embryonic and amateurish forms:

1st woman: Call to order. We will now begin the Ritual, in honor and dishonor of Her. (clutches her heart and her stuff.) (then she hits a huge cymbal made of wood/to represent how they are struck and absorb the pain. she hits a cymbal of wood, painted on the front with a hot dog—only the bun's at the bottom and the weiner is at the top, symbolizing the unrealized Hot Dog—how far away they are from consummation with her, is as the wiener to the bun. she hits, as i said, hard, with a long cane, which symbolizes how crippled they are because of her, which is wrapped around at the top with lots of printed soft flannel material which also symbolizes Something, but i forgot what. sometimes they hit each other with the cane top, if they have won the Anguish Award for the week.)

2nd woman: Oh oh oh Ohhhh

3rd woman: Ayieeeeeeeee (rolls on the floor and screams, doing 5 modern dance contractions on her back and stomach)

4th woman: not you, not you, ME!! (does a James Brown Slide/boogaloo/ bangs into the wall/bounces back and grunts)-UH—good god!

2nd woman oh oh oh, i hurt, i anguish, i languish. plus, i'm hungry and horny/ because of her. . .

4th woman: (interrupting) SHUT UP!! nobody knows/the trouble i've seen, because of her. I. . .

1st woman: Now sisters. hermanas, we agreed to some basic rules to organize our feelings just last week. . .

3rd woman: DO THE DAWG!! Whooooooo!

4th woman: Stop. Stop!!! them MY lines, you stole em, you . . .

CUT.

i know. i promised you the ritual. but like the eleusian mysteries, the ingredients in coca-cola, and how much we really weigh, some things are just too, too sacred to divulge publicly. no matter how reverent the public is—as you are. you have seen enuf. you see: the wimmin suffer. you see: they are orderly. & you know enuf to imagine the rest. but before your fantasies get to work, and while the wimmin are working out in the Ritual, let me tell you—flashback time—how these wimmin met Her. there are at least 100 of them. but you are right. that goes in the section on How They Met Her.

(to be continued, next year. . .)

NOEL

IRARE SABÁSU

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She sat there in the shadows of the curtains, head bent as though she knew there were still crosses yet to bear. Folding shade after shade of darkness, with involved hands and compressed lips; until it spilled from her lap onto the floor puddling into others from before.

And she sighed a sound the wind makes through the mountains on November nights. It was numbing and it cut one to the core. She felt used up and empty, old before her time forgotten as the front page of last Tuesday evening's Post.

She vaguely wondered if she wandered on the outskirts of insanity. Could one simply cease to be from total lack of love? She shifted slightly in her chair, restless from the answers crowding affirmations round the room. She closed her eyes and shook her head, perhaps to clear her brain, perhaps the room.

And the quiet grew and swelled and floated just above her head, like a bunch of grinning carnival balloons. Slowly she rose from the over-soft chair, she just stood there. She took inventory.

One faded couch, sunken cushions, dog-eared edges; spillstains from the times her hands refused to remain steady. At night a sheet, a blanket, a too flat pillow, transforms this antique into her bed. A scatter-rug in front, a now curious pinkish-grey, that once new, glowed fiery red with rings of creamery yellow. (she had bought it on a whim at Alexander's six Christmas' ago.)

Four-day old dust filmed the one end table by the wall, where the chip-ped lamp, no shade, stood sentinel, urn shaped. Blue birds painted on one side, lavender birds the other. One green alarm clock, several hours slow. One transistor radio, batteries running low. A back issue of Readers Digest, found one Sunday on the train.

To the right, a picture of Christ on a cardboard calendar. The lighted lantern in his hand, somewhat subdued by his iridescent halo. He is poised, about to knock on someone's door. But there is something in his eyes, they've got that look....A look seen a hundred times swimming in children's eyes, when they weary of a game. But because they love you, or because you're having so much fun, they give it one last half-hearted try and then announce they'll quit. His eyes held that look.

Under it hung on a nail, blue plastic rosary beads. Further to the right, one rust-stained sink, steady faucet drip. Above it a mirror big enough to reflect a face and not much more. (if you didn't count despair). Screwed into the wall, a plastic cupholder, with one green glass containing one shredded toothbrush, a 1/2 squeezed tube of Pepsodent, a 1/2 used cake of soap, a 1/2 clean hotel towel hanging on a nail, a shower cubicle.

Still further, one-used-to-be white four drawer kitchen cabinet. It sits under a double-hot-plate, never unplugged. One miniature refrigerator big enough for ice cubes, T.V. dinners and not much more, seemed to cringe in the corner. One closet door leading to sweet and sour secrets. One room door leading to the toilet in the hall. That is unless one took the stairs towards the street, towards escape.

And then, the double window, shade always half-way down. Cinnamon-colored curtains, yellow horses galloping through its dust. And completing the circle, that much used necessary sanctuary of a chair behind her calves. Inventory completed a grim smile bursts across her face. The title of a song rushes up to greet her, dancing in her mind "This Is My Life"

She hums a few bars, crosses over to the table, and carries the radio to the chair: A news station crackles up at her as she reaches down, into the brown paper bag leaning by the chair. She lights up a cigarette from the pack out of her pocket. She unscrews the cap off the bottle of whiskey she has placed in her lap. She tilts her head and swallows deeply. Then she turns towards the curtains and the window and the world. And tonight she hardly feels the wet, or taste the tears. Tonight she is sending back her soul, to spend some time in the Christmas of '47. On that island in the sun, where she met Andrea.

Sweet Andrea, of the long legs and long lashes, tamarind-colored eyes, mahogany in the morning, indigo by night. Gingerale laughter, butterfly touch, liquid-lips infant soft. "Andrea" a name calypso to the ears.

She recollects her initial timidity when Andrea had approached her intimately, after the festivities. Steering her into uncharted waters, sucking her under whirlpools beyond the reefs nitrogen-narcosis in the night.

If only she had not felt so confused, so guilty, so fear-spattered afterwards. If only realization had not come agonized years after.

If only truth had not played hide-and-seek. If only....if only....yet, how could she foresee in her youth-dipped days. These curved and curious wrinkles, crawling cross her face? How could she know that loneliness, would extend itself across the latitudes and longitudes of her adult life?

How could she know that the restlessness and bitterness, would conspire and carve their names upon her heart? As lovers, slicing in....and carving out their initials, on a living, feeling tree? Oh, how could she? How could she know, that she would never, ever encounter Andrea again?

Inner pain: the kind just one thin layer above bone: cannot be ignored. She knows. Because shes tried. Oh God! how she has tried.

Even when she sleeps, her subconscious switch is flicked to automatic. Yet, the throbbing is persistent, and so far a cure is non-existent. And noxious screams are clawing at her insides, like a miner trapped beneath a landslide. And there is no space inside her brain-place where she can crawl....cower....hide.

Oh, she possesses wisdom now. But the price was her golden youth, her silver strength. She possesses freedom now. But her smoke-smudged servitude, between reality and hell was dearly spent. She possesses time now. Hours upon elastic hours, that she can taffy-pull between eternity and infinity....leisurely.

Yes, wise woman, free woman, time-trapper though she be. She is not whole...she is incomplete. Shallow waters, where she should be deep. She is not full....just merely half. She barely smiles, she cannot laugh. She sees the world behind a blur. No hope...no child...no love for her. No Andrea....

Somewhere nearby, corner caroleers are clustered harmonizing, reminding all to deck their halls....tra la la la.... She empties the bottle in several searing swallows. A deep sigh snakes away from her as she shuffles toward the toilet door. And as always, she remembers when she's through. To turn and peer into the turbid/tranquil waters, for any of her wishes that weren't whirlpooled down the bowl. ●

KATERI SARDELLA

Claudia

Boom! Boom! Boom! Always, it goes Boom! Boom! Boom! Sometimes the throbbing is so great, she is forced to her feet and she runs, as fast as she can go, without destination, through the streets.

People stop and watch her and make a point of loudly expressing their disapproval of this menacing looking creature; yet they giggle and shake their heads and feel this is the funniest thing they've seen today, the high point in their mundane lives.

"Claudia, you're not paying attention again. Claudia! Here, turn your chair more this way. Now, look at me, Claudia. Hey, Claudia! There. That's better. Now, pay attention, I'm asking you something, Claudia. Where did you go yesterday? Tell me, what did you do? Did you have a good day, Claudia?"

"Yes. Good day. Wonderful. We had a wonderful time. The mountains. Snow. We skied all day. Such a delicious dinner. Yes. She looked beautiful. The sun burned deep red into her face and her hands, so strong, stroking the rim of the wine glass, filled me with..."

"Claudia!" Dr. Adams gripped her shoulders and was almost aware of his desire to shake her and maybe even slap her, just this once. "Claudia, stop it! Claudia, I'm talking to you, Doctor Adams, remember me!"

Boom! Boom! Boom! Claudia felt the blood push its way into her head. She looked out and focused her eyes on the psychiatrist's furrowed, bushy eyebrows. They bobbed up and down as he

talked. "Yes. Yes, of course. Hello. Hello."

"Claudia, how do you feel?"

"Fine. Good. Time to go?"

"Okay, Claudia, we're through for now. But same time next week, okay?"

"Yes. Same time. Next week same time."

"Are you taking your medicine like I said to, Claudia? Do you have it with you? Show it to me."

Claudia reached into her torn jacket and pulled out the empty bottle followed by its chewed up safety-cap lid and showed it to him.

"Claudia, these are gone. Again. Alright, Claudia, you can refill it but if you continue to eat these up I'm going to have to cut down the number. Do you understand?"

"Yes. I'll be good. I promise."

Boom! Boom! Boom! She reaches up and pulls another chunk of matted hair out of the back of her head and that relieves it for awhile. The rain was reaching her skin and her jacket felt so heavy, so suffocating, she took it off and threw it into the gutter. It felt good to peel off the too small army shirt and her skin tingled and her nipples goose pimples. Passing cars showered walls of water into her face and she felt invigorated.

"Claudia, what are you doing now! Hey, Claud, get your clothes on!" The officer nudged her with his flashlight. "Claud, where's your clothes?"

"Clothes. Yes, they're on the rock. I left them at the rock. Did you see where Denise went? She was here a moment ago. She looks radiant in that tiny little suit, don't you think? We stopped in Syracuse on our way. I got this, do you like it?" Claudia stood up and clumsily twirled her aging half naked body in front of the policeman. "Denise thought it was a little big but I've never gone in for anything too revealing."

"Claud, come on and let's put your clothes on."

"Oh, but we just got here. This may be my only chance for a tan this year!"

The cop picked her jacket out of the sewer and threw it, muddy and saturated, around her shoulders and zipped it up, imprisoning her arms in the coat. "Now get going, Claud. It's late and if I see you out again tonight I'm takin' ya in. Now go on."

"Yes. Yes. Of course." She began walking towards Central Ave, but in her reality, Denise was just over the ridge, lying in the sun, wiggling her toes in the sand, and stroking her rich black hair with her thin brown fingertips.

"Claudia."

"Yes, Deni, I'm here."

"You don't have to be here, now. Not anymore."

"You don't mean that. Lay back and rest."

"You're so strong, Claudia. I know you'll be all right. Just promise me that you'll go on with your life. More than anything, I want you to have a good life."

"Yes, of course, Denise. I'll be okay. But I'll always love you, darling, I will always love you."

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"Draft?"

"Please, yes."

"I hope you have money with ya this time, Claud, I can't keep giving it away!"

Claudia set a pile of pennies on the bar. There were thirty-one in all. Laurie, the bartender, didn't pick up any of them.

"So, how's it goin', Claud. Haven't seen you around in awhile."

"Fine. Of course. Fine."

"What's you been up to?"

"New York. We've been to New York."

"Oh yeah, who you been there with?"

"Deni, of course. We had a great time."

"Claudia," Laurie gently touched the older woman's arm. "Claud, Denise is dead. Try to remember."

"We went for a week. Had a wonderful time."

"Claudia. Claudia!" The bartender squeezed Claudia's hand and looked into her crazy aware eyes. "Claudia, Claud, ah, Claudia. ya want another beer? Huh, Claud, ya want another beer?"

"Yes. Of course. Yes."

"What did you say, honey? Oh, okay. You're right, it is getting late. Do you want to stop for coffee? Oh no, that's all right with me. We gotta get up early tomorrow, anyway."

Claudia stepped into the street.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"I think I've drank a little too much. I'm already hung over. Deni, do you..." The van hit her solidly in the chest. She landed on her back, her jacket torn from her bleeding body. Blood oozed from her ears and the back of her head.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"Deni, it doesn't really hurt so bad. I've banged it there before. Oh ño, I'm okay. But can you just rub it for a second. Yes, the top of my head. It's still a little tender. What did you say? Where are we going? Oh, yes, I'd love to. Yes. Yes, of course." ●

JULIE BLACKWOMON

Marcia Loves Jesus

"I've given up women for Jesus," she said in a soft voice that was equal parts boast and apology.

"Oh," I said.

"Yeah," she said, leaning forward on the couch and looking at me intently. "I've also given up alcohol and marijuana; I haven't been able to give up cigarettes yet, but I'm down to two a day, one after lunch and one after dinner."

"Oh," I said gazing at a smudge in the center of her forehead. I don't think I had any expression on my face. I was trying not to have any expression on my face.

"You aren't upset, are you?" she said.

Upset? Me upset? Why should I be upset? Just because I've loved this woman for eighteen of the twenty-two years I've inhabited this earth? Because I've loved her constantly through such diverse obstacles as her thing for Benjie Morris, the cross-eyed child genius who won all the spelling bees in the ninth grade; her passion for Hank Matthews, the hot-handed all-American fullback who spilled sperm all over my sleeping bag the summer Marcia and I was supposed to have gone camping *alone*; or her all-consuming affection for Miss Davis, the six-foot wonder on the basketball court who Marcia loved all through her freshman and junior years at Howard?

Besides, at this very moment I kept neatly folded in the rear left-hand pocket of my jeans a dog-eared letter that said in part: "I love you, woman; I realize that now although it took me almost ten thousand miles and a near marriage that would have been a disaster, to convince me that I don't really want to spend my life pleasing other people and that loving you pleases me. I joined the Peace Corps to escape you and myself but it hasn't worked. It hasn't worked at all. My tour of duty will be up in another three months. I'm coming home. Wait for me. I love you..."

There. She'd put it down in black and white. She'd said she was coming home to be with me, not Benjie Morris, not Miss Davis—not even Ronnie Jordan, the woman who'd brought Marcia out—after the first time I told her I loved her, Marcia, feeling the attraction also, ran off and picked up the first obviously gay woman to respond to her advances and went to bed with her. No, Marcia was coming home to me—patient, long suffering, ever-constant me. She'd said that in her last letter.

Only now she was sitting in front of me, her hair pulled back into a ponytail the way she wore it when I fell in love with her in junior high school and telling me she'd given up women for Jesus and asking me if I were upset.

"No," I lied in my best Joan Crawford voice. "I'm not upset." I chewed the nail of my forefinger down to the quick.

"But isn't this kind of sudden?" I said finally, to fill the silence.

"Well, not really," she said. "There's this missionary who..."

"Ah, ha!" I said springing forward in my seat. "It's really the missionary."

"No," she said with a patient smile. (I hate patient smiles, especially when directed at me.) "It's Jesus, it's really Jesus." Personally I would rather have lost her to the missionary, but, alas, this was not a democratic situation, and my vote didn't count.

"So you're really giving up women for Jesus, huh?" I said and looked up quickly trying to surprise a twinkle at the ends of her mouth or some slight indication that she was only fooling.

"Well, yeah...." She looked down at her fingers now entwined in her lap and then back up at me. "Yeah," she said again with no additional prompting.

"Well, I wouldn't put too much stock in such a relationship," I said.

"This is it for me," she said. "There's been something missing in my life all this time; some vital ingredient just wasn't there." ("Yes, you fool," I wanted to say. "But it's me! me! me-me-me!")

But I was cool. I put my cigarette out on the arm of the chair and dumped the ashtray into the fruit bowl.

"You realize, of course that he's into slave and master roles; he'll have you drying his feet with your hair."

"I love Jesus," she said. "He's my alpha, my omega; he fulfills all my needs. Knowing I have Jesus has made all the difference. I've found a love that will never die, a love that's bigger than life." She started tapping her foot as if to some rhythm heard only by herself, and a bright halo made a wide arch and hovered just above her head.

"But this is ridiculous," I said, a bit flustered. "I mean the last time you wrote me you were saying...." I leaned forward and reached for the letter in my hip pocket.

"It was bigger than the both of us," she said. "But now I have overcome, hallelujah. I've surrendered myself to Jesus. I love Jesus! Only Jesus, praise the Lord!!!"

"But you've always insisted on monogamous relationships in the past," I said.

"What?" she said.

"He's a married man, you know."

"What?" she said.

"Those nuns—he's married to all those nuns in the Catholic church."

"I don't know about that...." she said, but I could tell I'd made her stop and think.

"And not only that," I said, now that I had her complete attention.

"He's bisexual at best...haven't you heard those rumors about him and Peter and Paul and John, too?"

"I wouldn't say...."

"Would I lie to you....you ever hear of him having a girlfriend during the time he was hanging around all those guys?"

"Jesus is my rock," she said stoutly. "My wheel in the middle of the wheel!"

"Well," I shook my head sadly. "I guess you know what you're doing and if you can handle the S and M...." I shrugged my shoulders. "Who am I to complain?"

"What S and M?"

"You mean you didn't even know about the S and M?"

"Jesus isn't into S and M."

"Anybody who'd allow himself to be nailed to two pieces of board in front of a crowd of people has got to be into masochistic exhibitionism."

"But his father told him to do that!" she said indignantly.

"And that's another thing," I said. "The man just can't stand up to authority."

"I don't care what you say," she said sticking her fingers into her ears and closing her eyes. "I just want to go to heaven to be with Jesus."

"I don't know why you wanna go there. There'll be no disco and no pot, no Harvey's Bristol Cream—just you and a bunch of strangers standing around drinking milk and honey—cause nobody you know's gonna be there."

"Jesus'll be there."

"Yeah, him, Peter and Paul, and about a million horny nuns."

"You can be there if you repent and accept Jesus as your personal savior."

"No, thank you," I said. "That guy's got a lot of problems. And furthermore," I added as I picked up my purse and headed towards the door, my anger finally coming to the surface. "I think you're a fickle snot, and the two of you deserve each other."

"That's not a nice thing to say," she said.

"I know," I said as I jerked open the door and stepped out into the hallway; "but to tell you the truth I don't feel very nice right now," I said. "But sometimes life is hard like that."

"I'll pray for you," she said softly behind me.

"And I'll forgive you," I said, from over my shoulder as I headed down the hall. ●

CLAUDETTE FURLONGE

A BRIEF ENCOUNTER

(with special thanks to S. Davis and Athena)

It was a very very cold day—a bitter painful cruel kind of day that was made only slightly more bearable by the clear bright light of a cheerless winter sun and the invigorating smell of the crisp icy air.

The slightest breeze seemed to cut through even the thickest layer of clothing, like a sharp knife right to the bone. It made her forget all of her mother's reminders to her, when she was a child, to "straighten up". Tall girls, she was told, should carry themselves erect in order to have good posture and to look graceful.

On a day like today, her long lean body tensed up as it labored in vain to provide enough fuel to protect itself from the shivers. She was vaguely aware that her shoulders were hunched up around her ears or that her teeth and jaws were clenched or that her head and upper back were bent forward but she was moving too fast to correct it.

It was the kind of day which caused her to think morbid thoughts. As she sped along as fast as her legs could carry her in her "good" wool duffle coat which she had gotten on sale at one of the better stores, she became aware of other people on the street who were wearing thin cotton jackets or pants. Some didn't have gloves, hat or scarf. She could only guess how cold they must feel. Then she would think about all the "street people" and "bag ladies" who had no place to go; about poor folks in general who had had their heat turned off, in their homes, because of unpaid fuel bills. Deserted by the thin rays of the sun, how many of them, she wondered would go to sleep tonight and not wake up? Every winter there seemed to be more and more cases reported in the newspapers of frozen corpses discovered in doorways of deserted buildings or in front of obstinate stoves or heaters. It disturbed her to be reminded that people could die in this kind of weather—that humans were so vulnerable to nature's elements.

There was never enough heat in her apartment either so she was almost glad to be going to the job. She thought of the cozy warm office where she worked as a receptionist. She walked so fast that she couldn't stop to browse in the many store windows that she passed. She didn't stop to pick up a bite to eat until she reached the office building. She decided to make a detour into the little candy store in the lobby. She wanted to pick up a container of yogurt and be on her way. As she handed the store keeper a dollar and waited for the change, she could feel her body already relaxing and straightening out ever so slightly. She was completely absorbed with the animal part of her nature that instinctively sought out shelter and food. She almost grunted with pleasure at the anticipation of feeling the warmth of the office while tasting the cool softness of the yogurt. But she was snapped back to her humanness by a whining, persistent voice. Her ears picked up the sound and then her eyes focused on an old Black woman standing before her.

I don't know how I could have missed her when I came into the store, because it's so small you can hardly even move around in there. She must have slipped in after me. The other people had managed to ignore her. Their backs were turned; their eyes averted. They didn't want to deal with her obvious distress. I was caught off guard. Although I was in a hurry to get upstairs, I looked into her strained anxious face. Her tobacco brown skin was aged but firm. It had a sheen like well oiled antique mahogany wood. The longer I looked at her, the more insistent she became. "Hep me with my coat," she ordered, "it's stuffy in here." I looked at her blankly, not comprehending what it was she wanted. "Hep me wit the buttons on my coat," she explained impatiently, "my fingers are too stiff—they don't work."

I was relieved that she didn't ask me for money, because I didn't have that much. I took a step towards her to unbutton the top button. It was an ugly cheap coat. The ill-fitting collar was fastened too tightly around her neck and it was no wonder that she complained of feeling stuffy. As I undid the 2nd and 3rd button, I could hear her breathing in quick nervous pants and I could see her chest heaving up and down.

She directed me to unzipper her purse, made of imitation plastic leather—the kind that gets stiff and cracks in the cold weather. She reached inside and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper and handed it to me. I re-zippeded the bag and read the scribbled address on the paper. She told me that she was lost. I assured her that she wasn't far from where she had to go and that I could walk with her to the corner and point her in the right direction. At the corner, I was about to turn back when she asked me, with big pleading eyes, if I would cross the street with her. On the other side, there was a small park. Again, she asked, if I could just please go with her through the park. By the time we had gone a few more blocks, it was if a silent bond had been struck between us that I would take her to find the address on the paper. It was close by, yet far out of my way. This is crazy, I thought as we hurried briskly towards our destination. Yet, I reasoned, it wouldn't kill

me to go a few blocks to help another Black woman. I was strong and healthy now and maybe I would need help in this way when I got older.

I glanced over at my new charge huddled beside me. She seemed to have shrunk in size from the cold. Her smooth dark hands looked swollen and puffy. As she moved, they dangled in front of her as if she was about to shake hands with someone. She held her pocketbook in front of her by its shoulder-length strap, causing it to swing slightly. I told her to put her hands in the pocket of her coat to keep them warm but she didn't seem to understand me. I gently guided each of her hands into the side pockets of her coat and moved her bag onto her shoulders. But a few moments later, they slipped out of her pockets like two big slippery flippers and they dangled and swayed as she shuffled along.

We turned up a side street, following the sequence of numbers on the buildings. I'd been naively looking for a street level photo studio or store because she'd mentioned earlier something about having to get some photos. When we reached the right address, I felt kind of foolish as I realized that it was the welfare office that we had been looking for. The ugly drab monstrosity of a building which took up one half of the block and was at least six or seven stories high seemed impossible to miss, now that we had found it. The inside was just as ugly and drab as the outside. Even the people seemed to have assumed the drab coloration of the greyish/greenish interiors. I felt out of place in my heavy wool coat and red leather bag and shoes. My having a salaried job, even as a receptionist, meant that I was in a more privileged situation than those who were forced to come here for measly handouts. I also felt outraged that this old Black woman should have to come out on the coldest day of the year just to get her picture taken for a welfare identification card. In another space and time, she would have been a respected, elder member of her community instead of having to prove her existence, her need.

We made our way over to the elevators. As we waited, I silently fumed while she loudly complained about her son because he wouldn't bring her to the welfare office. Whining and grumbling about the rest of her family whom she felt had also failed her, she suddenly turned to me and asked, "Could you come home with me?" In the next instant, the question changed to a statement, "I sure wish you could come home wit me and hep me," she muttered, looking down at the floor. In that instant that she dared to ask the impossible, I dared to think the unthinkable. The circumstances that had caused our paths to cross had aroused, in me, feelings for her of concern, of caring, of wanting to be helpful. I could picture myself as a good, dutiful daughter to her. I considered that what I would receive in return, her undying devotion and love, would not be an uneven exchange. But the moment passed and we both came back to our senses. Her question remained unanswered and was not repeated again.

An uncomfortable stretch of time went by before the elevator finally came and we entered inside. Sensing that our brief encounter was soon to be concluded, her face began to crumble as she thanked me for coming so far with her. I put my arm around her and told her that everything was going to be all right. I took out a tube of hand lotion from my bag and turned to her. "Here," I said,

as I poured the cool white liquid into her dark puffy palms. As she rubbed her cold hands together and patted her cheeks, a warm smile crept onto her face. I put some of the lotion on my hands also. Enveloped by its gentle scent and soothed by its softness on our skins, we passed our last moments together in a light-hearted exchange of feminine vanities.

The elevator doors opened onto an uglier, drabber floor, jammed with people. A stone-faced male guard looked at us and then away as if we were another cargo of refuse. "I.D. photos,—Get on line!", he announced mechanically. I took my charge over to the end of a long line that weaved in and out of every corner of the room. Before I could give my excuses for leaving, she released me with a silent, resigned nod of her head and she faded into the anonymity of the waiting crowd. I mumbled a good-bye, turned and walked back to the elevator. ●

"Hi Priestess of Brooklyn"



© Sapphire 1980

The Refrigerator Story

It was certain days that the feeling came over her. She didn't know when or how it had started. It had something to do with a lack of order, something the neatly folded clothes, the bathroom floor glistening and smelling of pinesol belied, something that could not be stacked or scrubbed away, something like the disintegration of a star searing thru an otherwise well ordered universe. It also had to do with the simple arithmetic of her life, which never seemed to add up. The thirty-six dollars a week she received in unemployment benefits and the forty-five dollars every two weeks from welfare never seemed to cover meager necessities, much less dreams.

And it was somewhere in clean closets and brown soaped kitchens that the debits created disorder. It could have been attributed to other lacks, but she was unaware of anything except that having put her house in order she was in chaos. Things made little and less sense daily. She couldn't put her finger on when or how, but she became broken—not like a spastic tin toy programmed to self destruct or a fine piece of crystal dashed to seething shards—but more like a damp piece of driftwood or a piece of rubber, things that don't ordinarily crack under ordinary circumstances, and indeed circumstances were as ordinary as any. Things were in their respective places and tho nothing added up it was no less than usual, that is, she had no more of nothing than she usually did. Somewhere under these most ordinary of circumstances certain things ceased functioning in her mind. No, she didn't stop bathing or slip into incoherent babbling. The change was almost imperceptible at first.

Her mode of thinking neither changed drastically nor deviated into odd little quirks. It was the dimensions that changed. She began to think small. In accordance with her place in the universe, she told herself. Her appetites heretofore insatiable became small. She ate less because she needed less, being less. Things that had been of significance dwindled daily. The need for conversation was the first to wither, and a caress or kiss seemed such huge acts. And the clothing, was there ever a need for so much, being so small? Then a most crucial point (why it had taken so long to realize she didn't know). She moved too much, far far too much. What was the need for so much movement? It could all be done from spaces deep inside, as anybody who's done it knows, you must be very very still if you want to fly. So it was with a minimum amount of movement that she dislodged the refrigerator shelves of their contents, quietly stacking everything neatly along the wall, then removed the shelves. She started to pull out the plug, thought better of it—after all cold slowed down movement considerably. Then, placing her bikini bottomed behind on the refrigerator floor, she folded her knees to her chest and inched herself in. She extended her arm, clutched the fixture that formerly held the butter and eggs and completed her last big movement as she pulled the door shut. ●

LINDA J. BROWN

jazz dancin wif mama

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jasmine had shorten to jazz a while ago, cut off her hair but was growin it back in braids, like cornrowed aunt sally from long years before; the kind o braids you don have to comb but once a week. had six ear holes filled wif skinny gold circles an' a dot of diamond wedged in her nose. had on her good black short-sleeved shirt an' tan work pants an' sandals from mexico. gotten over showin toes. in the heart pocket, was the petals from the purple iris dena give jazz to remember her by when she got on the bus. the bus was gonna take her south to monticello; makin a hundred stops from 42nd street 'n' 8th avenue to there. the petals shrank an' squeezed perfume into her shirt an' dried in the wind on the next day of the journey.

early mornin on the bus, with the light on the other side, jazz dozed, still, rollin her head around on her neck an' catchin the air with her open mouth. dena danced in the dream images an' thru jazz' blood until she waked, reaching for her like always in the mornins, an' bumped into the seat in front of her. chucklin to herself.

"fool, you on the bus, girl."

mos people had got off in d.c. an' jazz been able to stretch out in both seats, even tho her long legs hanged over the arm of the end seat into the aisle.

jazz wished she had some o dena's coffee right now, wished she could see some o dena's smile—but not here, not yet or now. jazz hadn tol mama yet—one reason why she come home this time. tellin mama was right, now, but tellin this took seein mama clear in her face.

bus rolled down 95, thru towns that ain't changed since 1902. jazz seen people workin they land, cows grazin, grass growin thick an' tall. jazz looked at the man's watch in the next seat an' counted up the hours on her fingers. be about 3 mo hours, then the journey be finish. at least, the goin half. jazz lit up a kool an' dragged on it, lettin the nicotene seep into her blood, slow, feelin the high it give her, ridin that wave.

dena had made rolls an' chicken an' wrapped them in foil an' a paper bag for jazz to eat an' not get hongry. had put 3 plums in the bag, the color of her own lips on the outside, the color of her tongue an' gums on the inside. sweet, jazz thought, like the center of dena. she had one roll left an' a wing an' a plum. breakfast be ok.

dust kick up so bad you couldn't see nobody. mus be hot, 'cause it sure was dry. red clay dirt all over everywhere. jazz said out loud to no one...

"cain't see mama. wonder if i give her the wrong time."

she got her suitcase with the stripe on both sides—brown grain leather and yellow stripes—down from the rack over the seats.

jazz straightened her shirt an' licked her dry lips. she picked up her bag an' waited her turn to file out the bus. in the sun, her eyes narrowed and the heat brought water, quick, to her forehead an' under her arms. but it loosed her body an' made walkin down the steps an' onto the ground a joy. like a fancy flight.

people wishin other peoples hello. huggin an' kissin, some cryin, sayin how well you look, big you grown.

jazz didn see mama yet an' the people were clearin away. the bus had pull off like a bat out o hell, spewin all them wif red clay dirt—white man sittin in a too tight driver suit in the driver's seat wif a sinister grin. he done reached the end o the line—carryin niggers down in the south—and this was his home, too, so he didn have to be nice no mo, or say yessir or m'am to em. this prank was only the beginnin o his fun.

jazz sit on her bag, brushin off red from her pants an' out her eyes. she sit in the shade of a big tree, foldin her hands like when they use to be in sunday school. waitin for mama to come. mama was walkin, so it may have took some time.

but, then a pickup pulled up, an' mama got out wif her good red cotton dress on an' pretty as a young girl in her sun hat. the sun had culled her a deep coco brown, even early in june. she smiled that smile let you know you home, an' reach out her long slender arms an' legs for jazz before she got right up on her. when she did, she wrap her arms round jazz' body.

"my baby. my own baby girl. don you look like water to a thirsty man to yo mama. jasmine. come here, baby. come here to mama."

an' jazz bury herself in mama's arms. 'mama's busom. under mama's heart. she smell an' breathe everything familiar. everything she know bout herself in this life. she close her eyes.

"mama, i'm so glad you come, finely. thought i'd be sittin her in-tomorrow." she teased.

"mama, i'm glad to be here. to see you agin."

around the laughin an' rockin an' swaying, the womon driver of the pickup walked. she stood behin mama, puttin her arm round her waist an' pullin her kinda upright.

"catherine."

mama straighten up an' let go o jazz for a bit. she turn an' smile into the womon eyes, while jazz stare, puzzle, wonder.

"jasmine meet maxine."

maxine put her hand toward jazz, who grip it firm an' said hello into maxine's eyes. maxine smiled an' said jazz look like her pictures on mama's table, after all. she took jazz' bag an' put it in the back o the pickup. then they all climb in. the truck moved with maxine drivin, jazz in the middle, an' mama by the door.

mama talk bout jazz' hair an' how thin jazz was. she pat her heart pocket where the petals dena give jazz was, still. they flew out in a puff on mama's lap. jazz pick them up one by one, settlin them back in her pocket.

"they pretty." mama told her.

"a womon name dena, who is sweet to me, who is my love, mama, give em to me fo the trip. so's i could 'member her while i'm away." jazz confessed.

"maxine an' me been together more'n a year now. since close after the las time i seen you in the flesh, jasmine. she good to me an' love me. an' i loves her."

"they's limonade an' ginger bread at home. we can all sit out on the po'ch an' have a long talk, girl. they's always mo news than you can put in a letter." ●

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3RD WORLD LESBIAN VISUAL ARTISTS

I am a Black lesbian painter and graphic artist, working on a book about 3rd world lesbian visual artists. Please send your support, ideas, and any information you want to share to: Robin Christian, 314 East 91st St., NYC 10028



Articles by 3rd World lesbians are wanted for an anthology on women identified women, which is currently being edited by two lesbian researchers. Articles on coming out, societal oppression, lesbian activism, and lesbian culture are especially welcome. Send inquiries, abstracts, or articles to: ANTHOLOGY, Box 25, Penn Laird, Virginia 22846



Cleis Press, a new feminist publishing company whose first books will appear in 1981, is researching a large resource book documenting the feminist "resistance" movement against male violence. We are looking for articles of feminist theory on tactics for fighting back, views on violence, analysis of the current struggle against this wave of abuse, essays and stories of feminist fantasy. For more info and to send in work (Deadline: October 1, 1980) write: CLEIS PRESS, Frederique Delacoste, 3141 Pleasant Ave. South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408



Julia Penelope (Stanley) and Susan Wolfe are seeking personal narratives from wimmin that respond to the question, "Why Do Wimmin Marry Men?" If you have a story to tell, please send it to us. While we want the stories themselves to be true, autobiographical information, any form is fine—narratives, diaries, poetry, plays, etc. If you don't think of yourself as a "writer", send us a cassette tape recording and we'll have it transcribed. Our deadline is *December 1, 1980*. For information and to send in work (with SASE) write to: Julia Penelope, Dept. of English, U. of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb. 68588, or Susan J. Wolfe, Dept. of English, U. of S. Dakota, Vermillion, SD 57069



B.C.A.R. PUBLICATIONS is a gay press. They are looking for manuscripts for novels. They are also accepting material for an anthology of lesbian literature. For more information write: *B.C.A.R. PUBLICATIONS*, PO Box 50, Cooper Station, NYC 10003



CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

MICHIYO CORNELL

"I am a Eurasian lesbian mother, who lives and works in Vermont. I was raised by a sadistic stepmother and alcoholic father, after my mother died a month before my fifth birthday."

MYRNA HILL

Black lesbian poet and writer. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

JUANA MARIA PAZ

"Juana Maria Paz is a New York Puerto Rican now living in the Fayetteville, Arkansas Womyn's Community. She has lived at La Luz and Rainbow, both lands for womyn of colour. She writes plays, poems, visions, keeps journals of womyn's evolution, makes matriarchal clothes for womyn and is always interested in hearing from womyn on any of the above.

COQUI

"I like to be called Coqui—it represents a certain frog called the coqui in Puerto Rico. I'm 25 yrs. and a mother of two Scorpio girls. I'm a Gemini, with a Libra moon sign. I believe in astrology and in the unusual. I love disco-dancing. I love quiet, romantic settings with my womyn. I'm concerned about mothers, abuse and brutality on womyn. I'm womyn conscience."

ROBBI

Black lesbian poet, writer; living and working in NYC.

LOU

"My name is Lou. I've decided to become my own woman, so I don't use my given last name. I am a Black lesbian-feminist mother. I live in Columbia, South Carolina."

ROSITA ANGULO MIRET LIBRE de MARULANDA

Born in Baronquilla, Colombia (S.A.). She is a Virgo. Rosita feels that "the world is so messed up because it's run by a few people who use only 10% of their brains." She believes that people should come out and be heard. "Coming out of that closet is like coming out of the womb; a very frightening process, and yet a very liberating one."

ANNA HEARNE

"Anna is a Matriarchal Writer. She is a Lesbian, a Woman of Colour of Black and Multiple Heritage. She is Jamaican by birth, British by Education, and American (a little) by association. Her commitment is to the resurrection of the female imagination in all its forms."

DONNA DONATO

"Am an Afroamerican woman who loves and respects other women. Currently living in Washington, DC. with eyes turned toward NYC."

JOAN GIBBS

Joan Gibbs lives and works in New York City. She is the author of one book of poems and a prose piece, *Between A Rock and A Hard Place*, and co-compiler of *Top Ranking: A Collection of Articles on Racism and Classism in the Lesbian Community*. Both are published by February 3rd Press, and available from the author. Joan is a contributing editor of *Azalea*. "If He Changed My Name..." is from a soon-to-be-published collection of short stories entitled *Bearin' Witness* in which Joan is attempting to understand what it has meant and means to be a Black woman in the U.S.

ROCHELLE H. DUBOIS

"Editor of *Valhalla*, whose 7th issue is titled, "Woman's Love" and includes contemporary women's fiction. She is the author of *PANGS* (Lawton Press 1980) and the upcoming *The Train in the Rain* (Timberline Press 1981). For more information write: Merging Media, 59 Sandra Circle A-3, Westfield, NJ 07090."

ROBIN CHRISTIAN

"Virginian, currently residing and working in NYC...Painter... Lesbian...Graphic Artist...Coordinator...Co-editor of *AZALEA*...Black..."

DONNA ALLEGRA

"I am a Brooklyn born, lower east side living tomboy who never grew out of it, but instead went on to further my education after Tilden High School at Bennington College—excusing myself for mental health reasons—then to finish up at New York University graduating from baby butch to pedal pushing Amazon riding ten speeds on the pages of my journals, in poems, essays, reviews, and now, short stories, over the air of WBAI radio; vegetarian, shy, growing more like the women I still dream about.

JEWELLE GOMEZ

She is originally from Boston, Mass. She is a Virgo. A critic, poet and teacher. Jewelle is currently working on her first novel. She is the author of *The Lipstick Papers*, a newly released edition of poetry, available from all NYC women's bookstores.

PATTI-GAYLE JACKSON

"I hope my work is sufficient indication of my loves/concerns/commitments. I want to poet and tell tales as well as document our herstory/history. Presently, I'm working on all that here in Brooklyn, NY."

DORIS DAVENPORT

"She is a Black lesbian writer living in Los Angeles. She was born in Cornelia, Georgia, and has a B.A. from Paine College, in Augusta, Georgia. She is also a part of a writing collective in Los Angeles called, 'Daughters of Yemayé.'"

IRARE SABÁSU

"Freelance artist, poet, writer. West-Indian amazon. Taurus-gypsie. Come to participate in the NYC dance—and to add a few steps of her own. Goddess willing."

KATERI SARDELLA

Kateri is a Native American lesbian writer and poet. She lives and works in California.

JULIE BLACKWOMON

Black lesbian poet, writer; living and working in Philadelphia, PA.

CLAUDETTE FURLONGE

Black lesbian political activist and organizer; works and lives in NYC. Co-editor *AZALEA*.

SAPPHIRE

"Black lesbian poet-writer, living in NY."

LINDA J. BROWN

Black lesbian-feminist writer, photographer, graphic artist. Born, grown, lives, works in NYC. Co-editor of *AZALEA*. Author of *The Rainbow River: stories of cullered womyn*, Iridian Press, 1980 (L.J. Brown, 314 East 91st Street, NYC, 10028)

SANDRA LARA

"Puerto-Rican woman, born in Staten Island, NY. Raised across the US. Came back to my roots in NYC, where I now live and work." Co-editor *AZALEA*.

NEXT ISSUES

The next issue—**Winter 1980-1981**— will be a mixed bag. The emphasis will be on graphics. Due to our current printing process, we can only accept those done in black ink (as *dark as possible*) on white bond paper. We cannot accept anything larger than 8½" x 11", at the present time. Be sure to mail work in an envelope or container that will protect it. Also, please enclose a Self-Addressed-Stamped-Envelope (or container) for the return of your work. We cannot be responsible for returning work, otherwise. We also cannot be responsible for work damaged by the postal service. We are also accepting short stories and articles for this issue. The deadline is *December 12, 1980*. Send to: AZALEA, c/o Sandra Lara, 14 Lincoln Pl., Brooklyn, NY 11217



The **Spring 1981** issue of AZALEA will focus on the politics of being a Third World lesbian. Some of the questions that we are interested in hearing your answers to are: what does it mean to be a Third World lesbian, what does feminism mean to you as a Third World lesbian, differences that exist among us because of our different ethnic backgrounds, our relationships, and your/our relationships to our Third World communities and the lesbian community. For this issue we will be accepting articles, prose pieces, book reviews, and graphics—please keep your submissions to under 6 pages. All submissions should be sent to *Azalea*, c/o Joan Gibbs, 306 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238. The deadline for this issue is *February 18, 1981*.



Sisters—Due to an overwhelming response, we are publishing a special poetry issue for **The Fall 1981** issue of *Azalea*. Please hold all poetry manuscripts until *August 1981*. **We won't be accepting any poetry manuscripts until then.** Send all manuscripts to: AZALEA, c/o Claudette Furlonge, 1000 Grand Concourse, no. 7B, Bronx, NY 10451





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