

AZALEA

summer/fall 1979

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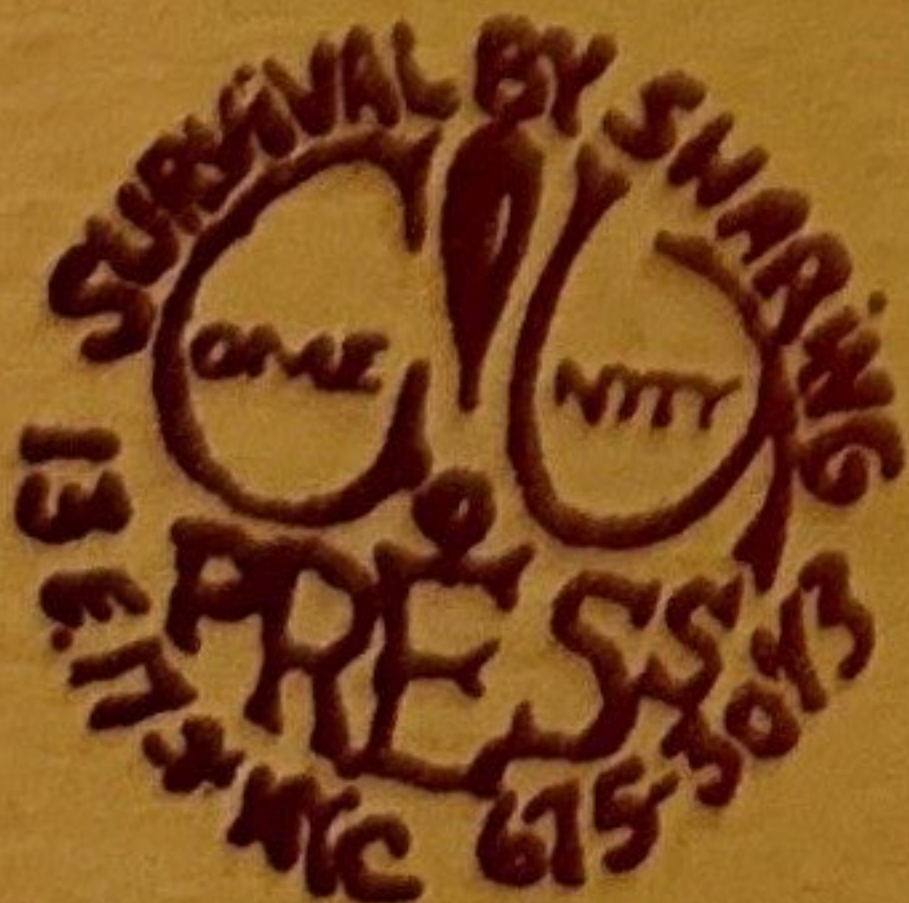
\$1.50

more if you can,
less if you can't

a magazine for third world lesbians



(C) L. Brown 8-79



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The proposed theme for that issue will be
"Third World Lesbian Mothers"

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AZALEA will be sent free to any woman in
prison. Send us your address. AZALEA
is mailed in a plain envelope.

** If you cannot afford the price of
AZALEA, send what you can.

Cover graphic by Linda Brown.

We will not be vanguished. We must survive,
No longer destroying each other, no longer being
ashamed and hating ourselves for this.

We must tell each other the story of our
lives. We must love as lovers and cherish each
other's strength.

You, mother, the well of my strength,
my nurturer, my first lover, you must continue
to tell me the story of your life,

January, 1979

Wendy McNeil

FEAR -- A DARK CLOSET

The dark closet of fear has kept many women from reaching out toward other women. We hold back, so afraid that a smile or a gesture will provoke others into pointing an accusing finger at us, saying "She's one of those." We cannot laugh, hug, or kiss like the couple parting for the day or meeting for the night because of fear.

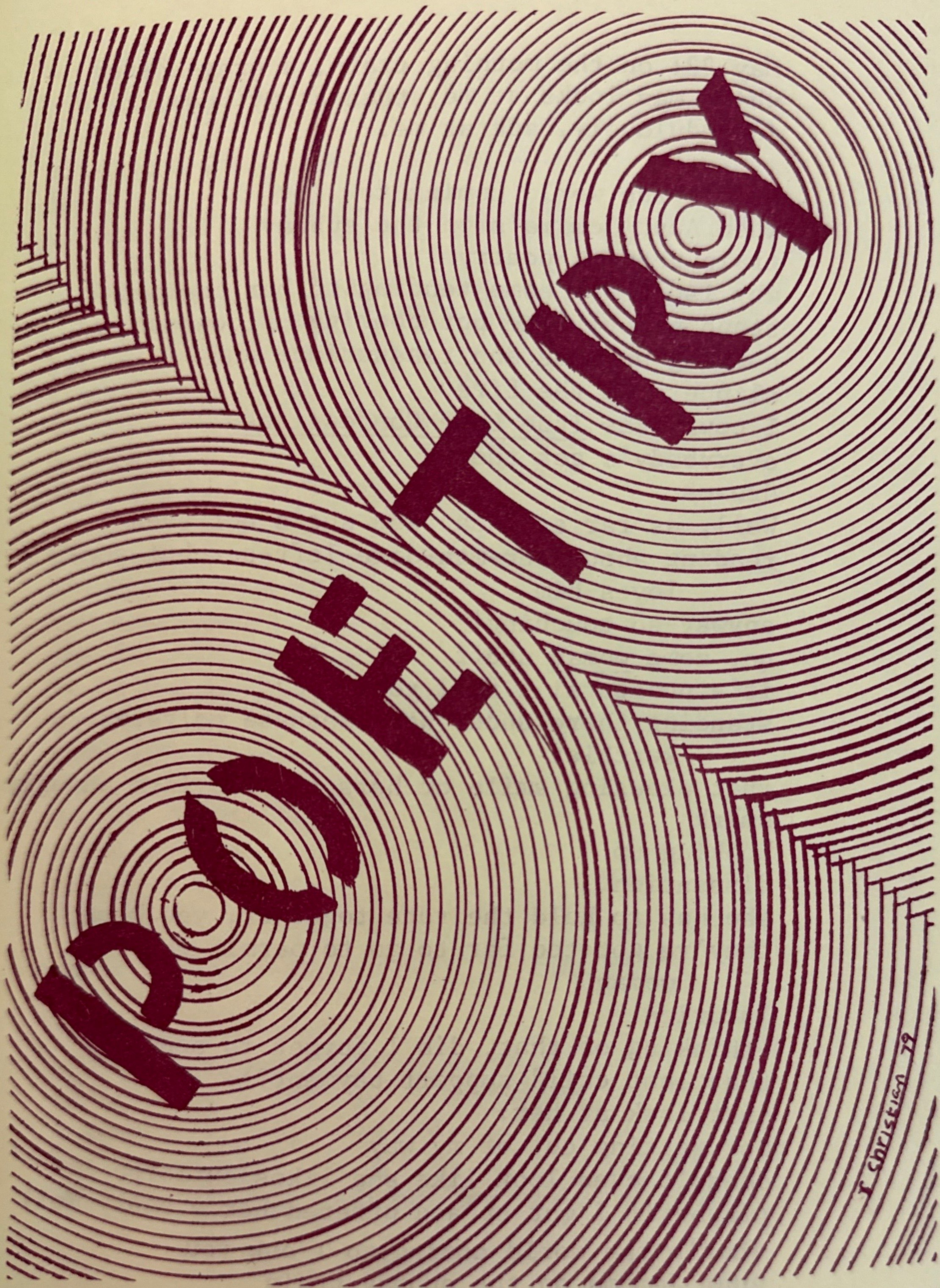
Some women have opened their closet doors and said, "Look at me, I don't give a damn. This is who I am." To these women I say, "I love you, for you have shown the strength I am so desperately searching for."

To those who are like this writer who remains in the dark closet, I say, comfortingly, "I understand." But let us not give up entirely and retreat further onto the uppermost shelf, behind the hat box, underneath the afghan. In time, we too will throw open the door and say, "Go ahead and see what I have kept hidden inside for so many painful years. I don't give a damn. I AM WHO I AM!"

Be patient, the strength to do this will come.

Robbi

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F. CHRISTIAN 79

May 22: on the morning train, a grey-haired
white man looks at me, then at my book, then
incredulously back at me.

What's the world coming to
when Aunt Jemima's on the subway
train reading poetry
why isn't she home tending to her business?
standing over the pot cooking up contentment
cooking up home and reassurance and
slippers by the fire
I could see True Love Confessions-
everybody's got their
dreams
Well, as far as I can see she's not even
reading about her-man-done-left-her-but-she-
loves-him
anyway-so touching!
no, some woman stuff
it's unnatural I tell you
standing there under her Japanese polyester
kerchief
that pleasing smile of hers twisted into an ugly
smirk
cooking up
dissent.
she has to hold the race together, you know
they've got too far to go to permit white
woman
luxuries
(thinking of that, did I forget to send off
that last child support payment?)
just look at her:
not getting out of my way
doesn't even look like she likes children
(maybe if I got up and offered her a seat? No?)
what's the world coming to I ask you
Aunt Jemima on the subway train
cooking up
destruction.

Myrna Hill

"Thinking Over You"

Pausing in the middle of the page,
my distracted eyes
suddenly penetrating the walls and miles
of time,
my rays of inner light stretch especially
into my cancelled future with you,
making it different with you,
trying to make it
through this today that stretches out
before me
and behind me endlessly

Thinking of you crying, crying,
crying late at night
and wondering,
for the millionth time,
if it was really for some distant grief,
distant in the time before I knew you,
that you cried,
that you could not be comforted,
or was it instead some cruelty,
some failing of you that somehow I cannot
remember
that drove you, wordless with hurt,
into the comfortless arms of your past

Thinking over you,
endlessly reinterpreting a memory,
revising my memory of an incident,
I wonder if that incident or this
was essential
or only a minor incident cancelled by time.

Myrna Hill

Apologia
or
Answer to the Question: Do Lesbians
Have More Fun?

I was heterosexual
as I used to be Catholic.

It was true, then;
I believed it, then.

It is not better to be a non-believer
it is worse:
it was better having faith
as it was better to have The Tooth Fairy.

But The Tooth Fairy is gone.

It is not better being
a non-believer,

but it is true.

Myrna Hill

OFFERING TO INANNA

Goddess.....
Just give me the
strength to reach
the top of the
highest mountain
I must climb in my life.
Then reaching up
on tip-toe, let me....
.....touch the sky.
Just give me enough
wisdom to let me
walk my roads, enough
courage, not to turn
from paths with broken
bridges or jagged rocks
where I must bleed and cry.
Just give me enough room
to keep an open mind,
an open heart.....grant me
the insight to see behind
the masks, into the souls...
Show me how to find the
inner truth. How to confront
.....deliberate lie.
Please let me learn to sing
with my sisters, chants
our mothers knew when worlds
were young. Words that weaved
us tightly together, before
the drifting/ sifting.....
when our songs would bind.....
the words would tie.....

Goddess....immerse me in
your light....in your love
be lenient with your daughter
though I stray....oh! the
world of man is much for me, and
highly is the price I often pay
for dignity.....for privacy...
for living free....for being me.
For loving women without guilt.
or fear. For wanting to nurture...
.....to hold them near.
Now! ...it is not enough, this
wanting that I have to fly....
I must attempt to try....I ask
your blessings,....I open wide
my eyes, I take a breath.....
I plunge...I door die.

SABASU

TALKING BOUT MASTURBATION/ AND

JUST LETTING THE TIDE ROLL IN

sitting here
letting the
sweetness of
the saxophone
sink in.....

letting the
coolness of
my fingers
roam across
my skin.....
letting my
mouth blossom
from quiet smile
to happy grin.....

Just letting the tide roll in.....

and my breath spin
in semi-circles
to the ceiling
as i fall into
the feeling
finding soft
and even softer.....
wet before and after.....

i'm prism-bouncing
between passion-pink
and pearly.....
and it really
doesn't matter.....
coming late or
coming early
when one comes by
wine and candle light.
i guess it could be
called a solo-orgy.

Just by letting the tide roll in.

Autumn.....

came at 1/2 past two

last Thursday afternoon

and I was caught

quite unprepared.....

for it had come too soon.

The wound was raw.....

the hurt still lived

the game was not at end.

Tho' strong winds

could not break me.....

Lord!the pain it took

.....to bend.....to bend.

SABASU

Ode to the Alias American Smelting Pot

large gaping mouth
burning hot with greed- on the lookout for
profits horizon
sign reads "American Melting pot" stand
clear
or by order of the law, be swallowed up.

burning hot with desire--on the lookout
for the consumer
large probing globes for eyes
on the lookout for those dollar signs
nothing is too great or small for the pot

burning hot with greed -alias smelting pot
machine

burning hot with bodies - the machine is fed
by big industries

smelting down people
burning people is it's business
burning people for profit is big business
there's no waste -- the smelting pot uses
all parts

culture/language/skin --not one part is left.

the sign in the museum reads:
"American Smelting Pot" --stand clear
or by order of the supreme law,
BE SWALLOWED UP

(c) spring Karen wells '79

the Problem of English

a major problem with english is
alot of people are speaking it.....
who originally did not
who lived in other places
who lived with different ways
people who did not want the english.

they did not speak english.....
they did not "want" to change
they did not "want" to lose their
native, original words
they did not "want" to forget their
original, old ways

they wanted to keep their own ways.....
these people fought long battles
people are still fighting battles
to keep what's left of their old ways

a major with english
is

A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE USING IT AGAINST
THEIR WILL

(c) fall '78 karen wells

Small Change

there are events

which remind me

of long ago times

times when i was confused

i would talk to men

no longer do i

talk to men

when confused.....

(c)karen wells fall '77

WHO AM I

I AM CHANGING,

but the new me frightens
the me I used to be.

THE NEW ME WANTS--

to spread her wings and soar
grasping all within her reach
tasting and touching
the sweetness of life.

THE OLD ME STAYS--

silent, watching through fearful eyes
at what the new me wishes to
taste and touch.
she is silent and watchful
waiting to push the new me
into that dark closet of fear.

She'd like to lock her away, forever!

Robbi

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MY LOVE CAN BE

like the sunrise, the morning dew
that makes the earth all fresh and new
like a misty rain sprinkling down
to quench the dry and thirsty ground.

MY LOVE CAN BE

as gentle as a soft, wet breeze
flowing through the leafy trees
like the smells of coming spring
that makes the hearts of children sing.

I'LL GIVE IT

freely without charge
this love of mine is mighty large
it can fill an empty cup
come taste my love, come let us sup.

Robbi

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International Woman's Day

i wear a feather in my hair
i walk tall
because i am indian
a native-american woman

i carry generations
of my people's blood
in my heart
i know secrets
that no one
ever whispered to me
i am aware that my womb is empty
of my people's future children

i join the walk to the square
i am surrounded by sisters--my family
and i am proud to be a lesbian
i carry generations of woman-wisdom
in my struggle

my sisters see me
an indian woman
and don't know who i am
what i feel

the brown-skinned woman
sitting across from me
makes my heart race

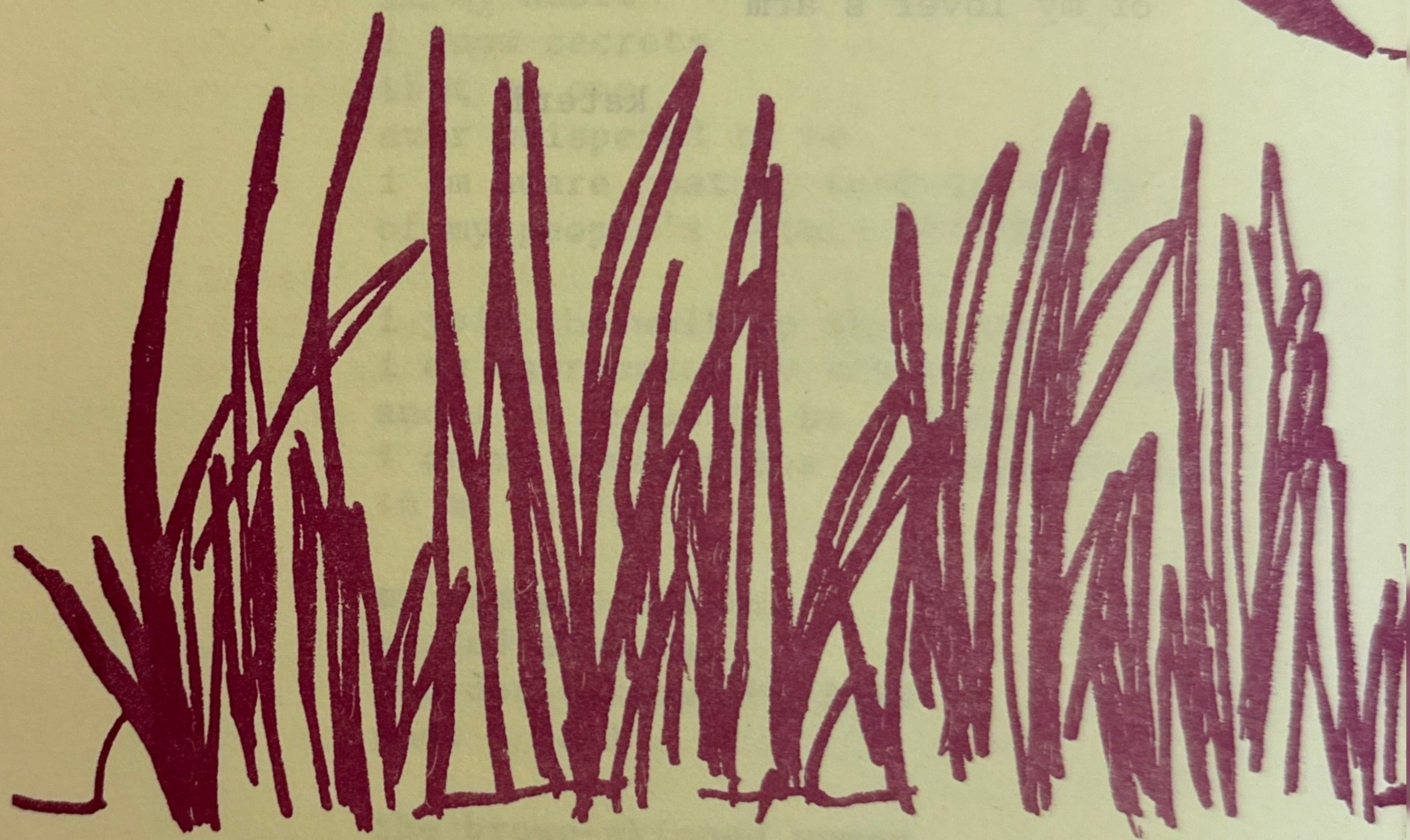
does she know me?

i say hello
she sits still
no movement
her eyes vacant of recognition

i am caught--invisible
trapped
a feather in my hair
the great spirit lives in me
sappho lives in me

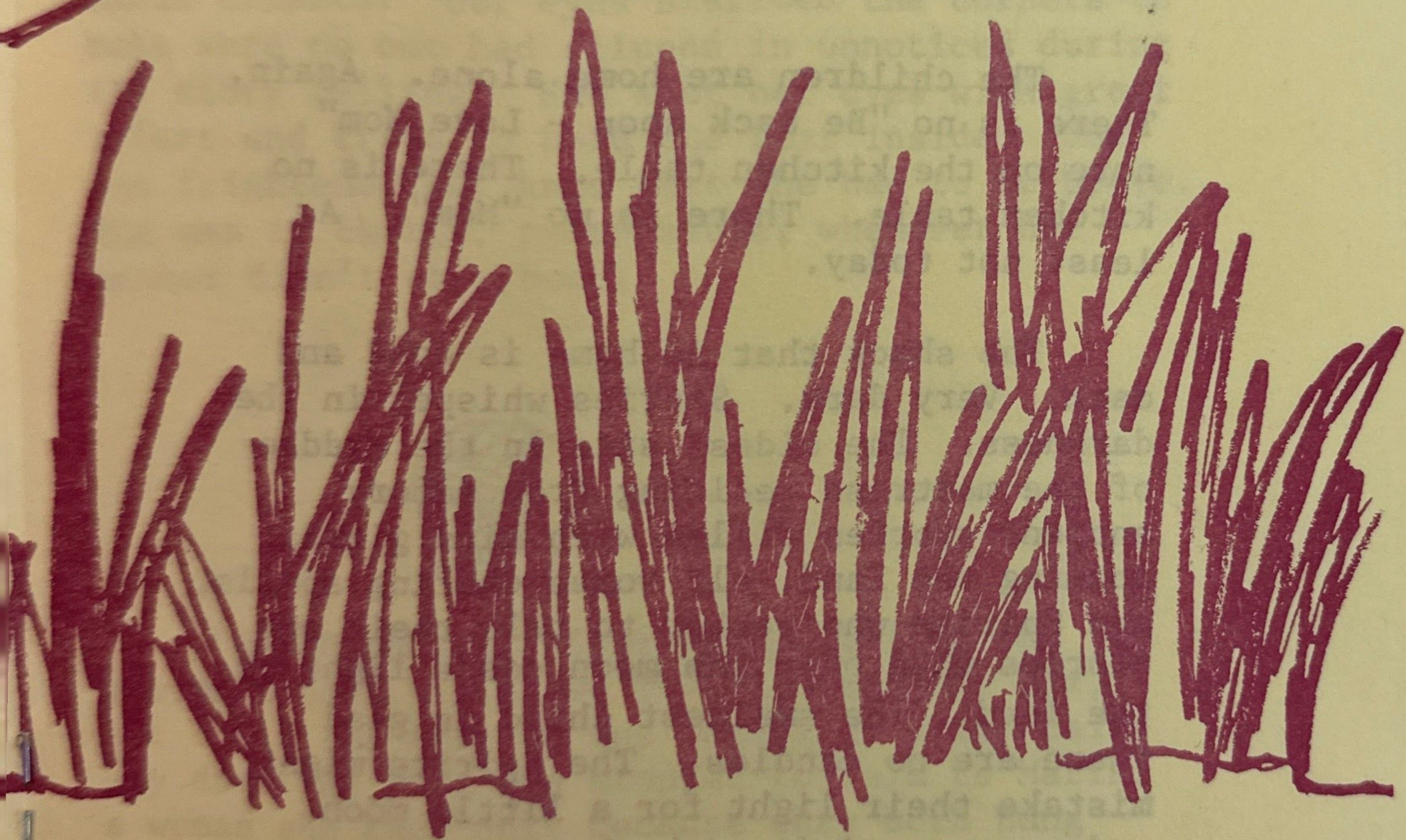
in this crowd
this wide unconnected circle
i reach out
my hand searching for the comfort
the acceptance
of my lover's arm

kateri



STORY -

9/19 Brown 9/19

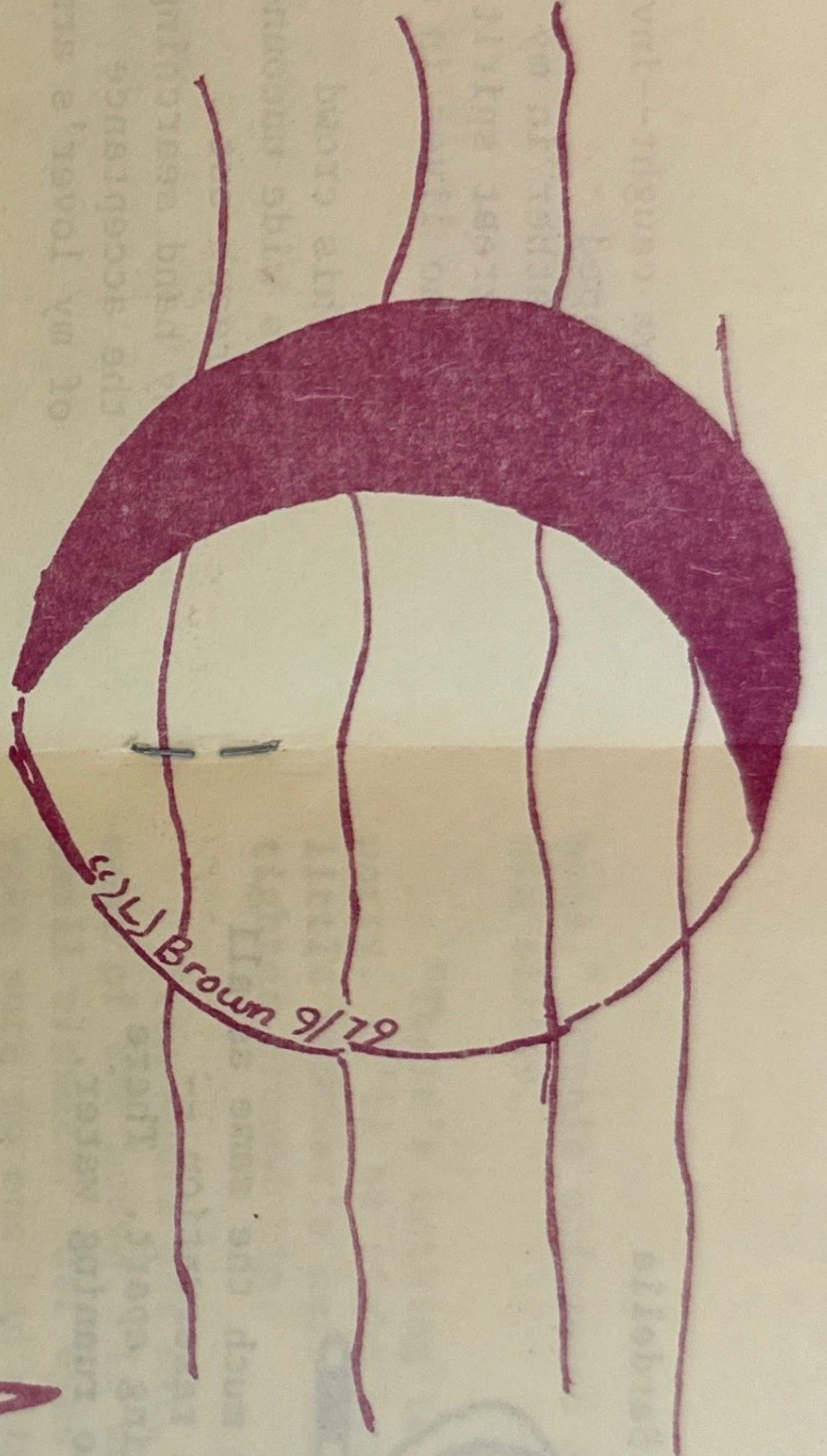
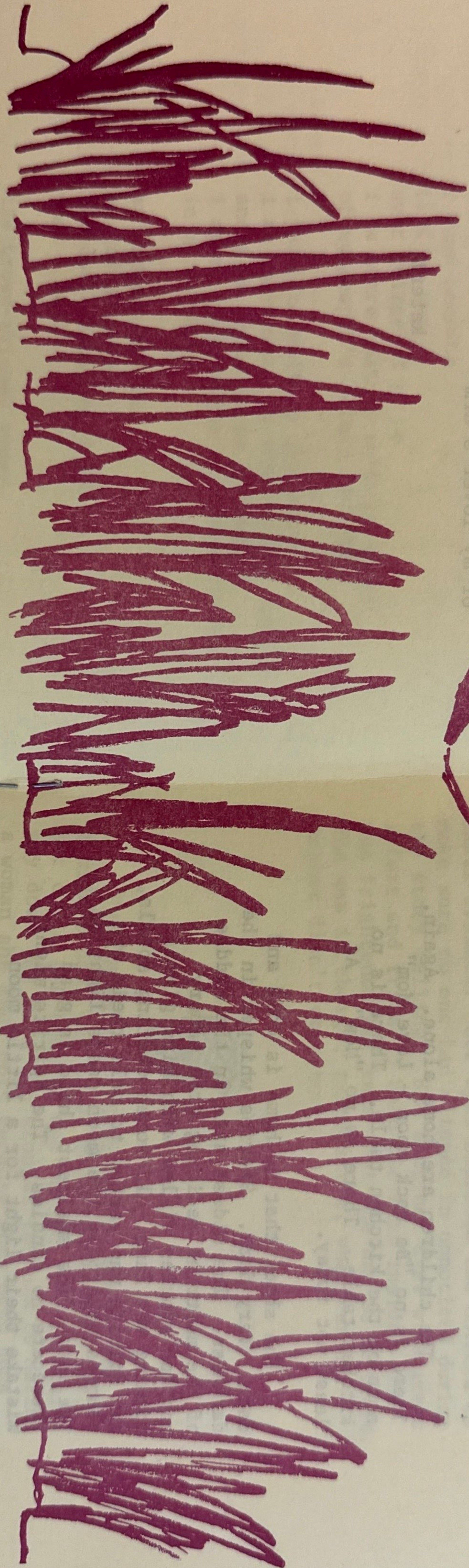


TELLING

STORY - TELLING

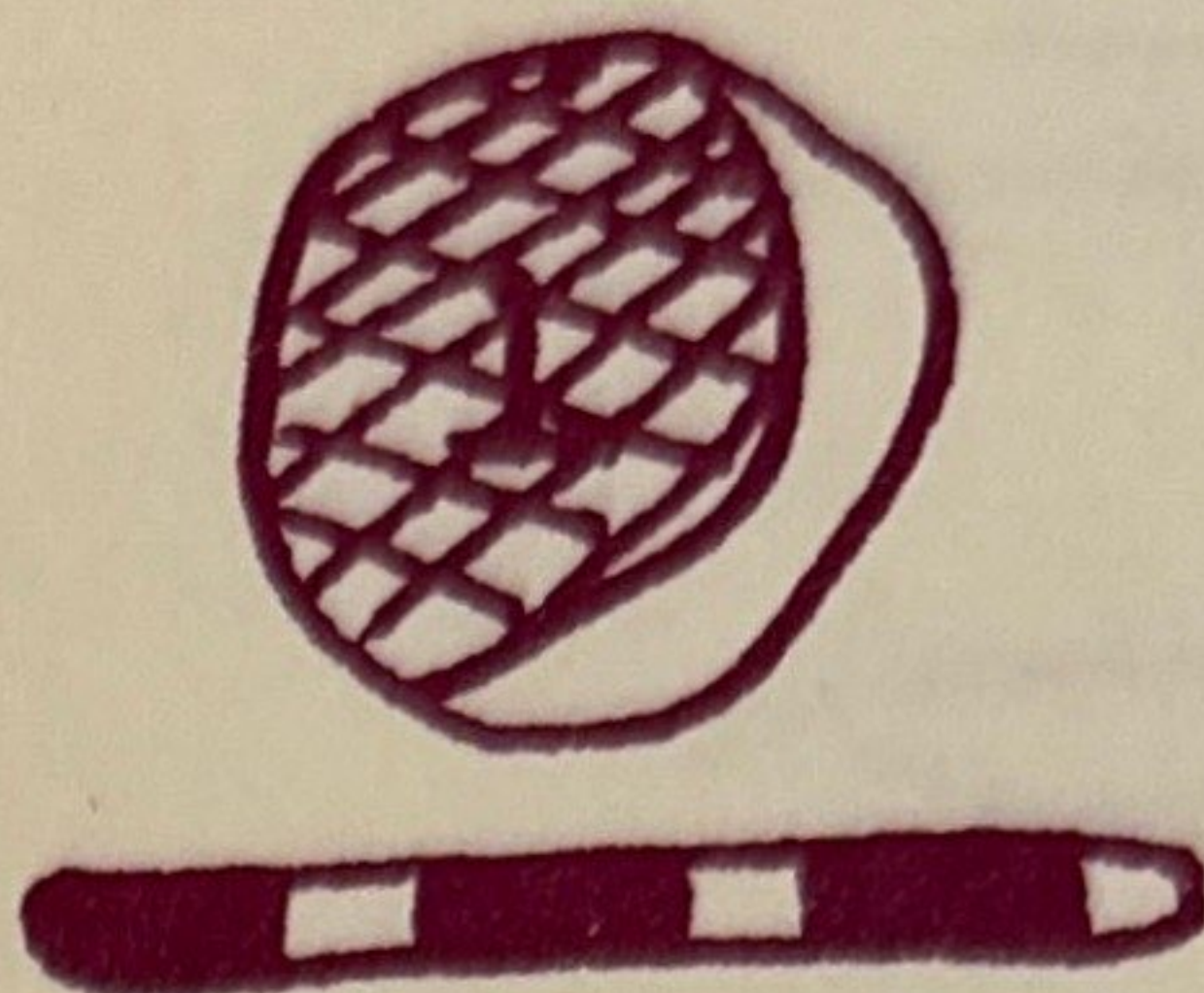
19.

20.



Vision Quest

by Kateri Sardella



This house is very much the same as all the other houses on the reservation -- half completed and falling apart. There is no electricity and no running water.

The children are home alone. Again. There is no "Be back soon - Love Mom" note on the kitchen table. There is no kitchen table. There is no "Mom". At least not today.

The shack that is home is cold and dark. Very dark. Stories whisper in the darkness. The oldest sits in the middle of the mattress reciting from memory ancient stories filled with kind giants roaming the land, old women casting spells, and Spirits who gather to tell their own stories when only the moon casts light on the land. The smallest child is glad there are no candles. The Spirits might mistake their light for a little moon and want to visit with them.

"Will Mommy be home tomorrow, Evy?"

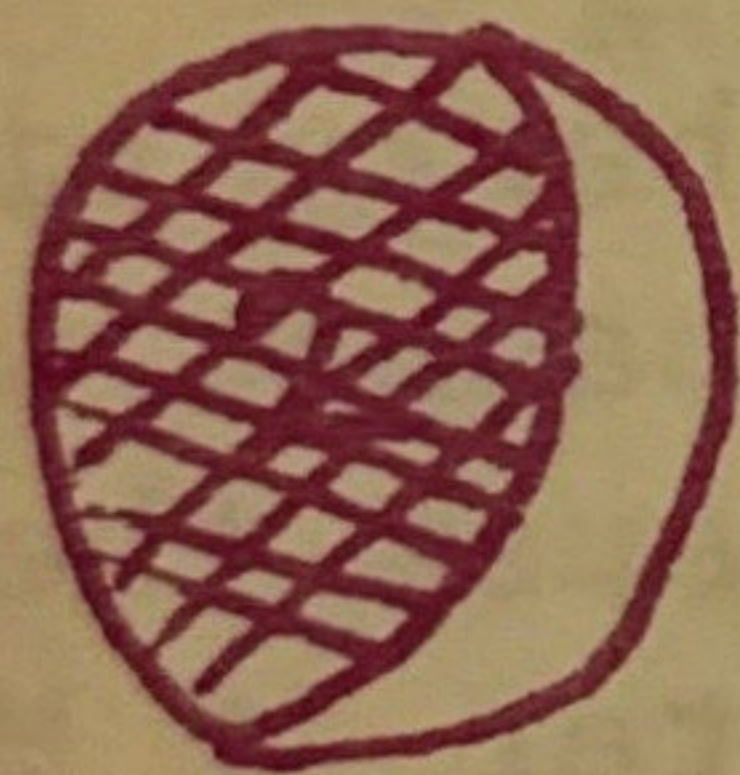
"Sure she will, Donnie. Now stop talking and go to sleep."

"I'm scared and I want Mommy to come

home," Donnie whimpered as he hugged closer to his sister.

"There's nothing to be scared of so don't worry. I'll be right here." Evy stroked her little brother's hair and pulled the blankets tighter around him.

From where she sat, Evelyn could see through most of the house. It was one large room and two small closets. Her eyes searched the corners to make sure no one had slipped in unnoticed during the story telling. She shut her eyes with great effort and tried to hold the fear inside. She was frightened but knew that she had to be brave. She was in charge, responsible, whenever her mother didn't come home.



"Hey Margaret! Over here, baby!" She couldn't hear him above the blaring juke box, but could see that he was waving at her. Half-way down the bar, she stopped to talk to Marie, a woman she knew only because they both hung out at the Indian bar once in awhile. Neither one of them spent much time there because the men never had any money.

"Hey Marie, what's that white guy's name down there in the corner?"

Marie swung her head around and stared in the direction Margaret had pointed. "Which one Margaret? There's a whole bar full of 'em here!" Marie loved white men. She thought they all had money.

"The one in the corner, I told ya. He's got a black shirt on and whiskey sittin' in front of him." Margaret was getting nervous. It had been awhile since she had found a man to buy her drinks. She didn't want him to find someone else to spend his money on before she got there,

"Oh him! Not bad lookin'!" Marie noticed the money almost immediately. "Jim or Joe, who cares! They'll answer to anything at first. When you get down there have him send me a drink, will ya?"

"Let me see if I can get one first!" Margaret unconsciously patted her hair, adjusted her skirt, and strolled up to him, her hips keeping subtle time to the music.

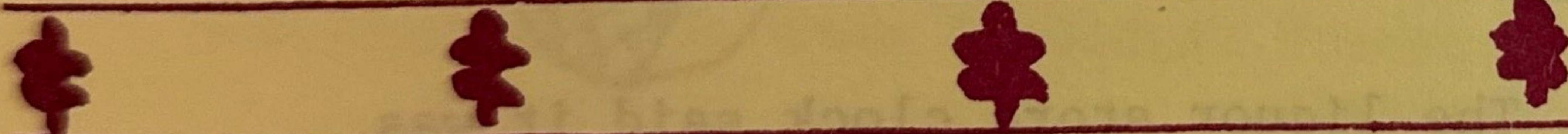


Evelyn had been berry picking since sunrise. Her little basket was nearly full and she felt good because they would eat today. It didn't matter if Mom didn't come home. She was taking good care of the kids.

The ocean smells began to draw her to the water's edge. The sound of waves splashing against rocks comforted her. She sat down in her favorite place and started looking for the big boats that often passed by the island. Her mind was just beginning to wander when she heard the high pitched sound of her little brother's

voice yelling to her from atop the hill. He was excited and that made Evelyn a little afraid. Her heart was pounding in her ears now, blocking out the comforting sound of the waves. She didn't turn around, but could feel him half-running, half-falling down the hill.

"Mommy's home! Mommy's home!" Donnie fell against his sister. Exhausted from running, he gasped for air before he continued. "Come on, Ev! Come and see Mommy! She came home in a big truck and she has some food and she said we could all go for a ride and we could sit in the back! Eeeya! I'm so happy! Aren't you happy? This is my best day!" He danced around Evelyn singing, "My Mommy's home! My Mommy's home!" stomping his foot hard into the ground each time he came to "home". Donnie started tugging Evelyn up the hill. An emotion she couldn't understand ran through her and she angrily grabbed a bunch of berries and squishing them in her hand, rubbed the juice into the shirt she had been trying so hard to keep clean. Then she flung the basket, which she contained her family's breakfast, into the tall grass and ran after her brother.

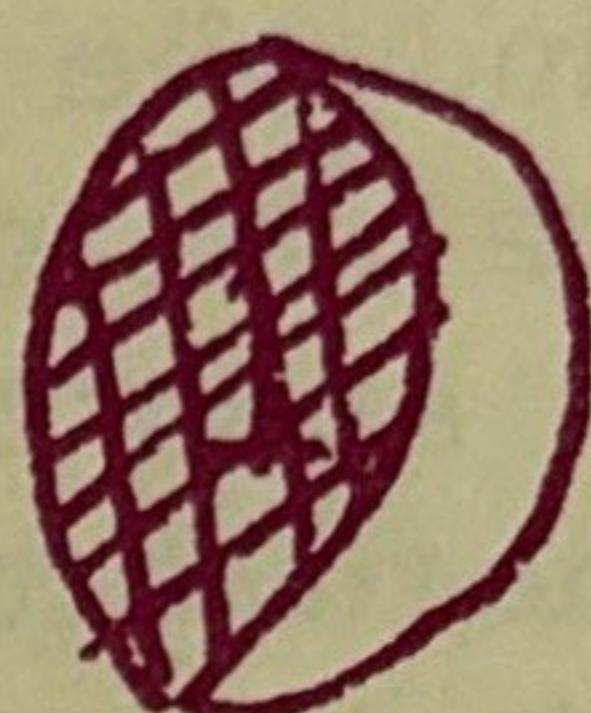


Margaret watched Evelyn walking towards her. Her daughter was growing so fast. She was the oldest, ten years old last winter. Her baby, her child, looked like an old woman in a little girl's body.

She had been gone five days this time. She wanted to stay home but there just wasn't

anything to keep her on the reservation. She'd stay for a few days now, but then the shakes would start and she'd be gone again. As Evelyn entered the yard, Margaret knew that her daughter was beginning to hate her.

PART II



The sun pounded in her eyes. She shoved a hairy arm off her waist and got up. Her legs shook as she stood to look out the window. No one was on the street below. On the crumpled bed lay a man Evelyn couldn't remember seeing before. He disgusted her. On the night stand was an ashtray full of change. She got dressed quietly, drank what was left in the bottle, and shoved the money into her purse.

The liquor store clock said it was only half past eight, so she headed over to Bill's, a run-down tavern that opened at six. There was no sense in going home now. The kids would already be on their way to school. She didn't like to leave them alone all night but she didn't know anybody in town yet. After awhile they'd get used to it and everything would be better. She'd make sure she was there when they got home.

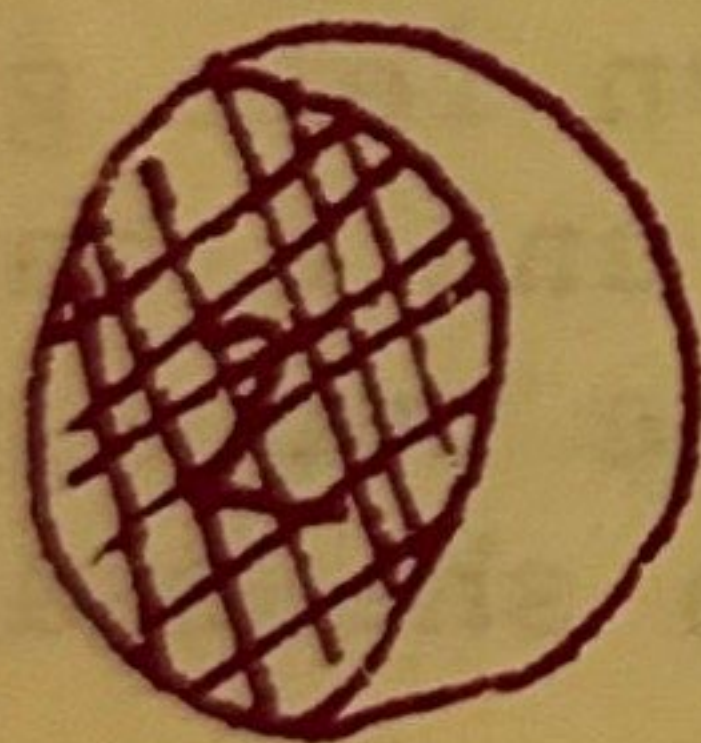
Johnnie and Kathy were sitting in the front room on the bed. At eleven and nine years old, they were in charge. Mommy didn't come home again last night. The baby was hungry and crying. They didn't have any milk so they filled his bottle with warm water. Donnie didn't want to go to school again; the kids made fun of him because he had holes in his clothes.

"I'll stay home with the baby today, Kath; you better go to school. And make sure Donnie walks all the way with you. The other day he just ended up walking back home."

"Okay. But you know his teacher wants to see Mommy today. What do I tell her?"

"Tell her Mom's working and she can't come."

"You know she ain't going to believe me. Donnie! Come on! We're going to be late! See ya later, John!" Kathy yelled as she ran out the door.



When Evelyn opened the door, she heard her children's feet running towards the back of the flat.

"Hey, Where ya goin! Get over and let me see my babies' faces!"

"Mommy? Mommy! It's Mommy, Kathy! They both came running to the door; their eyes searched the darkness for any sign of food.

"Hey, turn on the lights! I can't see a damned thing!"

"There ain't no lights, Mommy. But we got some candles!" Johnnie called as he ran to get them.

"Mommy, the cops were here and we told 'em we were somebody else and we didn't know who you were!!" Kathy started to tell her story, the fear starting all over again, but her mother cut her off.

"Don't worry 'bout no cops, Baby, 'cause we're goin' away tomorrow. All of us."

"We are? Where we goin', Mom? Johnnie asked as he came running in from the other room, two candle stubs in his hand.

"Light those things and we'll sit down and talk about it." Evelyn felt good tonight. She found money and a car all in the same man. "Where's the two little ones?" Her stomach tightened when she realized they were missing.

"They're sleepin'! It's the middle of the night, Mom! So where we goin'?" Kathy asked as she led her mother to the kitchen table. Her little hand fit so well in her mother's. She felt some of the anger go away. Mommy was home and everything was okay now.

Johnnie had both candles lit and was staring wide-eyed at his mother. He loved her so much and she didn't even look too drunk.

"Ya know how you kids are always

beggin' to go back up north? Well, we're gonna go. I talked with your grandma today and we're goin' up there for the whole summer!"

"Yipee! Grandma's! How we getting there, Mommy?"

"Don't you worry about that. You just be ready at five o'clock tomorrow and I'll pick you up in a shiny new convertible with the top down!"

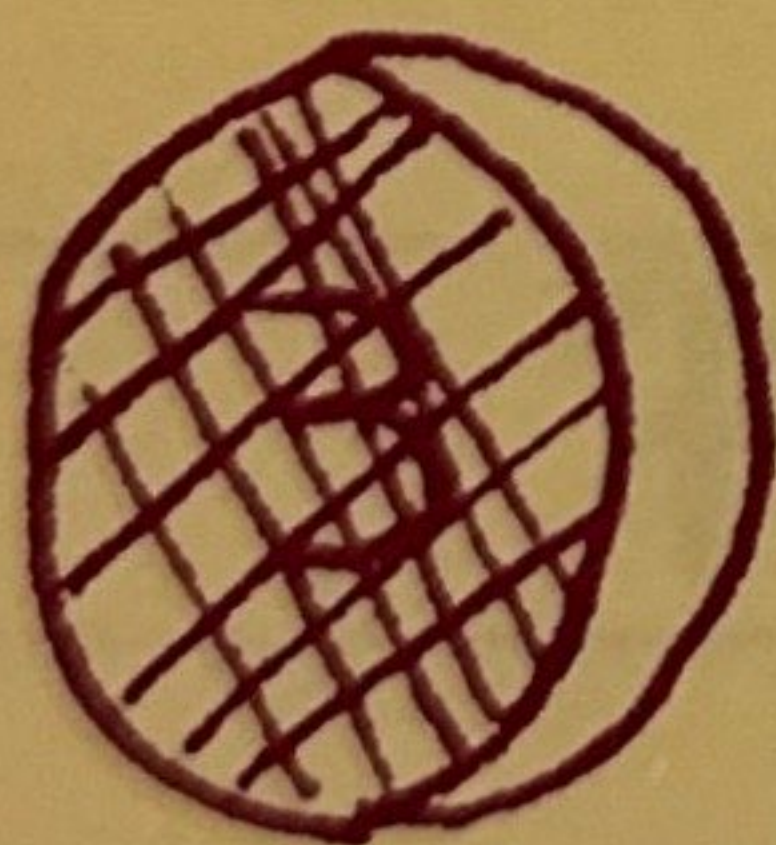
"Are you leaving again, Mommy? Aren't you going to stay home now?" Kathy's fingers tightened around the edge of the table.

"I gotta go, Baby. I got to make arrangements. But you help get everybody ready, okay?"

"Okay, Mom," she answered through the lump that was forming in her throat.

Evelyn eased out of the chair and headed for the door. "Now be sure you're ready and don't answer the door until I get back! And she was gone.

Johnnie and Kathy sat there, in silence, for a very long time.



Kathy didn't know what time it was. Grandma had a clock, but no electricity to plug it in. They were all up late last night. Mommy told lots of funny stories and "Uncle Jack" gave them all candy. He said he was staying all summer too, and maybe his skin would get as dark as hers.

Kathy doubted that.

The little girl looked all over but couldn't find Mommy, and Uncle Jack's car was gone. Grandma was snoring in her bed in the kitchen where she slept to be by the fire. Beer bottles filled the table.

"Grandma?" she whispered. "Grandma." She let her leg jiggle the bed.

"Huh? What? Go back to bed, Kathleena. It's too early to be up."

"Where's Mommy, Grandma? I can't find her." Kathy's heart was pounding hard.

"Oh, her." Grandma opened her eyes a little. "She's gone to town, now go back to bed."

"When will she be home, Grandma?"

"I don't know. Soon. Now get back in bed before you wake the other kids up. Go on. She'll be back soon." Her grandmother grunted and rolled onto her side, pulling the blanket over her head as she turned.



Kathy waited all day for her mother to come home. Johnnie said not to cry. Not to worry. Mommy would be home soon. But there was something about the way he said

it that made her know he was scared too. They waited all summer for her to pull up in another shiny new car smiling and holding her arms out to them. They waited to tell her about all the fun they were having learning to swim and jumping off the old bridge down by the river.

But Mommy didn't come that summer. Mommy never came home at all.



RAIN

A SHORT STORY IN PROGRESS

by Joan Gibbs

again for Sara

1.

It was happening again. It had been happening for months now and Denise didn't know how to make it stop. Everytime the phone rang or there was a knock at the door and *it wasn't Beverly.*

Denise wasn't one for crying. For years, in fact, every since her sister's funeral, she hadn't cried at all. Beverly didn't care. Why should she? she didn't know about it.

It started at a party. Denise came alone; Beverly with her boyfriend. But, something about her smile [hadn't she only danced with Denise?], the way she playfully tossed her sweater up in the air only to land around Denise's neck made Denise think "maybe" just "maybe."

Denise and Beverly worked together at a job neither particularly liked. Denise could be "out" though and Beverly was learning skills. Denise taught Beverly how to print, how to mix the water and ink just so. In the printshop and with all the regularity of the churchbells outside Beverly's new apartment on Sunday mornings they fought. Denise said Beverly was making faces; Beverly said it was just her "normal looks." Denise wrote letters, called; Beverly said "don't call again." None of Denise's letters were answered.

So Denise cried, returned to the place in her mind where tears flowed like rain drops on a summer evening leaving it cooler for awhile.

2.

Denise's eyes were sparkling: Sunday afternoon, February starting off cold as usual. Today, Denise couldn't wait for Monday to come. Usually the thought of Mondays on Sunday made her sad. It wasn't work at all, Denise had just slept with Beverly.

3.

Monday. The first day was strange. Beverly said she had spent the whole night crying with her boyfriend. Beverly said it had nothing at all to do with Denise - "*it was bound to happen, sooner or later.*" Beverly said they couldn't see each other unless she told him first. Beverly said she wanted to be his friend. Beverly said "*Can we do something together on the weekend?*"

Denise retreated, closed and opened her eyes, looking at Beverly into the eyes of her boyfriend. That night she had hives for the first time in years.

4.

Beverly: *I love you.*

Denise: *How much?*

32.

Beverly: *See all the bricks on that building*

Denise: *Yeh.*

Beverly: *Well, more than that. Several times more than that.*

5.

Do you believe in magic? the type of magic that can change sunshine to rain then a rainbow?

Denise still cries sometimes, remembers the time before the rainbow. But the place is different and Beverly is always there. Waking up beside her in the morning, smiling. Her eyes sparkling.

COMMENTARY...

PERSPECTIVE ON '3rd WORLD'

by Claudette Furlonge

What is the 3rd World? Does it mean: not as good as first or second? What is the 1st and 2nd world and why can't we be in them? How does 3rd World define us - lesbians of color - and why?

The New Columbia Encyclopedia describes 3rd World as "technologically less advanced nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America generally characterized as in addition to being poor in money income, poorly fed and largely agrarian, also has high rate of illiteracy, disease, rapidly growing populations, unstable government. Until recently most of the 3rd World was dominated by western nations through some form of colonialism. The term is intended to distinguish these nations from two other groups of technologically advanced nations, Western nations, influenced by U.S.A. and the Soviet bloc."

The Britannica Book of the Year - 1967 defines 3rd World as a group of nations especially in Africa and Asia that are not aligned with either the Communist or non-Communist blocs.

The key words in the above definitions are: recently and not-aligned. Between 1957-60 starting with Ghana, over 30 African countries gained formal independence from their British, French, German, Italian and Belgium colonizers. The phrase '3rd World' was then coined by some of these newly emerging African nations who sought to distinguish themselves from the 1st world of capitalism and the 2nd world of communism.

They sought to develop a hybrid brand of "African socialism." It was like playing both sides of the fence but the concept proved to be illusory. Because in attempting to overcome their problems of underdevelopment: illiteracy, malnutrition, disease, etc., they quite naturally had to seek aid from somewhere. With the economic and technological help from the Western capitalist powers came the political strings. Thus in trying to steer away from communism, they ended up with neo-colonialism, that is, they slipped backwards into an exploitative parasitic relationship with their former and even some new colonial masters. Other countries such as Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, etc., differ greatly from these because they have set another course for the development of their resources and the benefit of their people, and the cause of world revolution by aligning themselves with the communist camp. So, in that sense, the term 3rd World is not accurate because it does not correspond to the widely divergent economic and social and political realities among the countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia.

At the same time, the term 3rd World has a broader and more general meaning when it is used in the U.S.A. As a way of expressing solidarity with revolutionary movements by people of color in Vietnam, Angola, Cuba and the Middle East, etc., people of color in the U.S. (in the 60's) began to call themselves 3rd World. It also began to be used to show recognition of the various struggles by people of color within the U.S. Developing an awareness of these connections between people of color nationally and internationally affects the view we have of ourselves in a good way; because it means we are no longer a numerical minority but in fact a global majority. This makes us stronger.

I don't think that we should be so concerned with the usage of the phrase "3rd World", as with building an increased consciousness among people of color for the need for unity to effectively fight our oppressors.

Within the women's movement, lesbians of color have experienced racism and insensitivity which is but a reflection of the society at large. We understand this. It has prompted us to form our own networks. This is absolutely essential for our survival and it is also our right. It is a very new and fragile network which can be nurtured and developed faster and stronger from the combined talents and experiences of all lesbians of color.

If 3rd World is a short cut, albeit inaccurate term, which signifies that we recognize that there is potential for unity because of our common oppressions - then I am for using it. If someone can think of a better phrase, then I am for using that too.

Recognizing that, as victims of racism in America, 3rd World lesbians share many of the same concerns and goals. That is not to say we are all the same. We can and must have a healthy appreciation and respect for the differences between us. Asian, Native Indian, Black and Latin lesbians certainly have special histories and unique problems. There will be needs for our own spaces.

I am optimistic about this perspective, even if it may not reflect exactly where the 3rd World lesbian movement is at now.

Everybody knows that Black and Latin lesbians (certainly in NYC) have diversified social and political scenes. They are gradually coming together. The joining together of Black, Latin and Asian lesbians is a positive expression of our cultural self-determination, which surely must be a harbinger of more action in other arenas.

Above all, there is a need to reach more 3rd World lesbians. The majority in this town aren't even visible - much less active in anything. Working to change this will be part of the agenda on the NATIONAL THIRD WORLD LESBIAN/GAY CONFERENCE in Washington, D.C. Oct. 12 - 15. I hope that everyone will try to attend at least part of this historic event. Call for info at 202-797-8877, or write: 943 9th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. This is being coordinated with the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, to be held also in Washington, D.C. on October 14. I feel this is a must for all lesbians and gays to attend; especially 3rd World - the most oppressed. Even if you never go to demos - go to this one. Visibility is our power and it makes all the difference in the world to come together out of our strength than out of our weakness.

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